Social Science Research Council (SSRC)
Internationalization and Interdisciplinarity: An Evaluation of Title VI Funded Middle East Study Centers

Fieldwork Report

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The following document reviews findings from the fieldwork component of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Evaluation of Title VI funded Middle East Study Centers. The extensive interviews and focus groups from the six sites has yielded a rich and vast array of data, ideas, opinions, reflections, and information about the state of Middle East Studies (MES) today. A multiplicity of studies, papers, and research directions may be drawn from the collected data. For this initial report, I focus on the three principal components of the study as set forth by the SSRC Project: the role of the centers on campus, interdisciplinarity, and internationalization.

The report begins with a detailed description of the data and methodology, followed by an analysis of the center's role, interdisciplinarity, and internationalization, and a discussion of the challenges facing MES in the post 9/11 environment. I conclude the report with a summary of my arguments and suggestions for future research.

History of the Project

This project seeks to evaluate the role that Title VI centers play, and potentially could enhance, in meeting the demands placed on the field of Middle East Studies in the United States by examining the international reach of the Title VI Middle East Studies centers as well as their capacity to utilize interdisciplinary resources. By doing so, the project will serve two important needs of the academic and academic planning communities. First, it will provide an evaluation of the current status of Middle East Studies Centers at a time when these centers are bombarded with new academic and public responsibilities. The research will enable an analysis of the on-campus effectiveness of the centers as well as their international reach and ability to provide

students and scholars with access to resources and facilities in the region of study. Secondly, the project will serve to evaluate the potential role of Title VI centers in countering the trend of the declining contribution of crucial social science disciplines to the field. This analysis will enable us to understand best practices for enhancing the available national pool of Middle East experts.

One of the important promises of area studies, as a form of producing necessary knowledge about the world is the combination of the theoretical strengths of the social sciences with the in-depth cultural and linguistic analysis provided by the humanities. However, many changes over the past decade challenge the continued contribution of the social sciences to area studies: first, disciplinary shifts in economics, political science and sociology have led to favoring large-scale, quantitative analysis over contextual and linguistic knowledge; second, the post-cold war era has promoted frameworks and theories that put the weight of analysis on global forces as opposed to an understanding of local and cultural experience. While there are many who continue to argue for combining multiple approaches and investigating global/local interactions, academic careers and reputations in the fields of economics, political science and sociology tend to be made through the generation of the former type of knowledge rather than the latter.

Nevertheless, current affairs show that when crises occur there is an urgent call for expertise and in-depth knowledge on world areas. At these specific moments in time, area studies communities and organizations come under critical scrutiny which leads to debates on the "success" or "failure" of these communities. This project serves the critical need of objectively analyzing the ability of area studies centers to provide the necessary knowledge needed for various consumers. This project aims to show that

adequate international reach and robust interdisciplinarity are the basis of such necessary knowledge. The adequate training that is demanded of area specialists can only be achieved if there is strong and balanced representation of social sciences and humanities on U.S. campuses and if there is adequate access to opportunities for research and learning in the region of study.

The ultimate goal of this research is to answer the following three general research questions:

1. What are the roles the Middle East Centers play on their campuses in terms of mobilizing knowledge production, training and expertise in the Middle East and North Africa region?
2. To what extent are these centers able to utilize international resources (such as the American Overseas Research Centers) in order to expose students and researchers to the range of information and services necessary to produce well trained area specialists?
3. What balance of disciplinary expertise is available at the campuses where these centers are represented and to what extent do the centers fully exploit these interdisciplinary resources in the training programs and facilities that they offer? We explicitly seek to evaluate the incorporation of the under-represented but key social science disciplines of economics, political science and sociology.

Data and Methodology[1]

Qualitative Case Studies

In October 2005, the second SSRC Steering Committee Meeting was held, during which the research plan for the evaluation of the Title VI Centers was discussed. The initial evaluation plan called for an analysis of data from the EELIAS data, followed by a quantitative survey of all seventeen Centers and brief site visits to a smaller sample of centers. During the initial analysis of the EELIAS data, however, it became increasingly clear that the EELIAS database would not provide the information the research team needed to generate appropriate survey instruments and measurements, as was originally planned. The Research Team (Maureen Abdelsayed, Elizabeth Anderson, Cynthia Miller-Idriss, and Seteney Shami) therefore decided to expand the site visits into week-long, in-depth case studies, and reversed the order of the planned data collection. Instead of using the case studies to provide more depth and detail about the results from the on-line survey, it was decided that the case studies would come first. They would be used to generate appropriate measurements and questions in order to refine the subsequent survey instrument, which would be administered to administrators and students at all of the seventeen Title VI funded Middle East Study Centers.

The Research Team developed an approach to the in-depth case studies, which we labeled "mapping the landscape" of Middle East Studies on each of six campuses (due to the increased length of each case study, the sample was reduced from the originally planned eight campuses to six). In so doing, we aimed to determine the breadth and depth of activities, programs, events, and expertise on the region at each site; to identify challenges facing Middle East Studies on campus; and to note potential opportunities for

[1] Senior Consultant Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss contributed to this section.

collaboration or cooperation between the MES Centers and other activities on each campus. Thus, while the ultimate goal of the visits was to understand each Center's role in the production of knowledge about the Middle East on each campus, data collection extended well beyond individual Centers' administration and programming. Finally, we also collected data about two other area studies centers on campus for comparative purposes, as described in greater detail below.

This approach to the case studies is consistent with the core tenets of qualitative methodology and allowed us to capture complex and nuanced relationships within a university community in a way that would not be accessible through survey data. The weeklong case studies provided ample time to explore fully and understand a campus landscape.

Site Selection

The case studies were structured and standardized to include interviews, focus groups, and participant observation on six campuses, which each house a Title VI funded Middle East Study Center (CMES). To create a representational sample, the sites were selected from the following criteria: degree or non-degree granting; and private or public. The Research Team also worked to ensure that there was regional representation. In addition, the host universities were required to have a Title VI funded Latin American Study Center (CLAS) and a Russian, East European, and/or Eurasian Study Center[2], which would serve as a comparison to the CMES. At the Center Directors' Meeting at Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Convention in both 2004 and 2005, Dr. Seteney Shami, Director of the Middle East and North Program of SSRC, publicly

[2] The exact title and geographic scope varies across the sites. Some centers also include "Slavic" in the title of their center.

announced the study, explained the objectives, and responded to queries. Participation was voluntary and permission from the center directors was sought before any data gathering commenced.

To maintain confidentiality in accordance with procedures set forth by the SSRC Human Subjects Review Board, the sites are labeled as University A, B, C, D, E, and F. Table 1 below outlines the individual sites.[3]

Site/Center	Public/ Private	Degree/Non-Degree Granting through Center	Center Years Since Establishment	Regional Location	Univ. Size (graduates and undergraduates)	University Endowment
A	Private	Degree	> 50 yrs	East Coast	<20,000	> $5 billion
B	Private	Degree	> 40 yrs	Mid-West	<15,000	< $5 billion
C	Public	Non-Degree	< 20 yrs	Mid-West	> 25,000	< $5 billion
D	Public	Non-Degree	> 30 yrs	West Coast	> 25,000	< $5 billion
E	Public	Degree	> 40 yrs	South	>25,000	< $5 billion
F	Private	Non-Degree	> 50 yrs	East Coast	< 25,000	< $5 billion

Table 1: Description of Sites

Instrument Development and Methods of Data Collection

Data collection and analysis had to proceed on a very tight timeline in order for the Research Team to be able to present findings at the next Steering Committee Meeting in June 2006. Instruments were developed and finalized in October/November 2005. Data collection began in December 2005 and continued through March 2006. Methods utilized during the case studies included formal and informal interviews, focus groups, and observations. In order to ensure that all data could be analyzed in time for this report, the Research Team prioritized the interviews by categorizing some as formal

[3] Exact figures for enrollment, years since establishment, and endowment are not provided, in order to preserve the confidentiality of each research site.

interviews, which would be audiotaped, and others as informal interviews, which would not be audiotaped.

Thirty formal interviews were conducted with CMES directors, assistant directors, associate directors and/or center administrators; directors of Latin American Study Centers and Russian and Eastern European and/or Eurasian Study Centers; and the provost or dean who oversees international initiatives. These interviews were tape recorded, and written transcripts or audio files were coded and analyzed in a qualitative software program. They were designed to draw comparisons across six centers.

Forty-six informal interviews were conducted. These interviews were not audiotaped. Instead, I took detailed hand-written notes during the interviews, transferred these into typed fieldnotes, and coded these fieldnotes during data analysis.[4] Informal interviews served the primary purpose of providing depth and detail about the landscape of Middle East Studies on each campus, and included discussions with directors of graduate student advising in the disciplinary departments of political science, sociology, and economics; directors of related programs, such as Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations; center faculty; language coordinators; outreach coordinators; and organizers and directors of programs focusing on the Middle East region outside of the center, such as an Islamic Studies program in a divinity school. The interview instruments may be found at the end of this report in Appendix A.

[4] The following conventions are employed in this report in order to distinguish between quotations from formal and informal interviews. Direct quotations, which come from transcribed audiotapes, are distinguished by double quotation marks (“ ”), including the longer blocked quotations. Direct quotes from my handwritten notes are noted by single quotation marks (‘ ’). Statements that have been paraphrased from my handwritten notes are not in quotation marks. In addition, all quotations longer than two lines are footnoted to indicate whether the quote was taken from field notes or an audiotape.

All interviews conducted were semi-structured, meaning that research instruments were designed with a standard list of questions for each interview. However, the interviews also allowed for follow-up questions and detailed discussion of interviewees' particular projects, research, or work. In some cases, I was not able to ask all the questions because of time constraints. The SSRC Research Team developed instruments for the interviews and focus groups under the direction of consultant Dr. Cynthia Miller-Idriss. I assisted in fine-tuning the instruments before the site visits and tailored them to fit particular institutions, department, and projects.

