

STRATEGIC PLAN

May 6, 2002

Mission Statement

1. To promote understanding of the Middle East through expanded curricular and research opportunities.

The Middle East is on many minds these days, and there is a dramatic need for improved understanding of these subjects. Yet even before the current War on Terrorism, understanding these subjects was a priority for North Carolina and the United States. Our ever-expanding connections with Muslim societies - through migration, trade, investment, and cultural flows - demanded that we re-think old assumptions and explore new realities.

2. To gain international prominence for Carolina's unique approach to Middle Eastern studies: the combination of regional study with the cross-regional study of Muslim civilizations around the world.

Carolina is on the verge of establishing this prominence, as it is already well known for this innovative approach to the study of the Middle East. As Islamic ideas and movements circulate across regions, it is increasingly important to avoid geographic blinders. To pick an example from current headlines: If al-Qa'ida terrorists move from Saudi Arabia or Yemen to Pakistan or Malaysia, must Middle East studies stop studying them?

Strategic Priorities for the Next Five Years

1. Establishment of the concentration in Middle East Studies within the Curriculum in International and Area Studies (Year 1).

As noted in the proposal for this concentration (<http://www.unc.edu/mideast/concentration.html>), Carolina already has in place two dozen courses that fulfill our distinctive pedagogical goals, namely the emphasis on cross-regional perspectives on the Middle East. A list of these courses is appended to that proposal.

2. Institutionalizing Carolina's distinctive approach through the establishment of a Center for Middle East Studies (Years 1-5).

This Center will be the first Middle East Studies Center in North America to include cross-regional perspectives in its mission. It will promote faculty and student research, organize colloquia, conferences, course development, community outreach. The Center will have a half-time director and a full-time

associate director, with additional staff support to be provided by the Center for Asian Studies. The Center will be housed in the new Center for Global Education. The existence of this Center will facilitate external grant development (see item 3).

3. Broadening course offerings and building infrastructure through application for external funding (Years 1-5).

University resources for instruction and research-support can be augmented and leveraged through external funding sources. We would like to pursue several such sources: a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish an undergraduate-level National Resource Center in Middle East Studies (Fall 2002); a private foundation grant to support a research group on "The Middle East and Beyond: Cross-Regional Approaches to Middle East Studies" (growing out of the longstanding Carolina Seminar on Comparative Islamic Studies); a private foundation grant to support the Muslim Networks Consortium, of which Carolina is a charter member; and private donations, for which purpose the Planning Group will continue to work closely with Development Officer Raymond Farrow.

4. Integrating Study Abroad into the concentration (Years 1-3).

The proposed concentration encourages students to participate in Study Abroad, and will work with Study Abroad partners to integrate the course-work abroad with the requirements of the concentration. A Study Abroad program at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, is beginning in Summer 2002, and a second program at Bosphorus University in Istanbul, Turkey, is scheduled to begin in 2003. Additional programs are being developed in East Africa and South Asia, both of which could offer instruction and experiences relevant to Muslim civilizations. We are eager to pursue a wide range of collaborative possibilities with the American University in Cairo, which could serve as our hub for study and research in the region.

5. Strengthening the concentration's course offerings through course-development grants (Years 1-3).

A course-development grant competition will offer incentives for faculty to develop new courses that fit the concentration's goals, especially on regions that are not currently covered (Islam in Europe, for example); to revise existing courses to correspond as fully as possible to these goals; and to revive infrequently taught courses. (The courses identified in the concentration proposal are offered regularly, at least twice in the past three academic years.)

7. Strengthening of the concentration's core-course faculty through the hiring of a junior-level Middle East historian with a specialization in the study of North Africa and a familiarity with cross-regional perspectives (Year 1).

We have in place a core course for the proposed concentration, "Introduction to Islamic Civilization," a two-course series offered jointly by the History and Religious Studies departments (HIST 36-37/RELI 25-26). Only one semester of this series will be required for the concentration. We propose that this course series be offered every academic year. Three faculty members are slated to rotate the teaching of this course series, one in History (Professor Sarah Shields) and two in Religious Studies (Professors Carl Ernst and Edward Curtis). We recommend that a second historian be hired so that the course series can be shared more equally among the two departments. This hire would also contribute to the History department's goal of minimizing the number of regions covered only by a sole faculty member. Since the existing Middle East historian on campus specializes in the Levant, we propose that the new faculty member balance this focus with an emphasis on North Africa, the other "wing" of the Middle East. This specialization is additionally useful in contributing to the efforts to build African Studies at Carolina; Professor Julius Nyang'oro, chair of African and African American Studies and a member of our Planning Group, emphasizes the importance of this coverage for ongoing grant-application efforts in African Studies. Finally, faculty members who are active in European Studies identify the additional synergy that would be gained if the new faculty member specializes in the Francophone regions of North Africa.

7. Accommodating the growth of the Arabic-language program through the hiring of a third faculty member in a tenure-track position (Year 1)

Enrollment numbers in first-year Arabic have risen dramatically over the past several years, to 33 students in Fall 2001, justifying a second section of the introductory class. The two faculty members currently teaching Arabic, Professors Sahar Amer and Nadia Yaqub, are offering four years of the language, so their teaching schedule is already over-full. This appointment can be made jointly with Asian Studies and another department, and might also be shared with Duke University, since collaboration between Carolina and Duke in Arabic language instruction is already well-established.

8. Building the concentration's course offerings in social science through the hiring of a junior-level Middle East expert with a specialization in democratization and/or social movements and a familiarity with cross-regional perspectives (Year 1).

As the concentration's course offerings lean somewhat towards the humanities, we consider it a priority to balance this tendency with the hiring of a social scientist. We propose an emphasis on two substantive fields that build on current Carolina strengths and speak to major issues in the Middle East: social movements, in particular Islamist movements, and democratization. Carolina has an extensive track record in the field of democratization, having received a National Science Foundation graduate training award in this area; in the field of social movements, Carolina's growing cadre of specialists has been honored with an award from the American Sociological Association's Fund for the

Advancement of the Discipline. Both of these issue areas lie across several social-science disciplines. We propose that this position be offered competitively to all social science departments in the College of Arts and Sciences, possibly in conjunction with the Curriculum in International and Area Studies.

9. Boosting Carolina's prominence through the hiring of a senior-level scholar to lead our efforts in this area (Years 2-5).

Our existing senior faculty in this area are pulled in numerous directions through administrative duties and other responsibilities. Our efforts would be greatly enhanced by the hiring of a well-known senior scholar with a primary mandate to build our program in the study of the Middle East and Muslim civilizations. This scholar could come from any discipline, but would be someone with considerable name recognition who is committed to Carolina's distinctive approach to the field.

10. Filling gaps in the concentration's course offerings through five additional junior-level positions (Years 2-5).

We propose that the following fields ought to be covered more fully in order to build a concentration that fulfills Carolina's ambitions in this area. Each of these searches should emphasize candidates who are familiar with cross-regional perspectives.

(1) Middle East librarian. The library's Middle East collections are currently being developed by the West European bibliographer, with no specialized training in the Middle East.

(2) Central Asian history. This position would promote linkages with Carolina's strengths in Eastern Europe/Eurasian studies.

(3) Islamic art history. The Department of Art has already identified this position as a priority for its next hire.

(4) Middle Eastern media studies. This position could bridge the College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Journalism.

(5) Middle Eastern economic development. This position could bridge the College of Arts and Sciences and the Kenan/Flagler School of Business.

Drafted by Planning Group Secretary Charles Kurzman, April 10, 2002.

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