

**WORKING DOCUMENT ON  
THE REORGANIZATION OF THE AREA STUDIES**

**February 2010**

## **Introduction and Background**

Discussions about “the best organizational rubric” for the various area studies programs have been ongoing at Grand Valley State University at least since 2000. This enduring question was revisited again during a series of meetings last academic year, which were followed by a new round of meetings this academic year. The Dean, the Area Studies Directors and jointly appointed faculty were all involved in these preliminary conversations.

The primary goal of this working document is to offer a summary of the main points that have been addressed during these meetings. It is divided into three parts. The first part outlines the rationale for a new structure for the Area Studies. The second part presents the major highlights of the proposed new structure. The third part recommends some concrete steps as we move forward with this endeavor.

### **I. Rationale for a New Structure**

Reorganizing the Area Studies into an integrated academic unit would be a logical and adequate institutional response to the challenges facing the University and the Area Studies. The following reasons were particularly underscored.

- 1) With the infusion of new tenure track faculty primarily appointed with the Area Studies, the current structure doesn't represent the best environment for the professional growth of these faculty as well their personnel review and evaluation.
- 2) An integrative structure would give the Area Studies more stability in these financially challenging times.
- 3) An integrated structure would be eligible for external grants and could secure more funding from the University to run the office.
- 4) An integrated structure would position the Area Studies to become a leader in global learning in fulfilling the University's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and in accordance with the recommendations of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).
- 5) The current structure of the Area Studies is not conducive to conversations and dialogues across regional boundaries that allow for the expansiveness in thought

and attitude. Providing the faculty with an integrated academic unit would foster synergetic collaboration and engagement across regional boundaries and around global issues.

- 6) An integrated structure would provide the necessary template for a budgetary mechanism that combines the Area Studies' resources while addressing their needs from a common perspective thus leading to a better prioritization in programming and a sound utilization of both financial and human resources.
- 7) The growth potential for individual area studies program being rather limited, establishing an integrated structure would offer an opportunity for individual programs to grow together and achieve the long term viability of the current structure.

## **II. Highlights of the Proposed New Structure**

This new round of discussions on the reorganization of the Area Studies has focused and achieved a consensus on the following practical questions related to the proposed new structure. These discussions underscored the notion that the proposed structure must build upon the strengths and achievements of the area studies programs and strike the right balance between autonomy and collective action. Such a balancing act requires a great deal of flexibility both in the organization and running of the proposed structure.

1. **Name**
  - The new structure will be named "Institute for Global and Area Studies"
2. **Faculty**
  - Faculty with at least 1/3 appointment in CoIS will be able to vote on all matters (personnel and non-personnel).
  - A status of faculty associates or fellows will be offered to other faculty who involved with the Institute.
3. **Deciding body**
  - The assembly of faculty with a least 1/3 appointment in CoIS will constitute the Institute's deciding body.
4. **Chair of the Institute**
  - The chair will be elected by and among the faculty of the Institute and recommended for appointment to the Dean.
  - Term limit – 3 years, renewable once.
  - The chair's responsibilities are those defined in the University Faculty Handbook.

- Release time and any extra compensation will be discussed with the Dean based on University practices.
5. **Program Directors**
    - Will be nominated by each program's advisory board.
    - The Institute will endorse the nomination and recommend it to the Dean.
    - Program directors will be jointly appointed.
    - Any release time and/or extra compensation will be negotiated with the Dean.
  6. **Reporting line**
    - The Chair of the Institute will be the only officer reporting directly to the Dean on behalf of the Institute and its individual components.
  7. **Budget**
    - Current individual budgets will be consolidated into one common budget.
    - However, each program will be able to maintain sub accounts and preserve funds up front for their signature events.
  8. **COT**
    - The Institute will need 1 ½ COTs.
    - One full time, permanent graduate student will also be needed.
  9. **Start-up Cost**
    - Adequate permanent funding for the running the office will be requested.
  10. **Physical resources**
    - One perching office for program directors.
    - One office for adjunct faculty will be needed.

### **III. Suggested Action Steps**

1. **February 2010:** Program Directors discuss the present working document with their faculty and advisory boards.
2. **March 2010:** working document is refined based on input from (1) and a final determination is made on how to proceed.