Recruitment

All interviews were voluntary and were arranged either in advance of the site visit through email or during the site visit through email or telephone calls. Approximately two weeks to ten days before the site visit, Dr. Shami initiated the interview requests by emailing each participant a formal letter of invitation and a consent form. If a participant did not reply within one week, I followed up the request with an email or a telephone call. Examples of the invitation letters and consent forms may be found in Appendix B. University D was the exception to the standard recruitment procedure because the center director felt his colleagues would be more responsive to a request originating from him. In this case, both the center Director D and Dr. Shami sent letters of invitation.

For the faculty focus groups, Dr. Shami sent an invitation letter and consent form through email to all affiliated faculty members of each center. The student focus groups were more complicated to arrange due to varying CMES policies regarding student information and access to students. In some cases, I worked with a student leader (for

example, the president of a Student Middle East Association) to arrange student groups, and in other cases, I worked with a CMES administrator or director who distributed the invitation letters and consent forms. This made arranging the student groups more complicated but I was able to organize four groups of three students or more and one group of two students.

I worked closely with Research Team member Maureen Abdelsayed in finding phone numbers, email addresses, and establishing contact with the centers. The number of interview invitation letters sent to each site ranged between fifteen for Site F and twenty-one for Site B. On average, I conducted thirteen interviews at each center, including the five formal interviews. The recruitment was difficult and most often required follow-up emails and telephone calls. After three to four unsuccessful attempts, I did not further pursue an interview. The directors of graduate advising were the least responsive. Although invitation letters were sent to all of the directors of graduate advising in sociology departments, only one responded but did not agree to participate. Faculty response and participation for the focus groups was difficult to secure and no faculty members volunteered for the focus groups at Centers A, E, and F.

Data Collection and Analysis

In total, seventy-six semi-structured interviews were conducted between December 2005 and April 2006. Please refer to Table 2 below for details.

Total Number	Interviewee	Audiotaped/ not audiotaped
6	CMES director	audiotaped
3	CMES associate director	audiotaped
4	CMES assistant directors*	audiotaped
1	CMES administrator	audiotaped
6	provost/dean	audiotaped
6	Russian and East European and/or Eurasian Study Center Director	audiotaped
4[5]	Latin American Study Center Director	audiotaped
5	director of graduate advising for political science departments	not audiotaped
3	director of graduate advising for economics departments	not audiotaped
5	director of related departments, such as Near Eastern Language and Civilizations or Middle Eastern Studies Department	not audiotaped
8	director or organizers of related programs or projects, such as the director of study abroad program in Egypt or the director of a Security Studies Center	not audiotaped
10	faculty member affiliated with the center**	not audiotaped
4	language coordinator (Arabic and Hebrew)	not audiotaped
4	outreach coordinator	not audiotaped
4	center staff member, such as an events coordinator or a grants administrator	not audiotaped
3	Faculty Focus Groups, 2-6 participants	audiotaped
4	Student Focus Groups, 3-5 participants	audiotaped
1	Student Focus Group, 2 participants	not audiotaped
* The assistant director is an administrative position.		
** These faculty were not directors of related departments or language coordinators and were in addition to the focus groups. These faculty may also be linked to the center through thematic programs, such as gender or religious studies.		

Table 2: Interview and Focus Group Details

[5] Due to scheduling conflicts, the Directors of Latin American Study Centers at Sites D and E were not available for interviews.

The interviews varied in length of time. The director, assistant or associate director interviews were between one and a half to two hours, while the provost or dean may have been only able to spare a half an hour. The informal interviews ranged from twenty minutes to one hour. All interviews took place in the participants' office or a location chosen by them, such as a conference room or a local coffee shop.

At Centers B, C, and D, I conducted faculty focus groups, which ranged from two to six participants. I conducted student focus groups at Centers B, D, E, and F, which ranged from three to five participants. The focus groups were audiotaped. In addition, I conducted a non-audiotaped focus group of two students at Center C. At the time of writing this report, a quarter of the focus group data has been transcribed. The available data has been incorporated into this report.

I spent approximately one week at each university. Maureen Abdelsayed at SSRC arranged for all my travel and lodging. To fulfill the participant observation component of the site visits, I took every opportunity to attend academic and social events, classes, outreach projects, and other activities associated with the centers. Examples of these activities include the following: a graduate student workshop in Islamic Art and Architecture, a faculty and student Middle Eastern music ensemble, a Turkish film night, an outreach event at a community library, and a book reading by a visiting lecturer. In addition, I attended events that were not sponsored by the centers but were related to the Middle East, such as a political lecture organized by a student association. I spent as much time in the centers as possible whether it was to consult with the administrative assistant in arranging interviews, to eat lunch, to check my email, or

just to "hang out." Some centers, such as Centers B and E, had lounges where I spent time informally talking to students and faculty.

Data analysis did not proceed as smoothly as intended, largely due to the tight timeline and the lack of funds for professional transcription. An SSRC intern who was hired to transcribe the formal interviews did not proceed as quickly as intended. As a result, only eight of the tape-recorded interviews were fully transcribed. These written transcriptions, along with the audiofiles of the remaining twenty-two taped interviews, were coded in Annotape, a qualitative software program. For the analysis of the informal interviews (which were not audiotaped), the detailed fieldnotes written during each interview were typed and analyzed through Annotape as well.

In addition to the collected qualitative data, I utilized the centers' Title VI Proposals from the past two funding cycles (2003-2006, 2006-2010) in writing this report. The information in these proposals, such as funding details, helped me to understand the functions and roles of the centers and to provide more examples of center events and activities.

The Role of Middle East Study Centers on Campus

Title VI Guidelines and Centers' Place within the University

By order of Title VI, Section 602 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as Amended, federally funded area study centers, also referred to as National Resource Centers (NRC), provide national resources for the following:

> "(i) teaching of any modern foreign language;
> (ii) instruction in fields needed to provide full understanding of areas, regions, or countries in which such language is commonly used;

> (iii) research and training in international studies, and the international and foreign language aspects of professional and other fields of study; and
> (iv) instruction and research on issues in world affairs that concern one or more countries."[6]

The Middle East Study Centers in this study operate under these guidelines and work to provide their respective campuses and communities with these resources. All of the centers' mission statements incorporate the Title VI goals and the directors felt that the mission statement reflect their center's activities. Some excerpts from the mission statements are:

> From Center C:
>
> The mission of the Center is to foster and generate knowledge of the Middle East, its past and current economic, social and political developments, and to promote teaching, learning, research and public awareness of the diverse array of Middle Eastern cultures and peoples. The Center's continual goal of making greater impact and its striving to meet the priorities of Title VI…
>
> From Center D:
>
> The principal mission…is to enhance awareness of the Middle East and of its diverse peoples and cultures. The center promotes both specialized knowledge and public understanding of this crucial area of the world, which includes the Arab states, Turkey, Iran, and Israel.
>
> From Center F:
>
> ….to set the national pace in developing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the present, with a primary focus on the 19th and 20th centuries.

In fulfilling their mission and Title VI obligations, the centers sponsor a wide range of activities from language courses to outreach projects to lecture series. The centers meet

[6] "Title VI, Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended" http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/nrcflas-laws601-602.pdf: Accessed 24 May 2006.

their Title VI goals yet are not limited by these requirements. Throughout this section, the many ways in which the centers fulfill Title VI will be discussed. The following section, "Mapping the Landscape," will explore how the centers extend beyond Title VI.

All of the centers are physical places on campus. Although the quality and quantity of space varies, they each have their own office. For Centers B and D, space is more plentiful than at Centers A and C. Center B has a large lounge that brings faculty and students together for lively conversation whereas Center E has a library that offers students and faculty a quiet place for study and research. Center D has its own conference room but Center C shares a conference room with several other study centers. All the centers have an office for the director and assistant director, as well as a reception area. Centers A and F have office space for affiliated faculty in their centers. Many of affiliated faculty for Centers B, D, and E are all in the same floor or in the same building. Center C's faculty are scattered across the campus.

The physical location of the center often reflects the place of the center in the larger university structure. Centers B and D are affiliated with a larger organizational structure of international and/or area studies and are housed in a building with other similar centers. Center C is affiliated with the office of international affairs and Center F is affiliated with a school of international affairs but both are located in buildings with other area study centers. There is variation within "International Studies" across the sites. At Sites C and D, International Studies includes an undergraduate major with a concentration in Middle East Studies. For Center D, this arrangement is sometimes difficult because the Center's status, as a center and not a department, does not allow it to hire adequate faculty to support the necessary undergraduate courses. At Center C, the

growing undergraduate enrollment in International Studies and subsequent increased class size helps bolster the center's importance on campus. International Studies at Site B is a more closely-knit organizational structure than Site D. Site B has a central office that assists all area studies centers with Title VI proposals and facilitates collaborations. Area study centers at Site D are part of a looser structure under an umbrella of International Studies. Although these centers are grouped under the heading of international studies, area studies, or international affairs, the structures that surround and support the centers are different at each site. It is difficult to generalize how centers are structured. Some centers report to the dean of international studies, others may report to a dean in the central administration of the university. If a center is degree granting, it may report to a more generalized unit, such as a graduate school of arts and sciences or a school for public affairs. A center's faculty is comprised of faculty members from the departments, such as comparative literature, history, or music. With the exception of endowed chairs, which will be discussed in the below section, faculty appointments are made in the departments and centers do not have the funding or authority to hire full-time faculty.

