



December 2008

DRAFT: Bachelor of Arts in Finnish University of Washington

Introduction

The University of Washington (UW) seeks approval to establish a Bachelor of Arts in Finnish degree program. The program would share many courses with an existing Finnish option within the Scandinavian Area Studies degree.¹ Housed within the Scandinavian Studies Department of the College of Arts and Sciences, the proposed program would enroll 6 FTE students in fall 2008 and achieve full enrollment of 15 FTE by 2011. At full enrollment, it would graduate 7 or 8 students per year who would be prepared for graduate study with an international emphasis, or for careers that require skills in critical analysis, effective communication, and the interpretation of various media.

Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission and the Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Washington

According to the “UW Role and Mission Statement,” the University of Washington’s primary mission is the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge. The proposed program would support the UW role and mission by training students to understand the language, culture, and history of Finland, a state which has contributed significantly to world affairs through its cultural and political traditions and whose economy has similarities and connections to Washington’s.

The proposed program also would support the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education* by expanding access to postsecondary degrees in a field that will help drive greater economic prosperity, innovation, and opportunity. Finland has contemporary strategic economic importance in areas such as telecommunications, film, manufacturing, and refining. Finnish language study and the cultural understanding it provides are assets in participating in this business activity.

¹ The proposed program, a major in Finnish, would emphasize language and literature, whereas the existing option emphasizes history, politics, folklore, and society. Both the option and an existing Finnish minor, which requires fewer courses, would continue in operation after the proposed program starts.

Diversity

In addition to participating in university-wide diversity initiatives, the department would:

- Develop outreach materials (brochures, fact sheets) and work actively to inform students of other cultures and color about the program;
- Include multicultural and diversity issues in Department courses and seminars;
- Support (through extra teaching and service credit and through use of discretionary endowed funds to provide extra research support) faculty who mentor traditionally under-represented students;
- Develop outreach efforts for transfer students from community colleges aimed at under-represented students and potential majors; and
- Provide scholarships or travel grants to traditionally under-represented students.

Program Need

Although the *HECB State and Regional Needs Assessment* does not note a demand-supply gap in humanities occupations, it does note that humanities program graduates are distributed broadly across a number of occupational areas. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain employer demand for graduates of the proposed program. Program planners have indicated, however, that out of 11 students who have minored in Finnish in the last three years, two have gone on to pursue graduate studies and seven have gained employment appropriate to their education. Corresponding information with regard to Finnish option students is not available.

The proposed program would benefit students interested in focusing on Finnish language and literature by highlighting the focus of their studies better than the current Finnish option within the Scandinavian Studies major. As evidence of student need for the proposed program, planners noted that 100 percent (5 of 5) of the students currently enrolled in the Finnish option would sign up for a Finnish major if it were offered. In addition, student interest in Finnish appears to be increasing. Enrollment in first-year Finnish has increased from 11 students in 2005-06 to 15 students in 2007-08 and 2009; and the number of graduates in the Finnish option has increased from three in 2005-06 to four in 2007-08. Furthermore, the Department has received “many” inquiries from students who wish to major in Finnish. Finally, the Department obtained several e-mails from alumni indicating that they would have pursued a Finnish major had it been available.

As evidence of community need for the proposed program, planners noted the Finnish Ministry of Education currently funds half of a visiting lecturer position in Finnish. At the local level, the Finnish-American Community of Puget Sound has funded an endowment to provide scholarships and general support for the Department and has organized a fund-raising committee to establish a Professorship or Chair in Finnish Studies at UW. In addition, the proposal included a letter from the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle’s president indicating support for the proposed program.

Currently, there are only 11 universities in North America that teach Finnish, none of which are in Washington. Thus, the proposed program would not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs in the state.

Program Description

The proposed program aims to prepare students for careers that require critical analysis of texts, effective communication, and interpretation of information in various media, and graduate programs and professional schools that value an international perspective. Its target audience includes a broad range of students with an interest in international affairs, literature, and linguistics. Students would attend traditional daytime classes at the Seattle campus full- or part-time. To be admitted, one must be a registered UW student in good standing.

