

SUMMARY PROPOSAL

March 3, 2002

Goals

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?

Means

1. To establish a Center for Middle East Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which will be the first Middle East studies center in North America to combine the regional and cross-regional approaches.
2. To establish an undergraduate concentration in Middle East Studies within the Curriculum in International and Area Studies, which will be the first such concentration in North America.
3. To expand existing partnerships in this field with Duke University, Emory University, and North Carolina State University.

Why Carolina?

1. Carolina's faculty includes an array of researchers whose focus combines regional and cross-regional approaches to the Middle East, including scholars whose expertise

includes the Middle East's connections with South and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, Western Europe, and North America. Thus far this has been the product of happy coincidence, but Carolina is in the process of recognizing this distinctive approach and building on it in a concentrated manner.

2. This distinctiveness has already gained considerable attention. Carolina, in partnership with Duke, Emory, and N.C. State, has established a reputation for its innovative approach to the study of the Middle East. Colleagues around the U.S., and indeed around the world, have asked to join our efforts to build a consortium that re-thinks area studies through the lens of cross-regional networks.

3. Carolina's track record in this field includes the establishment of the Carolina Seminar on Comparative Islamic Studies, which has been gathering monthly since 1994; the Carolina-Duke-Emory Institute for the Study of Islam, which integrates graduate and undergraduate course offerings at the three schools; the North Carolina Center for South Asian Studies, which is distinctive among such centers nationwide in its expertise on Muslim civilizations in South Asia; and the Consortium for the Study of Muslim Networks, a new initiative that is forging ties with universities around the world.

4. The Curriculum in International and Area Studies has grown in the last several years into one of the largest undergraduate majors at Carolina, as hundreds of students recognize the importance of global phenomena for their courses of study and future careers. As recent events have made even clearer than before, the Middle East has a major role to play in global affairs.

5. Carolina is committed to its identity as a premier international university. One indication of this commitment is the Center for Global Education, currently in the planning stages, that will house Carolina's international efforts. Another indication is the expansion of Study Abroad opportunities in partnership with universities around the world. In the Middle East, Carolina is establishing Study Abroad programs in Cairo, Egypt, and Istanbul, Turkey.

6. Thanks to a generous donation, Carolina is in the process of establishing a Center for Asian Studies that may allow the future Center for Middle East Studies to draw on existing resources for administration and support.

Next Steps

1. Expanding course offerings in the field through:
 - (a) course development grants for existing faculty;
 - (b) the allocation of faculty hirings by the university; and
 - (c) the funding of new faculty positions through external grants and donations.
2. Locating support for the Center for Middle East Studies, in particular:
 - (a) the directorship;

- (b) the associate directorship;
- (c) staff support;
- (d) programming costs, such as seminar series, inter-campus curricular offerings, and Study Abroad opportunities;
- (e) library collection development and bibliographer; and
- (f) operating costs.

Initially drafted by Charles Kurzman, February 7, 2002. Revised at the Planning Group meeting of March 1, 2002.