The organizing structures may differ with regard to a center's degree and non-degree status. However, apart from the structural aspects, the degree-granting indicator of the center was largely irrelevant. All of the centers faced similar challenges and played similar roles on campus regardless of their ability to grant degrees. In addition, the public or private indicator of a university had little bearing on a center's functioning. These findings were often counterintuitive. For example, Sites D and E, both public

universities, had more funding for faculty hiring than Sites A and B, which are private and have larger endowments.

Center Funding and FLAS

On average, the centers receive $305,000[7] a year in Title VI funds with additional funding for FLAS awards (Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship). The centers also receive limited funding from outside donors. Saudi Arabian Oil Company Aramco provides supplemental outreach funding at almost all of the centers. Usually this funding is used for incidentals that are not authorized under Title VI, such as transportation or food for receptions. In the past, Center B collaborated with the Mellon Foundation to raise funds for endowed language instructor positions. Recently, Center A received an unsolicited donation from an alumnus to be used at the center's discretion. Center D is an exception because it has received large endowments from donors in the Middle East region and this funding provides for more student fellowships, post-docs, and visiting scholars. These funds were also used to renovate the center. However, most centers shy away from soliciting and accepting funds from the Middle East because of the political controversies that often surround the donations. Without revealing specific details, critics of Center D accuse the center of promoting the donor's political agenda. Similarly, Center F accepted funds from the region to endow a faculty chair and was accused of promoting a pro-Arab agenda. Thus, the centers rely primarily upon Title VI and funding from their university. The consensus throughout the interviews is that the sustainability of the centers' current activities depends upon Title VI funding. Many of the directors remarked that without Title VI, activities like outreach and the funding of less commonly

[7] As calculated from figures provided in Title VI proposals for funding cycle 2006-2010.

taught languages would not be possible. The following activities are authorized under Title VI funding, which may be used to pay for all or part of the operating of a center:

> "(A) teaching and research materials;
> (B) curriculum planning and development;
> (C) establishing and maintaining linkages with overseas institutions of higher education and other organizations that may contribute to the teaching and research of the center or program;
> (D) bringing visiting scholars and faculty to the center to teach or to conduct research;
> (E) professional development of the center's faculty and staff;
> (F) projects conducted in cooperation with other centers addressing themes of world regional, cross-regional, international, or global importance;
> (G) summer institutes in the United States or abroad designed to provide language and area training in the center's field or topic; and
> (H) support for faculty, staff, and student travel in foreign areas, regions, or countries, and for the development and support of educational programs abroad for students."[8]

Centers have complete autonomy from the their university administration with regard to their Title VI funding.

FLAS grant administration is an important part of the centers' role. FLAS is a competitive fellowship for all graduate students with US citizenship who are enrolled in a modern foreign language program, and who demonstrate potential for academic achievement. FLAS grants provide funding for academic year or summer study at a students' home institution or an approved overseas institution. Each center has a selection committee and selection criteria, which has been set by the committee and approved by the Department of Education through the title VI proposal. The centers work actively to encourage students from all disciplines to apply for the grants. The

[8] "Title VI, Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended," http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/nrcflas-laws601-602.pdf: Accessed 24 May 2006.

number of FLAS grants awarded ranges from as few as 13 at enter C to as many as 23 at Center B for the 2005-2006 academic year.

Center Staffing

All centers have a director, a full-time assistant director (also called an administrator or center manager), and a part-time or full-time administrative assistant. All the directors have a PhDs and are academic specialists in their field. Five of the directors have academic appointments in one or more academic departments and the remaining director has a direct appointment to the center and to the office of international education. The directors divide their time between the center and their departments. Three of the centers have an associate director, who has a PhD and works with the center director in academic affairs. One of these associate directors is directly appointed to the center and works full-time. The others divide their time between the center and an academic department. The centers have a range of various part and full-time staff. For example, Center F has a part-time events coordinator, Center E has a part-time library assistant, Center A has a full-time grants administrator, and Centers A, B, and C have part-time outreach coordinators. Depending upon the job position and individual center, Title VI funding makes up anywhere from 25% to 50% of staff salaries with the exception of directors and associate directors whose salaries come from their departments. The Universities make up the rest of the staff salaries. Centers also provide partial funding (usually 25%) for language instructors but the number of funded instructors varies greatly across the sites. Centers also employ work-study students and may have student interns working on special projects.

Additional Title VI Functions

A "Comprehensive NRC", as set forth by the Department of Education, also receives funding to provide specialized library collections, to provide "outreach and consultative services on a national, regional and local basis", to maintain overseas linkages with universities and research institutions, and to employ faculty and scholars with training and expertise that relates to the subject area of the NRC.[9] These library collections vary. Some centers have a library in their offices where students and faculty can check out books and videos. Other centers contribute heavily to university holdings. The extent of outreach varies across the centers. Centers A, B, C, and E have a part-time "outreach coordinator" who facilitates outreach to other campus units, local public schools and community organizations. Examples of this type of outreach include facilitating a multicultural workshop for college freshman, developing curriculum kits for elementary school teachers, organizing teacher-training workshops, and presenting talks at a local public library. Most often, outside groups will contact the NRC and request a speaker from the center. For example, a high school history teacher will contact the outreach coordinator and request a speaker to visit his or her class and present a talk on contemporary events in the Middle East. Graduate students regularly volunteer for these outreach activities and centers rely upon their participation to fulfill lecture requests from schools and community groups. Centers D and F do not have outreach coordinators but have well publicized lectures and events that are open to the public. Center D has a

[9] As per the Department of Education, http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsnrc/index.html: Accessed 24 May 2006.

central coordinator that works with all the university NRCs to facilitate outreach to local schools.

Mapping the Landscape

Overlapping Roles: Academic, Utilitarian, and Social

From the Title VI guidelines, we know what role the centers are required to play on campus. As part of mapping the landscape of Middle East Studies on campuses, we aimed to understand the many roles that centers may play on campus in addition to the Title VI requirements. To capture these roles, questions regarding how one sees or understands the center's role on campus were part of almost every interview.[10] The roles of the centers are overlapping and elastic, yet they may be clustered into three themes: an academic role, a utilitarian role, and a social role.

Seventy-nine percent of the participants (sixty out of seventy-six) were asked about the role of the center on campus and the range of responses reveals that the role is one of fluidity. In discussing the role, the following terms and concepts were used: "coordinating body" for the university (10)[11]; "bringing" or "pulling together" Middle East interests and resources (9); "advocate" for MES at the university (9); sponsoring events (8); meeting place (5); outreach to university and community (5); "clearinghouse" for all information and resources related to the region (5); teaching (4); "umbrella" for everything related to the Middle East on campus (4); source of funding for faculty and students (4); facilitating teaching and research on the Middle East (4); "anchor point" or

[10] The directors of the Latin American and Russian, East European, or Eurasian Study Centers and the directors of graduate advising for economics, political science, and sociology were not asked specifically about the role of CMES.

[11] This notes the number of participants that employ the term or concept. Please note that participants often used multiple concepts in their descriptions of the center.

"focal point" for MES (2); training Middle East specialists for government and other non-academic careers (2); "supplement to the university" (2); and "hub" (1). Many of these concepts overlap with subtle differences. For example, "coordinating body" most often refers to logistics, such as compiling course listings or sponsoring inter-departmental and center events, whereas "pulling together" Middle East interests often refers to bringing individuals together. Serving as an "advocate" for MES means lobbying the university administration for faculty hires or courses, whereas "facilitating teaching and research" refers to providing seed money for new courses or providing research assistance. "Meeting place" means a place for academic discussion, a place for social exchange, or a place for students to "hang out."

Many respondents used multiple concepts in describing their center. The director of Center B describes the role of his center,

> "Within the university, our job is to be the umbrella of Middle East Studies across the campus, to provide a space for interdisciplinary conversation between faculty and students from different departments, and to coordinate campus-wide activities and events to animate and promote the study of the Middle East. We also have outreach that connects to our mission [sic] beyond campus."[12]

A long time faculty member of Center A describes the purpose of her center as "primarily teaching," and secondly "lobbying" the university to ensure that there is an "ample place for Middle East Studies in the curriculum." She adds that the center is responsible for assisting students in studying and researching abroad, and the center is also responsible for "ancillary activities" such as events, roundtables, and conferences.

The range of responses is also reflected across interviews at each individual site. The director of Center E discusses the role and mission of his center,

[12] From audiotape transcription.

> "We aim to educate people about the Middle East region in a comprehensive fashion covering all periods, all countries, all languages to be as inclusive and to focus on as many issues as we can manage. And the reason people should be learning about the Middle East is for personal reasons, academic reasons, professional reasons - some go into business, some work for the government, some go into academics. There [are] any number of reasons but our goal is to educate people broadly in these things."[13]

The provost of Center E refers to the center as an "anchor point" for Middle East issues because the center provides guidance in moderating campus dialogue related to the topics in the region. A faculty member in a social science field explains the center's role: to coordinate 'a bunch of faculty, classes, activities, and FLAS [funding] related to the Middle East.' A staff member added that the center's role is 'to teach Americans about the Middle East in a broad way through outreach' and 'train the next generation of scholars and professionals.' The chair of the Department of Middle East and Near East Studies at Center E distinguishes the role of the center from the role of her department: 'The Center supports and promotes the study of the Middle East on campus….it pulls together faculty from a variety of disciplines. [Whereas the department] is responsible for the teaching of languages and cultures.'[14]

The range of responses at Center E is consistent with the other centers, with the exception of Center F where all participants more consistently identify the center with utilitarian purposes, such as a coordinating body, an advocate for Middle East Studies, and a sponsor of events. They do not associate the center with teaching, training, or social functions. The varying perceptions and understandings of the centers remind us that the centers are not monolithic. The centers have multiple, layered, and elastic roles

[13] From audiotape transcription.
[14] From field notes.

on their respective campuses and all centers are different. No two centers have the exact same combination of overlapping roles. Center B's role has a greater social component than that of Center D, which places a greater emphasis on providing funding to faculty and staff. The multifaceted nature of the centers makes it difficult to classify or define them.