Within the program, students would take 65 credits, 30 of which would be upper-division credits. Paralleling other language programs at UW, the major in Finnish would combine intensive study of Finnish with courses in Finnish and Scandinavian literature and cultural studies, culminating in a senior capstone essay. Requirements include 30 credits of Finnish language courses; 15 credits of third-year language and culture; 5 credits of Scandinavian literature in translation; 5 credits in Finnish cultural studies, 5 credits in Scandinavian area studies, and a 5-credit senior capstone essay. In addition, research, internship, service learning, and study abroad opportunities would be available, but not required.

The proposed program would consist almost entirely of existing courses² taught by existing faculty. All of the faculty would be full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, except for a visiting lecturer partially sponsored by Finland's Ministry of Education. Students would achieve the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate proficiency in Finnish language sufficient to interact in written and spoken Finnish with native speakers of the language; and
- Demonstrate historical and cultural understanding of Finland adequate to explain to a high school student in Washington State - the outlines of Finnish history, its cultural profile, and the main features of its place in world politics today.

² Although the Department is considering adding new courses in Finnish cinema, language, and culture.

These student-learning outcomes would be measured using a variety of assessment tools including exams, short and long papers, and oral presentations. In addition to traditional course work, there would be a required capstone senior essay. Students would be assessed within their individual courses, based on learning outcomes identified for those courses. The proposed program would employ multiple program assessment approaches:

- Course evaluation data to measure the effectiveness of the instructor and the relevance of course content;
- Informal gatherings with students to discuss the program and their effective participation in it;
- Exit surveys to assess student expectations and satisfaction with the program and how the program met student expectations;
- Follow-up surveys for graduates three, five and ten years after graduation; and
- Annual review of the program by faculty, including an evaluation of exit surveys and other student and faculty input.

Data from all of the above approaches would be used to develop and refine the program as needed.

Program Costs

The proposed program would enroll 6 FTE students in the first year, growing to 15 FTE students by the fourth. To implement the program, the department has budgeted 0.25 FTE for administrative staff and 1.95 FTE for faculty (0.95 tenure track FTE plus 1.0 visiting lecturer FTE). The proposed program would use existing office space and library resources, so the budget excludes those items. It would be funded by an internal reallocation of general fund state and tuition funds and external funding from the Finnish Ministry of Education.

With an entering class of six FTE, the direct cost of instruction³ for the first year of the program would be \$83,996, or \$13,999 per FTE. At full enrollment of 15 FTE, the direct cost of instruction would be \$91,246 or \$6,083 per FTE. According to the *HECB 2005-06 Education Cost Study (July 2007)*, the direct cost of instruction per average annual upper division undergraduate arts and letters student FTE at public Washington institutions, ranges from \$4,725 at The Evergreen State College to \$7,278 at UW Seattle. Although the proposed program's cost per FTE lies in the upper portion of the range, it is noteworthy that the proposed program's full enrollment student/faculty ratio (7.7) is significantly lower than arts and letters faculty ratios at other public institutions, which range from 13.9 at WSU Tri Cities to 26.9 at WSU Pullman/Spokane.

³ Direct cost of instruction = total budgeted cost (\$99,030 during first year; \$107,200 at full enrollment) minus cost of teaching assistant and research assistant salaries & benefits (\$15,034 during first year; \$15,954 at full enrollment.)

External Review

Dr. Thomas A. DuBois, Professor and Chair, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Dr Börje Vähämäki, Professor and Director of Finnish Studies Program, University of Toronto; and Dr. Melvin J. Luthy, Professor Emeritus, Linguistics, Brigham Young University, reviewed the program.

All three reviewers looked favorably on the proposed program with comments like, “I wholeheartedly recommend its approval” (Dr. DuBois), “I commend the Department for this initiative” (Dr. Vähämäki), and “The University of Washington is the right place to do it” (Dr. Luthy).

