As the results of program review indicate, the Department of German, Russian, East Asian Languages has maintained academically strong programs that promote study of foreign language and culture. That the department has done so in the face of declining student interest in studying foreign languages—a national phenomenon that is at odds with forces of globalization that so dramatically affect our students—is a tribute to its commitment to liberal and international education. This commitment makes the department a valuable asset to the College and University as we attempt to educate students for citizenship in an increasingly interdependent world.

The Program Review Committee’s final report praises the department for developing—and pursuing—a mission that articulates the value of a liberal education and situates the study of foreign languages squarely in the liberal arts tradition. The report also cites the strong work ethic of GREAL faculty, their commitment to students, their extraordinary efforts to collaborate with partners on and off campus, and their success in creating a strong and unique masters program in German. Moreover, the external reviewers call attention to the strength of the department’s AYA program in Salzburg, praising its design, high level of faculty engagement, and integration with on-campus language and culture classes.

As is appropriate, the PRC final report also identifies challenges that the department faces and suggests steps it should take to address these issues. In particular, the report recommends that the department develop greater focus by making more strategic decisions about how it uses its resources—including faculty time. The report asks the department to consider carefully its goals and activities and to develop clear priorities so that it can use resources strategically to develop stronger programs and increase student interest in these programs. The report also calls attention to the woeful state of the language laboratory (a matter about which the language departments themselves can do little) and the need for greater attention to assessment.

Dr. Timothy Pogacar has offered a thorough and thoughtful response to the report. Dr. Pogacar provides a great deal of useful information and valuable insights that will be helpful as we move forward to implement the PRC’s recommendations. He eagerly embraces recommendations that the department move forward on assessment, review the second year curriculum in the German masters program, and participate in the new International Program Council to be convened by the Provost in an effort to coordinate and promote international education at BGSU. Dr. Pogacar offers a cautionary note about forming a committee to investigate options for a new language laboratory and observes that the departments should not bear full responsibility for increasing student interest in foreign languages and cultures. With respect to the latter matter, I agree that the College must assume greater leadership in articulating the value of studying foreign languages and cultures—a responsibility that will be addressed by strengthening the
International Studies Program, supporting more aggressive and better coordinated recruitment activities, and creating an International Programs Council. Dr. Pogacar’s response is less enthusiastic about the PRC’s call for greater focus, finding the committee’s recommendations in this area vague. Nevertheless, I am confident that as we proceed with implementation of the recommendations, he and his colleagues will understand that the committee’s call for making difficult choices and setting priorities will result in stronger programs and—in the long run—greater resources.

I concur with the findings and recommendations of the Program Review Committee, subject to the following stipulations and elaborations:

1 Later this month I will meet with Dr. Pogacar to discuss the process for establishing priorities within the department’s seven-year plan as well as timetables for achieving these goals and benchmarks for judging success. I agree with the committee that the department’s priorities—as well as benchmarks and a timetable—should be submitted to the College no later than December 2001.

1 As the College reviews the resources necessary to support the German M.A. program, as recommended by PRC, it will seek information from and share its findings with the department to ensure that the process is collaborative.

1 In proceeding to gather information on how best to create a modern language laboratory, I will involve both language department chairs—to draw on their expertise and to avoid creating an unwieldy committee that will only slow progress toward deciding what the options are and which best matches our needs and resources. My goal is to have recommendations for replacing the language lab in my hands by December 1, 2001.

1 I will ask Dr. Pogacar to meet with Dr. Elizabeth Cole, the Associate Dean who supervises assessment activities in the College, before the beginning of the fall 2001 semester to discuss practical steps the department can take to close the loop on assessment. I will expect to see the results of this effort reflected in the department’s assessment report in the spring of 2002.

1 In the past, some of the department’s efforts to provide distance education have been unsuccessful, in part, because of poor communication among the department, CEISP, the College, and the Office of Academic Enhancement (which directs the PSEOP program). I will ask Dr. Roger Thibault, Associate Dean for Resources and Planning, to convene a meeting of representatives of these units to discuss parameters for any distance learning initiatives the department may undertake. The purpose is to establish clear rules for developing and offering distance courses so the department can decide where distance learning fits in its priorities.

1 Faculty scholarship is vital to the intellectual life of the department as well as to inspired, intellectually challenging teaching. I, therefore, share Dr. Pogacar’s desire that all tenured and tenure track faculty are active in research. However, the department
should have a differential workload policy in place to ensure that faculty who fall short of expectations for scholarly productivity are required to carry a greater share of its instructional responsibilities. There appears to be disagreement as to whether the department has a viable differential workload policy that is regularly applied. If there is no policy, the department should develop one by December 2001 and begin to implement it during the spring semester of 2002. If a policy exists, the chair should forward a copy to the College Office with a brief statement describing the manner in which it is administered.

Like other foreign language departments across the nation, the Department of German, Russian, East Asian Languages faces a variety of difficult challenges. Nevertheless, it confronts these with a committed faculty, sound academic programs, a tradition of innovation, and knowledge that its mission is vital to the University’s goals. Therefore, I am confident that by energetically pursuing the PRC’s recommendations, the department—working collaboratively with the College and other units interested in international education—will overcome the challenges and strengthen international education at Bowling Green State University.

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Donald G. Nieman, Dean

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John W. Folkins, Provost

Concurred:

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John W. Folkins, Provost

Date