When asked directly about the role of the center, the majority of participants described the center as serving a utilitarian and/or social function on campus. The responses of "outreach" to the campus and community and "sponsoring events" imply an educative role, but only a small minority of interviewees explicitly discussed education. Four respondents used the term "teaching" in their descriptions of the center and two used the term "training." Some directors of related departments, such as the Departments of Middle East and Near East Studies,[15] define the centers as specifically non-teaching units. When asked how the role of the center differs from the role of his department, the assistant director at Site C comments, 'There is no outreach here - we are an academic department.' The chair of a similar department at Site D states, '[Unlike the center, our department] is the central research and teaching unit for our area studies from antiquity to modernity.' Although most of the center directors and faculty do not describe their center's role as explicitly educative, when discussing what is needed to improve their center, they most often refer to improving teaching and learning. The directors of Centers A and B expressed a desire to strengthen their curriculum with more specialists on contemporary Middle East issues. Centers A and F would like more faculty hires in political science. Center C felt that more student funding for study abroad would

[15] At some universities, the related department may be the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, or Middle East Studies. I will use Department of Middle East and Near East Studies to refer to these related departments.

improve language skills. The associate director of Center A thought that the quality of her students' thinking and writing should be improved. Center E would like to expand course sections by employing more teaching assistants.

Likewise, the centers cannot be defined in opposition to related departments. Some department chairs define the centers as non-academic. Others, such as the chairs of the Department of Middle East and Near East Studies at Sites B and F, use historical periods to distinguish the role of their departments from that of the center. That is, CMES encompasses modern and contemporary events whereas their department encompasses ancient history and civilizations. The Director of Center D describes an intellectual split between the two units, "There is a difference between the Near East and Middle East intellectually…In this university, the Near East is the study of the ancient Near East, it is the study of archeology, it is the study of religions, and the study of literature. The majority of the faculty there are linguists, archaeologists, or people who do religious studies."[16] In the cases of Centers B, D, and F, the CMES cannot be classified as a non-academic unit, in contrast to an academic unit, such as the Department of Middle East and Near East Studies.

Centers' Fluidity: A Threat to Academic Legitimacy

The center's elasticity is advantageous as it allows the center to do and be many things. The Associate Director of Center B explains:

> "The Center focuses all the related studies that have to do with the Middle East - be it anthropology, sociology, history, linguistics, philology. First of all, it is an academic center. At the university, it functions on three levels: it teaches, provides classes on language, but also since many

[16] From audiotape transcription.

> of the faculty are involved with other departments, it also provides knowledge. As far as the university is concerned, it is not only the knowledge but the atmosphere where people who are interested [in the Middle East] but are not necessarily committed to taking a full year of courses can stop once and in a while to hear a lecture or a talk. It also, I think, encourages the community to be a part of these things… People in the community stop by to hear a talk or see a movie. And especially for the MA students and PhD students, especially those in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, it is a place to relax - the fact of the space of the center because there is a lounge here, the fact that the atmosphere is more welcoming. It is a good idea. It works well. People stop here for breaks."[17]

Center B is involved in producing knowledge as well as providing a social space for university and community members to interact. Center B caters to a range of populations from students with a casual interest in the Middle East to PhD students in the field. In the student focus group, a PhD student in the Department of Near East Studies confirms this:

> "[I am] in Near Eastern Studies but I use the center a lot simply because this is where people involved in the same work that I do congregate.… I remember I actually never ever came to the center last year, my first year as a PhD student in Middle East Studies, but I was going by randomly, walking in one day to pick up an Arabic assignment, and it was great actually… I was welcomed and I got some great conversation, good food, it was very warm and welcoming and I got a tremendous number of ideas for my master's thesis. So, I've started to participate in the Middle East Center."[18]

From my time at Site B, I know that center is an exceptional place on campus because of its inclusive environment. Interviewees, like this PhD student, attribute this welcoming atmosphere to its status as a center rather than a department.

While the centers' elasticity allows the centers to do and be many things, this fluidity may weaken the centers' ability to bolster the teaching and learning about the

[17] From audiotape transcription.
[18] From audiotape transcription.

Middle East in substantial and concrete ways. At some centers, the understood role as a coordinating body de-legitimizes the educative role that the center plays. The director of a thematic studies center and a tenured professor in the political science department at Site C thinks CMES is an important component of university life because it provides FLAS funding and plays a critical pedagogical role as a clearinghouse for teaching and learning about the Middle East. Yet, he states that there are boundaries: 'The CMES is not for research and has a low profile as a research engine [because] department chairs are the powerhouses and they disregard the CMES'. He comments on area studies in general, saying he does not think an area study center is useful to his political science research , nor does it benefit him to have input from other disciplinary scholars. As an expert on Iran, he asks: 'What do I have in common with people at the centers?….What do I have in interest with a Persian literature expert?'[19] The director of graduate studies in the economics department at Site F expresses a similar viewpoint. If a student in his department were interested in the Middle East, he or she would not consult the CMES faculty but rather fellow economists.

Others do not question outright the CMES's academic legitimacy, nonetheless they express uncertainty about the centers' role. A social scientist at Site A remarks that CMES provides a supervising group for Middle East activities, however, 'I question if it works as the intellectual center for students and faculty to hang out.' Another social scientist at Site E thinks it is difficult to distinguish the difference between the role of the CMES and of the Middle East Studies Department. At Site B, a high-ranking administrator at the public affairs school thinks CMES is too 'traditional' because it specializes in the humanities and cannot produce leaders in the field who are

[19] From fieldnotes.

knowledgeable about current events. As a result, he is beginning a new MPA program in Islamic Studies and public affairs. A political scientist at Site B, who specializes in Islamic studies, thinks the center's role is 'fuzzy' and 'not clear.' She has the 'impression that it is an empty shell' to unite students and bring Middle East scholars together, but ultimately it is 'hard to define.' These comments exemplify the potential ambiguity that the center's role may create and this ambiguity diminishes the center's profile as a place for teaching and learning.

A weakened center profile may effect faculty hiring and thereby hinder the enhancement of Middle East Studies on campus. None of the centers have faculty lines. All the center directors report that they often serve as consultants on hiring committees and some centers are able to offer partial funding for hiring from Title VI funds. Center C offered to fund a quarter of the starting salary for the hire of an anthropologist:

> "A Middle Eastern anthropologist was not a priority. We went and talked to the dean and then the chair of the department of anthropology and I was instrumental and told them, 'Look, if you will hire an anthropologist that will have Middle Eastern expertise, we can come up with the twenty-five percent of the salary as an assistant professor for the three years of cycle - that is the next cycle that we're at, in the next Title VI proposal.' So we got this agreement from them, they approved that…they found someone, [name omitted], so we funded her twenty-five percent of her first cycle and then we reduced it, now we're paying an eleven or twelve percent of that person's salary."[20]

Center E actively lobbies departments to encourage the hiring of Middle East experts and maintains friendly relationships with departments by contributing monetarily to department events, visiting scholars, and other activities. The centers are not academic departments and ultimately do not have the means to hire faculty to strengthen the

[20] From audiotape transcription.

curriculum. The Center Directors A and B report a pressing need for more faculty who focus on contemporary Middle East issues. Directors A and B can lobby university administrations and departments for hires although this is not a foolproof means of securing Middle East specialists. If academic departments do not value area studies, and if they perceive the CMES as an administrative rather than academic unit, the effectiveness of lobbying for hires is compromised.

Center E is the exception. Over the past three to five years, the center has worked with many departments in arranging eight to ten new faculty hires who have a Middle East specialization. CMES is highly regarded and supported across the university. The provost is firmly committed to international studies and strengthening all area study departments and centers. His commitment may be a model for others. For example, the chair of the political science department at Site E lauds CMES and encourages his students to utilize it and other area study centers. His support and confidence in the center was in direct contrast to the aforementioned political scientist at Site C. In addition, CMES is closely connected to the Department of Middle East Studies; the two units share an office and administrative support staff. This tight link may lend CMES more academic credibility than the other centers. Again, Site E was the exception in the case studies.

The deans or provosts who oversee international initiatives had a range of responses as to how they see or understand the role of the centers but generally understood the centers to have utilitarian or social functions. The provost at Site E describes the center as an "anchor point" and the provost at Site C says of CMES, "Like all the other area study centers, it is the focal point" for the region on campus. The dean

at Site A understands the center to be "a meeting place for people with a strong discipline to focus their work on a particular area….a lively hub of discussion and thought, and research… And in the best circumstances, they have significant impact on the ability of the faculty to do research, particularly on the ability of the junior faculty, and on supporting both graduate students and undergraduate work as well."[21] The dean at Site F sees the centers as a supplement to departments: "…by the standards of these departments which do [sic] instruction - in languages or in history and so forth and so on - the value added of the [area study centers] is to bring people together from across disciplines on the one hand and to focus their attention on contemporary policy matters…They are supplementing, not standing in for, other programming."[22]

As part of my site visits, I interviewed the directors of the Latin American Study Centers and the directors of Russian, Eastern European, and/or Eurasian Study Centers. Like the role of CMES, the role of these centers greatly varies and overlaps. The Director of Latin American Studies at Site B describes his center:

> "We're an umbrella for research initiatives - in the sense that we help people with grant applications - we help faculty with grant applications. We have an MA program that we administer ourselves.... We administer a [sic] undergraduate BA major in Latin American Studies. And we provide services to graduate students. We run a summer field research grant competition, we rank people for FLAS fellowships in Latin American languages....and we administer a Cuba travel license…We have semi-consular functions for University because…a lot of Latin American policy people come through [Site C] and a lot are in [sic] office when they come and we do a lot of quasi-consultant work."[23]

The Director of Latin American Studies at Center F describes his center:

[21] From audiotape transcription.
[22] From audiotape transcription.
[23] From audiotape transcription.

