February 13, 2001

TO: Joan Gorham, Associate Dean  
Eberly College of Arts and Sciences

FROM: Marilyn Bendena, Associate Chair,  
Department of Foreign Languages and  
Coordinator, Slavic Studies Program

RE: Request for Change in Requirements for the Slavic Studies  
Program; Submission of the Senate Capstone Course Form for Russian  
area (Foreign Languages) and for Slavic Studies Program

Given the fact that all undergraduate programs will now be required to include a capstone  
experience, the faculty in the Slavic Studies Program met on February 9, 2001, and unanimously  
decided to use RUSS 496 (Senior Thesis) as the capstone requirement in Slavic Studies. This  
course will also be the capstone requirement for all Russian majors within the B.A. program in  
Foreign Languages. I attach the Senate form which addresses the criteria. Students will be able  
to demonstrate their oral and written linguistic abilities in this course, as well as their cognitive  
skills, and content knowledge. They will also be able to address ethical/societal issues  
related to their topic.

The course has already been approved for use in the new undergraduate curriculum revision in  
foreign languages, which will go into effect for students entering the program as of fall, 2001.  
We need only forward the attached form to the Senate for its approval.

Concerning the Slavic Studies Program, we shall need to modify the requirements of the  
program in order to include the capstone requirement. Thus, I would like to request that, of the  
30 hours required in this interdepartmental major, 18 hours of course work will now be  
prescribed  
instead of the former 15 hours, by adding RUSS 496. The catalogue copy should be modified to  
read:

The major requires a minimum of 30 hours, 18 of which must include:  
History 217 and 218  
Political Science 351 or 366  
Russian 301 and 302 or 303 and 304  
Russian 496

The remaining hours required may be chosen from a flexible list of courses approved by the  
Slavic Studies Committee. Currently, such courses could include History 417, 418, 419, 420;  
FLIT 273, 274; Political Science 351, 366; Russian 301, 302, 303, 304, 341, 342, 451, 493.

Please let me know if I can provide you with more information.

Thank you for your consideration.
CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE FORM

College: Eberly College of Arts and Sciences

Department/Program: (Russian Majors in the) Department of Foreign Languages AND Interdepartmental Slavic Studies Program

Course(s) in which the Capstone Experience is fulfilled: RUSS 496 (Senior Thesis)

For the above course(s), please provide a statement that illustrates how a student in the course would demonstrate each of the following abilities:

1. Gather material independently, as needed:

   In RUSS 496 (Senior Thesis), students will 1) identify and seek approval for a research topic that deals with an aspect of Russian/Slavic culture, 2) develop a bibliography, 3) prepare an outline and drafts of the research paper which will be reviewed by the instructor, and 4) submit a final thesis. In order to accomplish the assignment students must gather research material from a variety of possible sources (library, internet, legal documents, television, journals, newspapers, etc.), depending upon the topic selected.

2. Think critically about and integrate the theoretical and/or practical knowledge that they have acquired throughout their undergraduate careers:

   Topics for the Senior Thesis must be approved by the instructor. Care will be taken to ensure that the topics have necessary breadth and depth and that they can relate to the kinds of material that students have acquired during their undergraduate studies. The Department of Foreign Languages has defined the criteria for the capstone experience in their recent undergraduate Curriculum Revision, which was approved by the Senate in fall, 2000, and which is scheduled to go into effect as of fall, 2001: "Students must demonstrate attainment of the basic objectives of the program: cognitive skills (critical thinking), communicative skills, and cultural awareness/content knowledge." The topics selected must, therefore, provide students the opportunity to apply and synthesize the knowledge acquired during their undergraduate preparation.

3. Reflect on the ethical (or societal) issues that are implicit in their project and/or their project's design:

   The goal of any humanities program, especially those that are second culture oriented, should naturally lead students to reflect upon ethical or societal issues. As one studies another culture, comparisons are constantly and inevitably made, for example, concerning customs, ideas, historical, political, and social developments. I have been offering this kind of Senior Thesis experience for a number of years now. Samples of
topics selected have included such themes as "Violence in Russian Folklore Myths," "Translation of a Soviet General's Diary." (The student pondered not only "how" to translate, but also how the general viewed taking orders from Soviet authorities whom he mistrusted.), and "Chekhov's Characters and their Inability to Face Change in the Modern World." Within any research project, the "how" and the "why" must, by necessity, come to the forefront for consideration and analysis.

Please describe briefly how the written component of the Capstone Experience in the course(s) listed above is completed.

The students will be responsible for producing a thesis of substantial length. Before the final submission, they will also be obliged to present a formal thesis proposal, an overview of their bibliography, a formal abstract, two progress reports, and at least two drafts of the final paper. All of these parts will be gathered into a portfolio, which the student will submit at the end of the semester. There will, therefore, be a significant amount of written work involved in this course.

Please describe briefly how the oral component of the Capstone Experience in the course(s) listed above is completed.

Once the thesis is submitted, students will also be obliged to make an oral presentation of their research findings, during which they will define the research goal, describe the research materials available and methods of investigation, summarize the thesis and discuss salient findings, and respond to questions about the topic. This course will provide students ample opportunity to demonstrate their oral skills.