December 7, 2018

TO:       William J. Karpus, Dean of the Graduate School, Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

FROM:     William Aylward, Chair, Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies

RE:       Response to Summary of GFEC Program Review of CANES

CC:        Karl Scholz, College of Letters & Science
           Susan Zaeske, College of Letters & Science
           Elaine Klein, College of Letters & Science
           Alex Dressler, Department of Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
           Jeremy Hutton, Department of Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
           Toni Landis, Department of Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
           Jocelyn Milner, Office of the Provost
           Sarah Kuba, Office of the Provost
           Florence Hsia, Graduate School
           Parmesh Ramanathan, Graduate School
           Joshua Morrill, Graduate School
           Emily Reynolds, Graduate School

Thank you for commending our department on its strength and commitment to graduate education in your letter dated September 24, 2018. This memo fulfills your request for a response to your summary of discussion of the review of CANES graduate programs in AY2017-2018 at the GFEC meeting on September 14, 2018.

Graduate advising and time-to-degree

We are currently developing plans for yearly written feedback on student progress, which will include 1) yearly Qualtrics surveys of faculty regarding students, distributed to students with additional qualitative feedback prepared by the DGS, and 2) communication of written feedback developed in annual faculty discussion of student progress to students, along with the opportunity for student responses to that feedback. All of this will be assembled in a dossier and included in the student’s performance and career file. We anticipate at least some of these practices being established in the current academic year.

We aim to provide a formally written report pertaining to student performance in factors quantitative and qualitative at least once per year for every year of a student’s enrollment, a wider variety of
formally appointed advisers for students in their first two years, and a special advising seminar, led by a one member of the faculty, based on rotation, every year, to support the DGS and provide students with more specific and substantive, individualized feedback and assistance on specific projects, as well as more general matters of professional development relevant to their specific year in the program. We hope that this degree of dedicated individual advising will help all students, and especially underrepresented students, whose primary obstacle to timely completion, to the extent that the very limited numbers enable us to judge, has been insufficient preparation in the languages.

Other steps CANES has taken and will continue to take to address these issues:

CANES met with Associate Dean Florence Hsia on November 7, 2018, about our graduate program in Classics, strategies for funding, advising students about alternative academic careers, and strategic planning for growth and sustainability of our graduate programs. The meeting was attended by four tenured faculty in CANES, including the department chair. We plan to meet again in Spring 2019 and once every semester thereafter to check-in and re-tool practices and strategies for graduate education.

CANES also organized a listening session for graduate students on November 16, 2018. This two-hour meeting was an informal way for graduate students to express concerns about their experience in the department and the university. It was attended by three tenured faculty, including the department chair, our Graduate Program Coordinator, and eight of our graduate students from all levels, from first-year students to dissertators. CANES plans to repeat this event at least once per academic year.

Professional development and careers outside academia

Our weekly newsletters in CANES, emailed each Monday to all faculty, staff and graduate students, routinely advertise alt-ac resources offered by the Graduate School and encouraging our graduate students to take advantage of these opportunities. For example, a recent newsletter included links to these recent perspectives:
"We Need to Systematize Alt-Ac Career Guidance"
"Toward a Trackless Future: Moving beyond 'Alt-Ac' and 'Post-Ac'"

Recognizing that we can supplement these activities, in 2017 CANES applied for and was awarded a $1,000 professional development grant from the Graduate School. We used it to bring alumnus of Ph.D. program in Classics, Prof. Kirk Ormand (Oberlin College), to campus to deliver a presentation called "Find Your Best Fit: Could Teaching at a Liberal Arts College Be Right for You?" This wide-ranging talk on alt-ac careers featured robust Q&A that involved the speaker’s candid advice about limited prospects for employment in academic jobs at colleges and universities.

Additionally, we have added a Professional Development tab to our website, by which we link to Graduate School resources and which we update with relevant and timely information about PD. Our Web site will also soon feature the “Legion Project”, which is a product of The Paideia Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the study and appreciation of classical humanities. The “Legion Project” fosters a community of Classists who seek employment outside of academia: https://www.paideiainstitute.org/legion

Within the initiative is a bridge program, “a career placement initiative that advises and supports
Classicists as they seek to transition to fulfilling careers beyond the professoriate.”

https://www.paideiainstitute.org/bridge_program

Each week, our newsletter to faculty, staff and graduate students contains a link to these resources. On October 18, 2018, CANES organized an alternative careers workshop called “Classics and Careers” that featured three alumni of our undergraduate and graduate programs who now have successful careers outside academia. The alumni attended by video conference and the event was attended by thirty of our undergraduate majors and graduate students:

https://canes.wisc.edu/events/classics-careers

In Spring 2019 CANES is planning a second event specifically targeting our graduate students. We intend to host two alumni of our Classics graduate program currently on alt-ac career paths, one in library special collections and the other in museum studies.

The Classics Grad Forum, an RSO populated primarily by graduate students in the Classics graduate program, was recently awarded a $1,000 Graduate School professional development grant. They plan to use it for networking with alumni successful in academia and alt-ac careers and bringing a speaker to campus to address these concerns in conversation.
24 September 2018

William Aylward, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
College of Letters & Science
University of Wisconsin–Madison
Sent Electronically

Dear Professor Aylward,

When the College of Letters & Science assembled a review committee to conduct the ten-year program review of the MA/PhD in Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies with Named Options “Classics” and “Hebrew Bible” and Doctoral Minors Classics, Greek, Hebrew Bible and Latin, Associate Professor Christa Olson was asked to serve as the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) representative. Professor Olson led a discussion of the review at the GFEC meeting on September 14, 2018. In this letter, I summarize the committee’s discussion.

The GFEC learned of the strengths of this program, which include faculty commitment to plans for integration and coordination in the new department and its graduate programs along with robust scholarly training for students in their respective fields.

In addition to these strengths, the GFEC discussed some of the challenges facing the program:

- Advising: The review committee noted a need for more consistent early mentorship and clearer information about program requirements when students first arrive in the program. The GFEC recommends the department assess its advising strategy to ensure students feel confident asking questions of the right people.

- Professional Development: As the job market, particularly in Classics, continues to contract, the department will need to take concrete steps to support students across a range of career goals. The GFEC recommends the department engage in efforts to make information about alternative career options outside of academia available to students.

- Degree Completion: The data indicate that 35% of enrolled Ph.D. students do not complete the degree. Additionally, for those that do finish the Ph.D. the time to degree is prolonged beyond that of our AAU peers. While this may be a phenomenon of the past,
the department should outline its continuing strategy to mitigate both of these weaknesses.

The GFEC commends the program on its strengths and thanks you for your commitment to graduate education. We look forward to the program’s response by December 10, 2018.

Sincerely,

William J. Karpus
Dean of the Graduate School
Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

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