> "To provide a link between the university and Latin America, which means having some kind of interfacing between the academics here and elsewhere. The second obligation is to provide assistance and resources to students...A third component is to provide ongoing access to the campus community as a whole to research related to the area as presented by academics. To provide a vehicle for non-academics or politicians and businessmen, etc., to have a chance to speak and have access to [Site F] audience as a whole. A fourth obligation is to serve as a locus to visitors who come from the region...."[24]

The centers promote and advocate for area studies on campus as well providing funding for students and faculty, administering FLAS grants, facilitating course development, hosting visiting scholars, and sponsoring lectures, conferences, and other events. Like CMES, the geographic scope of the Russian, Eastern European, and/or Eurasian Centers is also fluid. Director B defines his region in the "broadest, historically defined terms… We're talking about the old Iron Curtain countries so-called of Europe and the Soviet Union but we also include Greece and Turkey for historically important reasons and the Caucasus and Central Asia, of course."[25] One notable difference in center roles was at the Latin American Study Center at Site A. Part of the center's mission is "to strengthen ties between [University A] and research institutions in Latin America." The Center accomplishes this through sponsoring visiting scholars from the region and establishing study abroad programs with regional institutions. Fortunately, Center A has a large endowment and the financial means to easily carry out these activities. None of the CMES staff included links to the region as part of their role on campus. Their neglect in mentioning regional institutions is a curiosity and may be something to probe further in later studies.

[24] From audiotape transcription.
[25] From audiotape transcription.

Interdisciplinarity

In examining the interdisciplinarity of the Middle East Study Centers, we sought to evaluate the performance of the centers in terms of one of the central tenets of area studies programs, namely achieving balance in disciplinary representation on campuses and enabling the interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East. We focused specifically on the social science disciplines of economics, political science, and sociology in Middle East Studies. In addition, we sought to understand the role of the centers in trying to achieve a breadth of disciplinary expertise on the campus. To evaluate the interdisciplinarity, I collected data on affiliated faculty, course offerings, and events and activities sponsored by the centers. Extensive questions about interdisciplinarity and the centers' relationship with disciplinary departments were included in the interview instruments (please see Appendix A). Interviews with the directors of graduate advising for economics, political science, and sociology were specifically aimed at understanding the attitudes towards and support of Middle East Studies in the these departments.

Like the centers' role, the centers' disciplinary offerings, resources, and faculty representation are varied. With the exception of Centers D and E, the center directors expressed concern with regard to the disciplinary balance on campuses. Across the sites, economics and sociology are underrepresented fields in Middle East Studies (see Table 3). Political science is also a weaker component.

As Table 3 below indicates, faculty representation is heaviest in regional languages and literature and secondly in history. The data collected from the interviews

reveals that the disciplinary imbalance is caused by two primary reasons. First and as discussed in the previous section, university structures prevent the centers from hiring faculty. As centers and not academic departments, they do not have faculty lines. Centers cannot simply hire faculty to fill in gaps. The disciplinary composition of a campus is a precarious because it depends upon departmental priorities and hiring. A center's course offerings, activities, and even geographic focus may shift as faculty come and go. A campus is only as balanced as its academic departments. Second, disciplinary trends, which discourage a regional concentration, further skew the disciplinary composition. In light of the uneven faculty representation, centers actively work to compensate for the underrepresented fields. They do this through hiring adjunct professors, and by sponsoring lectures, conferences, reading groups, and other activities. To this effect, the centers create interdisciplinarity within their centers and sponsored activities.

Academic Field	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E	Site F	Total
Anthropology	2	1	2	6	2	5	18
Art/Architecture	5	1	4	7	2		19
Economics			1	5 (Agriculture & Resource Economics)			6
Geography		1		3	3		7
History	8	9	11	8	6	3	45
Jewish Studies	2	2	2				6
Middle East Languages & Literature (including Near Eastern Depts. and Middle East and Islamic Studies)	20	18	18	37	17	31	141
Political Science	2	1	3		4	3	13
Public Affairs/Intl Relations/Law	1	2	1	1	1	3	9
Sociology					2	1	3
Other*	18	7	11	14	10	10	70
Total	58	42	53	81	47	56	337

* "Other" includes fields that are represented at less than 3 sites: archaeology, Assyriology, business, classics, communications, divinity, education, Egyptology, engineering, Germanic languages, linguistics, medicine, music, natural resources, psychology, religion, rhetoric, Romance languages, social medicine, social welfare, theater, and urban planning.

Table 3: Faculty Representation for 2005-2006 Academic Year

Faculty Hiring

Throughout the interviews, the lack of faculty lines is the most pressing example of how university structures negatively impact a center. CMES leaders are well aware of their faculty imbalances, however few have the means of improving the situation. All of the center directors report that they serve in a limited advisory or consulting capacity to hiring committees. As the Assistant Director of Center C explains: "A negative effect [of university structures] would be our lack of control over faculty hiring; we don't have any say. It doesn't mean that we don't have influence…We are invited quite frequently

to hiring committees but there is no guarantee." The Director of Center B gives a more pointed example:

> "For example, it would be wonderful to have someone here at the moment and I think it is an oddity at this precise moment that we don't have anyone working in sociology or anthropology of the Middle East…but I'm not in the position to the go the Dean of Social Sciences and say, 'I demand an anthropologist of the Middle East.' I do not have that kind [of authority] but I do have ways of dropping the hint, sending memos, representing the thoughts of the executive committee here about what we've got, what we need, and sending that up to different levels. So, it is a way in which we are able to intervene in discussions but not specific ways and that is problematic…For example, if Title VI looks at our application and makes a call on funding us based on the balance and composition faculty we [have], I personally have no control over this situation whatsoever, except to put informal pressure to bear and drop hints. And I think this is very problematic."[26]

The Center B Director raises an important point that is easily overlooked by outside observers: many centers have no control over the disciplinary composition of their affiliated faculty.

Director B lobbies departments for hires by sending memos and dropping hints. In some cases, centers offer to fund new faculty. The aforementioned example of how Center C partially funded an anthropology professor is an example of a successful endeavor. There are also unsuccessful attempts. Director A reports that they had raised money for a chair in economics but the economics department rejected their proposal. Center F accepted funds from Arab sources to endow a chair and the funding was to remain anonymous.

[26] From audiotape transcription.

Again, Center E is the exception. As mentioned above, the center has worked with several departments in arranging eight to ten new faculty hires in the past five years. In part, the hiring spree is attributed to the central administration's goal of decreasing the student teacher ratio in the classroom and there has been increased hiring across the university. More importantly, Provost E has made a commitment to international studies and strengthening all area studies departments and centers. In fact, Provost E is so committed to expanding international opportunities for his students that he traveled to a country in the region with the CMES director and chair of the Department of Middle East Studies to develop a new study abroad program there. Center E has strong links to departments that are often unfriendly toward area studies, such as political science. Director E works hard at these relationships by pro-actively meeting with departments, awarding FLAS fellowships to students from all fields, and co-sponsoring events. Recently, they were able to secure a new hire in the music department. Director E describes his work with other departments:

> "[Other departments] appreciate FLASs for their students and also events and programming help a lot. When you go to the music department and say, 'We have money, we can pay for concerts and lectures and programs,' they get very excited and that does help a lot. We are able to influence them… And there are the certain usual suspects and then there are those [departments] that we work very hard at and it is hard to get success but we keep doing it. Economics is one – none of us gives up on [it] even though we have had no success at all…. Economics is not interested in area studies or even social studies anymore…Political Science has had this problem and we have managed to overcome it…It is a lot of hard work, we have worked with them closely and it is very difficult. And some in the department still speak in derogatory terms about professors who do area studies in their department. But others, we are able to win them over - it is a tough sell."[27]

[27] From audiotape transcription.

There is an element of chance and precariousness in the current interdisciplinary composition of Center E. If the provost were less enthusiastic about international linkages or if the center director had less time in which to lobby departments for co-sponsoring and hiring, the center's disciplinary balance may be different. Interviews with other provosts and deans revealed support for international studies but not to the extent of Provost E's personal enthusiasm for the enhancement of international and area studies on campus.

Strong support from the university is of paramount importance to a center's viability. Although the respective dean and provost from Sites B and C did not appear to waver in their commitment to area studies, faculty and staff from Centers B and C openly discussed a lack a consistent commitment from the central university administration. Director B remarks, "Centers are an afterthought at this university. They are not part of the central administrative machinery at this university....We are a stick on." An education professor at Center C, who has developed a highly successful online global education program and works closely with CMES notes, with frustration,

> The central administration does not know about my program and would not value it. There is no way that area study centers could compete with hard sciences…. If centers bring money and good press, 'great' but this is not a Nobel Prize. Social sciences are not valued as much as the hard sciences. Title VI is needed here because the institution is not going to pick it up if it disappeared. But it should have a top place in the university agenda…. The average American knows nothing! [University C] is a heartland school and it is harder and harder to promote International Studies. Title VI recognizes this need and this is why it is so important.[28]

[28] From fieldnotes.

Other faculty at Center C expressed similar views during interviews and the focus group. The central administration's lack of interest has not discouraged them thus far. A center is comprised of individuals and the individuals at Centers B and C are personally committed to Middle East Studies regardless of university support. I question the long-term sustainability of a center without strong university backing. What happens when the aforementioned individuals retire? Who will sustain the center then?