Dr. DuBois observed “The major as outlined seems cogent and workable.” He also observed “Three years of language study is normal for foreign language majors in general, and the additional requirements of literature and area studies courses ensure a diversified and substantive undergraduate study program. The existence of a senior capstone essay—parallel to that required of other majors in the department—is a very laudable component of the degree.” Finally, he noted a clear Finnish major would benefit students by allowing them to unambiguously highlight the focus of their studies, which is important given the ambiguities in the term “Scandinavian.”⁴

Dr. Vähämäki confined his comments mainly to editorial suggestions for the proposal, but did urge that, since the department employed Professor Andrew Nestingen, the leading expert on Finnish Cinema, it should consider adding a course in Finnish cinema. Program planners are considering adding such a course.

Dr. Luthy commented, “It is clear that the program is modeled after the other BA programs in Scandinavian Languages, and students who major in these languages take many of the same courses. As such, the curriculum appears rigorous and appropriate.” He also noted “The University of Washington has every right to be proud of its Scandinavian programs and faculty. Their scholarship and teaching is well known and highly respected internationally.”

Dr. Luthy did express concern, however, about the level of competency/fluency students not required to study abroad would achieve. Program planners responded that although students would not be required to study abroad, such study would be strongly recommended. Furthermore, Dr. Luthy noted, “When questions of ‘workforce demand’ have been considered in some language programs that have limited post-graduation employment opportunities, the requirement of a second major has often been a good solution.” He recommended that the department consider requiring, or at least strongly suggesting, a second major. Program planners responded that all of the programs in the Department recommend a second major, and they anticipate this would be done in the proposed program as well.

⁴ This is important because the term “Scandinavian” sometimes encompasses all Nordic countries and cultures, and sometimes only Danish, Norwegian and Swedish countries and cultures.

Staff Analysis

The proposed program would support the university's mission by training students to understand the language, culture, and history of Finland. Furthermore, it would support the *Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education's* economic goals because language study and the cultural understanding it provides are assets in business.

Student need for the program is evident from the enthusiastic response of students currently enrolled in the existing Finnish option. Students would benefit because the proposed program would highlight the focus of their studies better than the current Finnish option within the Scandinavian Studies major. Employers would benefit by being able to hire graduates equipped for employment in careers that require skills in critical analysis of texts, effective intercultural communication, and the interpretation of various media. Community need for the program is evident from a support letter from the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle's president and from financial support from the local community and Finland's Ministry of Education.

Students would study a curriculum that one reviewer suggests is cogent and workable and parallels curricula in other language programs in the department. Another reviewer notes the curriculum would be taught by faculty whose scholarship and teaching is well known and highly respected internationally. Student assessment would employ multiple measures, including a capstone paper. Program assessment would employ multiple measures as well.

The proposed program would not duplicate existing programs and would be offered at a reasonable cost.

Offering a Finnish major would make Finnish comparable to the department's other current language programs, and it would increase the university's attractiveness to students who wish to study Finnish language and literature. It would probably increase student enrollment and would help the department build on its existing relationships in the state's Finnish-American Community and with Finland's Ministry of Education.

Staff Recommendation

After careful review of the proposal and supporting materials, staff recommends approval of the Bachelor of Arts in Finnish at the University of Washington. The HECB's Education Committee discussed the proposal during its December 1, 2008 meeting and recommended approval by the full board.

RESOLUTION 08-43

WHEREAS, The University of Washington proposes to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Finnish; and

WHEREAS, The program would respond to student, employer and community need and would provide students of Finnish language and literature with a degree that highlights the focus of their studies better than the current Finnish option within the Scandinavian Studies major; and

WHEREAS, The program's students would study a curriculum similar to that of other languages offered in the Scandinavian Studies Department, taught by faculty whose scholarship and teaching is well known and respected internationally; and

WHEREAS, The program has support from external reviewers; and

WHEREAS, The program would not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs; and

WHEREAS, The program would be offered at a reasonable cost;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Bachelor of Arts in Finnish at the University of Washington effective December 17, 2008.

Adopted:

December 17, 2008

Attest:

Bill Grinstein, Chair

Roberta Green, Chair