The centers' dependency upon departments causes shifts in the centers' focus and capabilities. The director of Center D explains that the current interdisciplinary composition, center mission, and geographic scope are connected to their current faculty:

> "Our center is concerned with the cultures and peoples… [Our mission] has to do with who we have [sic] faculty and what their interest are. By in large, we have faculty who are experts on Turkey but that is the only thing that they are experts on. We have some who are experts on Turkic cultures in general and their expertise may spread from Turkey to Uzbekistan… We have a few who do the Arab world and a lot who do North Africa…so, our mission statement attempts to envelop all the faculty so they can co-exist and feel comfortable…[We have] a balance between the humanities and social sciences and the professional school."[29]

Director D's comments exemplify the precariousness of the centers and how directors must work with what is available to them in formulating their mission and scope.

Disciplinary Trends

[29] From audiotape transcription.

In interviews with the directors of graduate advising for economics and political science, I discovered that few if any students in these departments research Middle East topics. From my three interviews with economic advisors, there were no students working on the Middle East. Political science fared a little better with ten students at Site B but less at Site A (six), Site D (three), and Site F (one or less). Throughout the interviews, participants contributed the lack of regional expertise and lack of student interest to "trends" in the disciplines. These "trends" are often vague, but consistently refer to the low regard or suspicion that disciplinary departments have for area studies in general. The directors of graduate advising were most helpful in elucidating this point and some expressed outright disdain for area studies. The economics advisor at Site F plainly stated, "Nobody cares about area studies." The advisor in political science at Site F went so far as to question why I even bothered to interview him: "I don't think this is helpful because I don't care about the Middle East." A political scientist at Center C does not think that an area study produces rigorous research: "There is a great division because most research in the disciplines is analytical but area studies are collections of descriptive information." Despite invitations from Dr. Shami and follow-up emails and telephone calls, none of the sociology departments at any of the sites would agree to participate in the study. Their lack of cooperation may reflect the status of area studies in the field.

Center directors and faculty openly discussed the shift away from regional specialization. The head of Arabic Language Studies at Center A remarked, 'Somewhere in the academy, disciplines began to change… [One] had to be in a discipline first and a regional or area expert second. The disciplines took us on … Middle East was no longer

the unifying factor because the discipline became the core.'[30] He believes that the 'crisis of Middle East Studies' does not have to do with the field but rather with the changing nature of how we study regions. Director F concurs:

> "Our problem is the social sciences where there is a disciplinary move away from the specific knowledge. And [with] the exception of language, literature departments, history and anthropology, which see themselves as having a responsibility for the specific, there is a tendency in the social sciences…there is a move way from the specific and towards the general which some mistakenly call theory. What some lightly call science. It has nothing to do with science and not what I would recognize as theory. Whatever it is - whatever it is that political scientists play with, it has increasingly less to do with the specific and I am purposely not using the term areas studies because this has nothing to do with area studies … They think they are addressing general rules and that is all well and good but it means that what students actually are interested in, in many cases, and what we need to have taught doesn't get taught because of [lack of] appointments…so we are forced to compensate by making adjunct appointments."[31]

The Dean at Site D agrees with Center Director F with regard to the disciplinary move away from specific or regional knowledge. He worries that the social sciences are becoming too "ethnocentric" by focusing their research and work primarily in the United States. However, he regards areas studies as an "old paradigm" and the move toward thematic organization of knowledge, such as religious studies, provides a better understanding of the specific. He finds that the best work on a region is being done outside of area studies, whether it is in a social science field or a thematic study field.

The Dean at Site F discussed the disciplinary trends and how lack of incentives creates a dearth of social scientists with a regional expertise:

[30] From fieldnotes.
[31] From audiotape transcription.

> "I think Universities could be faulted for not trying to push interdisciplinary work a little bit more if that is the kind of work that supports doing areas studies. On the other hand, universities are not ranked on interdisciplinary grounds - they have best political science department or the 5th best economics department or the 20th best English department of whatever it is. So, as long as those kinds of rankings make a difference to faculty and applicants and sorts of things like that, then universities have to play by the rules of the disciplines. Now the disciplines in the social sciences have, as I say, have drifted into a very scientific definition of their purposes and their standards. Which means two things: One is that there is no reward to doing work that is out in the field when basically our definition of science tends to be numbers. And there is a disincentive to working with what those scientists would call dirty data sets - that is to say that if you go off into the field and realize that the numbers are bad, what are you going to do? So, why should you bother doing that kind of work at all. So, I think that there are those kinds of disincentives. And then I think for a long time, in [sic] especially the Middle East Studies, during almost all the 1990s and early part of this century there were very few jobs. So yet again, there was no point in kind of pushing ahead and writing a dissertation on something that people would say, 'Why did you bother with that?' So, it created now a generation of PhDs who were not trained to do this and saw no incentive to do this and [sic] actually are going to be dissertation supervisors for a generation of students who may in fact want to go out in the field…it does create a sort of self fulfilling narrowing of the definition of the discipline."[32]

Dean F raises the point of university rankings, which had not been mentioned by any other interviewees. This introduces an idea that disciplinary trends may be part of a much larger move towards rankings-driven university agendas.

As discussed above, Center E is the exception to these trends. When asked why his political science department has not dismissed area studies in favor of a stronger emphasis on political theory, such as rational choice, like his peers at other institutions, the chair replied: 'We have had a Middle East focus here for at least twenty years…

[32] From audiotape transcription.

[University E] has had a long interest in area studies. We have a premier Center for Latin American Studies. We have over 200 Latin American faculty and ten of our faculty members are affiliated with the Center for Latin American Studies…. Rational choice is a futile endeavor'[33]

These "trends" in the disciplines merit further study because I found that many participants discussed them in a nebulous way. Despite pressing for further explanation from the interviewees, it was not clear to me if "trends" was a catch-all phrase for the increasing divide between area studies and social sciences or if "trends" were discrete and describable phenomena. For example, the resilience of some disciplinary trends may be market-driven and may not have to do with a declining interest in the specific. The Dean at Site F discussed university rankings and lack of incentives. A faculty advisor and tenured professor in the business school at Site E explained that students are not interested in enrolling in a joint MA/MBA program in Middle East Studies and Business because they would face limited career opportunities: 'This is an elite business school and students expect high salaries when they graduate… If a student is interested in Middle East Studies, it becomes a hobby for them.' When asked about the challenges facing political science students who want to specialize in a regional focus, the director of graduate advising at Site D commented: 'The ability to get a job…[because] new PhDs must have the ability to ask broad theoretical questions …it is difficult to get a job as an Asianist.'[34] An economist at Site C was discouraged from expressing his interest in economies of the Middle East until after he got tenure. Since tenure, he has taught the course *Economic Development of the Middle East*, which is very popular with students

[33] From fieldnotes.
[34] From field notes.

from across the university. He does not teach the course in the economics department, but rather in the Department of Agriculture, Environmental, and Developmental Economics. Director D expressed frustration that there is no career benefit for involvement with the center; young faculty works closely with the center but their activities do not count toward tenure review. These comments hint at larger issues, which may influence student and faculty interests. If there is little incentive for PhD students or faculty to conduct research on the Middle East, a disciplinary balance may become less relevant.

Filling the Gaps

In addition to lobbying for MES hires, the centers take different approaches to addressing the gaps in their offerings: employing adjunct faulty, sponsoring non-credit reading groups and seminars, and sponsoring events. Center F hires adjuncts to teach courses in political science, economics, and contemporary Middle East issues. Center F is part of the School for International and Public Affairs, which relies heavily on adjunct faculty, and the courses are often geared toward the MA students specializing in international affairs. Some of these courses include: *US Foreign Policy – The Persian Gulf; Modern Afghanistan: History Culture, and Politics*; and *Economic Organization and Development of the Middle East*. These adjunct-taught courses may not have satisfied student demand. In a focus group, students explained that courses on contemporary Middle East issues are immensely popular, difficult to get into and, in many cases, students must apply to enroll in the course. The students find the competition to get into these courses frustrating and discouraging.

Center B takes a less formal route to addressing gaps in the curriculum by sponsoring non-credit reading groups and faculty-student seminars. During my site visit, I attended the reading group "Social Theory in the Middle East." The director of the center sponsors this weekly group, which is made up of third year PhD students from the Near East Studies and Music departments. The director and students developed a reading list together to make up for the "uneven terrain" of their course-work, as one student describes. Center B also sponsors weekly Friday lectures, which represent a range of disciplines and interests. Some of the invited lecturers from the past academic year include: an anthropologist, a political scientist with a specialization in gender studies, and an Islamic studies specialist. Faculty and staff of Center B also present Friday night lectures. A recent lecture topic was on women in the Arab world. The Center also sponsors student-faculty workshops. These informal educational forums may not address the needs of all students. In the student focus group, two MA students explained that lack of courses and faculty in the modern Middle East shaped their thesis topics because they could not find advisors. Once they chose topics that fit the faculty's specialization, they did not have a problem securing advisors. A PhD student in the political science department did not agree and found adequate course offerings on contemporary issues. The MA students also expressed discomfort at attending the student-faculty workshops. One student remarked: "I think actually it's very intimidating [to attend the workshops] and I've tried to go to a couple last year and I'm just not knowledgeable enough to actually go in and say anything." A PhD student responded, "No! What we need is for people to come!"[35] These differences between the MA and PhD students may represent a larger gulf between student experiences and may be fodder for a more extensive study.

[35] From audiotape transcription.

Despite the uneven faculty representation, finding members for dissertation committees is not a problem. Across the sites, students are resourceful in putting together committees that fit their needs. Within the disciplinary departments, the graduate advisors reported that students were capable and successful at creating committees by finding faculty members in other departments and, if necessary, other institutions. The Center Director B expressed concern that he and his staff were "stretched thin" when it came to advising PhD dissertations. This is important to note and raises the subject of staffing, which is difficult to gauge. Depending upon who was answering the question, sometimes the staffing was adequate but most times it was not. There is not adequate space to address this issue in the present report but I recommend that is be further examined in later reports.

The co-sponsoring of conferences, lectures, seminars, and other events is plentiful and constant at all centers. The centers work with other area study centers, thematic centers, such as gender studies, security studies, or religious studies, departments, outside institutions, and student groups in co-sponsoring a cornucopia of activities. Table 4 illustrates only a few examples of events that I have chosen to exemplify the breadth of activities. The diversity of co-sponsoring is wide and extends from a medical school to a religious studies department. The below examples are co-sponsored but the centers constantly sponsor events on their own, such as Center B's Friday night lecture series. Center F is renowned for its weekly brownbag lunch series, which has included talks such as *Reform, Youth, and Technology: Observations on the Recent Elections in Iran; War, Occupation, and Democracy: American Strategy in the Middle East;* and *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel.* The centers also

host conferences and workshops, such as Center A's recent workshop, *The Socio-economic Trajectory of Iraq, 1950 – Today,* or Center E's recent conference, *Contemporary Islamic Movements Conference: Ideologies, Aesthetics, Politics*.

The centers do not co-sponsor events with all organizations. For the most part, the centers are not involved with political student groups. While I was at Site E, the Palestinian Solidarity Organization sponsored a lecture by a controversial scholar. Director E explained that the CMES would not co-sponsor the event because of its politically sensitive nature and the lack of balanced viewpoints. Centers A, B, and C reported that they have little overlap with some professional schools, such as public affairs and law. The reasons for this are not clear. Director B suggested that the center's location might prevent students or faculty from casually stopping by or attending CMES events because the professional schools are located on the other side of campus.

The sponsoring of events and activities, whether it is a conference on the economy of Iraq or a concert of Middle Eastern music, is at the heart of all the centers. The centers create interdisciplinarity within the center through inviting speakers from underrepresented fields. The events act as a supplement to the university's Middle East course offerings and faculty. However, they do not and cannot correct disciplinary imbalances. An invited guest lecturer cannot be a dissertation advisor, a conference on economies of the Middle East is not a substitute for a semester-long economics class, and a roundtable discussion is not comparable to a graduate seminar.

Site	Activity	Co-sponsors
A	Symposium: *Historiography and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the "Lands of Rum"*	Program for Islamic Art and Architecture*
A	Roundtable: *Muslims in Europe: Between Islamophobia and Radicalism*	Islam in the West Program
B	Lecture: Khamrokhon Zaripov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Republic of Tajikistan to the United States of America - *Tajikistan: Political and Economic Development*	American Institute of Iranian Studies, Committee on Central Eurasian Studies, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Center for Russian/East Europe and Eurasian Studies
B	Social Event: MESSA Presents A Night of Egyptian Culture	Middle Eastern Studies Student Association and the International House Global Voices Program.
C	Medical Grand Rounds Lecture: *The Enduring Legacy of a Physician, Philosopher and Scientist: Ibn Sina (Avicenna)* by Dr. Gül Russell	The Graduate Medical Education Department, and the Departments of Internal Medicine, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation and Surgery
C	Lecture: *Women's Rights, Warlords, and US Occupation of Afghanistan by Malalai Joya*	Center for Security Studies and Women in Development
C	Lecture: *Islam and the New Indonesian Democracy* by M. Din Syamsuddin	Center for Security Studies and Department of Political Science
D	*Lecture: Freedom and Egyptian Women's Writings: Islamist and Secularist Perspectives* by Dr. Ellen McLarney	International and Area Studies Student Association
D	Conference: *Writing the Algerian Wars: History, Religion, Culture*	Department of French
D	Middle Eastern Film and Lecture Series	American Research Center in Egypt
E	Lecture: *Vaisnava Dhikr: The Case of the Converted Muslim Haridas* by Dr. Tony K. Stewart, Professor of South Asian Religions	Center for the Religious Studies and the South Asia Institute
E	Lecture: *Arab Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy by Marc Lynch, Associate Professor of Political Science, Williams College*	Department of Political Science
E	Middle Eastern Music: *Yair Dalal Ensemble*	Department of Music
F	Conference: *Does Islam Need a Reformulation to be Compatible with the West?*	Alliance Program (Partnership with University F, The École Polytechnique, Sciences Po, and The Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne)
F	Presentation: *The Arab Human Development Report: How the Arab World is Rethinking its Own Development* by Ms. Nada Al-Nashif Chief of the Regional Programme Division at the UNDP/Regional Bureau for Arab States	School for Public and International Affairs, Economic and Political Development Concentration
*Identifying names of centers and programs have been removed.		

Table 4: Examples of Co-sponsored Events

Interdisciplinarity at the comparative centers varied but almost all of the directors mentioned gaps in their disciplinary representation on campus. The Director of Latin American Studies at Site F is an economist and therefore has stronger linkages with the economics department than the Middle East Studies Center. However, they are weak in anthropology and sociology. The Latin American Studies Director at Site C reports a similar weakness in sociology. The Directors of Russian and East European Studies at Sites C and D report that they have strong representation in political science but need more hires in history. Like the Middle East Study Centers, these centers do not have faculty lines and lobby departments to hire new faculty with a regional expertise. Like the Middle East Study centers, they work to fill the gaps through adjunct hiring, sponsoring events, and bringing scholars to campus. There is also great variation with regard to outside funding. The Russian and East European Study Center at Site F has a large endowment and, as a result, they are able to bring more visiting scholars, sponsor post-docs, and offer more student funding than their colleagues at other the sites. The Latin American Study Center at Site A also has vast resources and is able to offer more faculty funding and sponsor more events than the other sites.

Internationalization

Internationalization[36] is the third component to be examined in this report. In addressing the centers' internationalization, it is first necessary to define

[36] While analyzing the interviews, I began to notice that I had less and less information about international initiatives. I had an abundance of data about the centers' role and interdisciplinarity but internationalization was quickly becoming my weakest link. I reviewed the interview instruments and realized that internationalization was the next to last section in a lengthy list of questions. In some cases, such as Associate Directors A and E or Director F, we never even got to these questions. With regret, I think the quantity and perhaps quality of data on internationalization may be less due to the nature of the sequence of interview questions and time constraints.

internationalization in the context of this study. From an in-depth qualitative study of the concept at five major US universities, Sheila Biddle defines the internationalization of American universities as "producing global citizens, remaining competitive with other US universities, and achieving a stronger presence internationally."[37] Using this broader idea of internationalization as a backdrop, I focus on the "robustness" of linkages between the centers and institutions in the region. As area studies centers, international linkages are an organic part of any CMES. The centers are formally affiliated with language and research institutes and study abroad programs in the region, and other linkages are informally maintained through personal contacts. It is difficult to identify patterns or trends in centers' internationalization because of the variation in attitudes, initiatives, funding, and priorities. All of the centers have regional linkages but the extent of these linkages largely depends upon the institutional context of each center.

All of the centers encourage their students to go abroad for study or research. According to Center A's Title VI proposal, approximately half of all enrolled MA students spent the summer of 2005 in the region, studying language or doing research in places like Fez, Cairo, Istanbul, and Damascus. Center D reported in their Title VI proposal that half of all summer FLAS recipients elect to study abroad. A language coordinator at Center F reports that ninety percent of his graduate students go abroad at some point in their studies. Safety concerns are an underlying issue with all travel to the region. Yet, most interviewees felt that those students who want to travel to the region would travel regardless of safety concerns.

All of the centers have formal links with the American Research Centers and Institutes, such as the American Research Center in Egypt or the American Research

[37] Sheila Biddle, "Internationalization: Rhetoric of Reality?" 2002: 11.

Institute in Turkey, and American Universities in Cairo and Beirut. In interviews, these linkages seemed to be a given - a natural or ordinary feature of the center. Students and faculty regularly utilize these linkages for language study and research opportunities. Centers may also have long-standing partnerships with regional universities that facilitate exchange in both directions. Center B has a partnership with a Turkish university that provides yearlong funding for Turkish students to study at University B. Some centers are developing new programs in the region. Center E is developing a new program in Morocco with the assistance of the provost. Center B is working with its university to develop study abroad programs in Istanbul and Granada, Spain (outside of the Middle East region but a site for Islamic art and architecture and the study of Islam in the West). Some of these new programs may be attributed to larger university trends. Directors A, B, C, and E report that there has been an increased university-wide emphasis on study abroad in recent years.

Language Study and Study Abroad

Language study is an underlying tenet of all NRCs. All of the centers have strong relationships with language institutes in the region, such as the Center for Arabic Study Aboard (CASA) at the American University in Cairo, and many other language programs across the region, such as programs at Ben Gurion University in Israel or Bogazici University in Turkey. All of the centers either offer intensive summer language training on campus or are part of a regional consortium that offers intensive summer language training at an affiliate university. The Centers award summer FLAS fellowships for overseas study and center directors also report that graduate students are frequent

recipients of the federally funded Borin Fellowship, which funds overseas language study and field research.

University sponsored study abroad programs for graduate students and undergraduates vary across the sites. There is a range in attitudes and priorities regarding study abroad. An illustrative example in contrast would be Centers A and C. University A is just warming up to the idea of sending students abroad. The Dean of Site A notes, "We have really as an institution become even more concerned and even more focused on things international… Up until a couple of years ago, five years ago, [University A], for a variety of reasons and a variety of very well thought out reasons, didn't particularly encourage undergraduates to spend time abroad." Dean A explains that the faculty of University A has long questioned the academic rigor of study abroad programs. This attitude has begun to dissipate as faculty agree that the experience of study abroad may be as beneficial as the academic component, and as a result, more students are spending time in the region. According to the Dean A, University A "has very deliberately not set up campuses [abroad] because one of the very strong feelings at the faculty is that if you isolate the students and they happened to be studying in Paris, it's still very nice, but it's not the kind of rigorous experience that they're hoping that they'll get."[38] University A has an office of International Education for undergraduates but graduate students must work with their advisor in finding a program. In contrast, University C has a campus-wide campaign to get students overseas as exemplified by a well-organized International Education office that markets, sponsors, and facilitates study abroad programs. University C makes it easy for students to study abroad by streamlining the registration,

[38] From audiotape transcription.

credit transfer, and enrollment.[39] In conjunction with the Department of Middle East and Near East Studies and CMES executive committee members, Site C offers a semester-long course on Egyptian society and culture, which culminates in a study tour during spring break. The study abroad coordinator describes the program, which is the first trip outside of the United States for many participants,

> This past year, we had forty students for spring break: from thirty-two majors with three from engineering. Forty to fifty percent are students of color. The program is short and cheap but students come back interested in the Middle East and take Arabic courses…it whets appetite for the Middle East… It does change people's lives! They go and they realize that the region is different from what is portrayed on CNN. The students say, 'This is not what CNN says'…. 'Egyptians are so nice.' Once we saw demonstrations of Egyptians burning US and Israeli flags. This was an eye-opener. Students got it…they said, 'They like Americans but not our foreign policy.'[40]

I thought it important to include the above example because the students are in Egypt for a brief period and they are not conducting serious research or bolstering international linkages, but their program is an example of what Sheila Biddle would classify as internationalization. Site C is attempting to create "global citizens" through first-hand experience, albeit brief, in the Middle East. This may represent another role of CMES: creating global citizens.

[39] I find this to be a tension at University C because on one hand, the center administration appears to marginalize the area studies centers by providing limited funding and office space and, as expressed in the previous sections, undervalue their work. On the other hand, the administration encourages study abroad. The campus programs and study aboard should complement each other. Area studies centers help students to be culturally prepared for their study abroad before hand, and helps sustain their interests in these cultures upon their return.

[40] From field notes.

University Partnerships in the Region

With regard to the many new satellite or partner universities that have been recently established in the region, the centers are not generally engaged with these efforts. Center A is not affiliated with its university's medical center in Dubai. The business college at Site C is establishing a new program in Abu Dhabi but Center C has had little involvement in its development. Director C explains,

> "We're involved in some ways. Let's take, when they take their MBA students to the Middle East, so they invite us to give them some sort of information in a very informal way to their faculty, and sense some sort of sensitivities - how to negotiate, how to talk to the people in the Middle East, and do's and don'ts of the Middle East whether it's a student or a faculty member. So we communicate with them, and they communicate with us. But we're not that directly involved as a Middle East Studies Center. Probably when it will become finalized in some way, that's in the working stages right now, the planning stages, so we might get involved toward the middle of the project somewhere."[41]

This comment is revealing because it recalls the previous discussion about Center C; it is not highly regarded by other campus units and departments. The Center may give advice on travel and etiquette tips but does not play a substantive role in the program development.

Lack of incentive may be another reason why the centers are not more involved with newly established universities in the region. An economics professor at Site C shares his experiences:

> From 2003-2005, I was on leave for an administrative position in United Arab Emirates at Zayed University, which is a female college in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. I developed their graduate program. My title was "Director of Graduate Studies." The university is based on the US model, staffed by US faculty, and it was a great

[41] From audiotape transcription.

> opportunity. The university is fully funded by the government and has an established link with US partners, such as the business schools at University of Kentucky, Oklahoma State, and Clemson. Fifty percent of the MBA program is delivered by the US partners. The MBA program is revenue generating for the US schools. I developed a health care administration program with Arizona, Kentucky, and Houston Clear Lake….I am very proud of this. It is the only program in the region and ninety-eight percent of the students were nationals and this is a graduate program so students are not funded. I raised one million just for scholarships (from the government and other agencies in the region)…. Liz Cheney's program *(MEPI)* selected three girls from my university to come attend a seminar/program where they toured local governments, learned about government in the US and it changed their lives. I am very proud of this but I do not report on these things to the University because it does not matter for promotions or raises. And changes here are cosmetic.[42]

Lack of incentive or university recognition could hinder an individual's, and subsequently CMES's, involvement in larger international initiatives and partnerships.

Funding

All of the center faculty and staff would like more funding for students to go abroad. Centers A, D, and E have competitive fellowships that provide funding for students to travel to the region for fieldwork. In particular, Center D has a generously funded program for both graduates and undergraduates. Students in the focus groups at Centers and C and F reported that fieldwork funding was limited but they were able to cobble resources and contacts to travel to the region. With the exception of Center B and E's nascent programs, developing new partnerships or programs did not seem to be a priority for most centers. When asked about how he would assist students who may want

[42] From fieldnotes.

internships in the region, Director A replied that he would open his rolodex. During their focus group, many faculty members of Center B also replied that they had personal networks, which they used to facilitate their students' travel to the region. One historian from Site D remarked that many of the faculty members are from the region, they will always travel to the region, and will always maintain their own personal contacts. Thus, in addition to the formal linkages, there is a plethora of informal networks between the centers and the region.

In comparison to the Latin American and Russian, East European, and/or Eurasian Study Centers, the wavering robustness of international linkages at CMES parallels the other regional studies. The centers with large endowments had more opportunities for their students and faculty to travel to the region for study and research. The inequality of funding is especially pronounced with regard to visiting scholars. For example, Latin American Center A has a substantial endowment, and as a result funds yearlong visiting scholars who contribute to the center's programming. CMES A has considerably less funding, and therefore hosts self-funded scholars.

All centers report that they regularly host visiting scholars from the region although most all the scholars are self-funded. Center D has funding to sponsor yearly post-docs and scholars. For the most part, scholars do not teach but usually present a lecture. Office space is a pressing issue for Centers C and F and this prohibits the amount of scholars that they can accommodate. All of the centers receive visiting delegations, such as diplomatic missions, Department of State visitors, and US Department of Agriculture exchange program participants, from the region, which can be burdensome at times because it stretches the centers' resources of staff time.

Challenges Ahead

The challenges facing Middle East Study Centers are as multifaceted as the centers themselves. The following is a sample of responses (not in order of importance): maintaining the intellectual rigor of MES; public misconception and saturation of the region; producing thoughtful scholars; producing competent language speakers in the short period of graduate school; academic freedom; helping students get government jobs; the increasing division between area studies and the social sciences; and providing adequate courses in MES. Issues of self-censorship and academic freedom were a constant fog in my conversations about challenges. Threats from political organizations and watchdog groups weigh heavily on the minds of CMES faculty and the need to remain politically neutral and avoid politically sensitive topics in the classroom has become a source of frustration and discouragement to many. In light of the post 9/11 criticism of MES,[43] I had assumed that academic freedom would be the most pressing concern. To my surprise, I found that challenges relating to teaching and learning are just as prevalent. Some of these challenges refer to the logistics of teaching and research – providing enough courses, strengthening the integrity of MES research, and overcoming the social science divide. Faculty members also worry about their MA students, who want to pursue careers with the federal government or international organizations. They are concerned not only with creating thoughtful and well-prepared scholars, but also with helping these students get jobs. The outreach coordinators are concerned with the 'public

[43] As I will discuss in the following section on the directions for future research, how the events of 9/11 have changed or not changed the centers and MES in general are not discussed directly in this report. The field research yielded a rich amount of data on the topic. The impact or lack of impact on the center from 9/11 is complex and merits a separate report.

saturation' of the Middle East or have 'Middle East fatigue.' Outreach Coordinator B has noticed a drop in attendance at the teacher workshops. Coordinator E reports that there was as flurry of outreach activity 'to put out fires' after 9/11 but this activity has subsided.

These challenges to teaching and learning reveal that CMES faculty have not become paralyzed by threats to academic freedom. Their critics may have made a career out of attacking the centers, but CMES staff and faculty remain steadfast in their role as educators.

Amongst the backdrop of academic freedom, Associate Director B named a challenge that is echoed by others:

> "It is something that I've said before, that we should be treated as any other field - American Studies, Slavic Studies - in that we are not just providing services for the government or whoever wants to know about Islam. We are also a discipline like Latin American Studies or American Studies or Jewish Studies. We should be able to enjoy the variety and the ability to handle whatever topic we find interesting."[44]

Her comments capture a deep, underlying predicament for all centers. Current world events and the centers' own elasticity have placed the centers in a position where they are expected to do and be many things; MES is no longer just a "discipline like Latin American Studies, American Studies, or Jewish Studies." The federal government and universities have put immense pressure on the centers to do everything – teach, research, give public lectures, train local school teachers, educate students for both professional and academic tracks, sponsor events, host visiting delegations, and remain politically

[44] From audiotape transcription.

neutral. The ability to sustain the momentum and resources that are required to do all these things and do them well is the greatest challenge facing CMES today.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

This initial report, drawn from data collected at six field sites, has focused on the three components of SSRC's Evaluation of Title VI funded Middle East Study Centers: the role of the centers on campus, interdisciplinarity, and internationalization.
The interviews and focus groups from the fieldwork reveal that a centers' role is one of great diversity and fluidity within each university community. A center can serve as a meeting place, a host to foreign visitors, a source of travel funding to students and faculty, a facilitator in the teaching and learning about the Middle East on campus, a place for conferences, an advocate for MES, and a outreach tool to the general public. The centers' elasticity is beneficial. Yet, it may weaken the centers' ability to enhance the teaching and learning about the Middle East because the administrative roles of a center may usurp its academic legitimacy.

The campuses have an imbalanced faculty composition, with more faculty members and course offerings in the humanities than in the social sciences. Centers do not have the means to hire faculty and this aspect of a center's structure creates a weighty obstacle in achieving a disciplinary balance. In addition, trends within the social sciences have further contributed to the disciplinary imbalances. The centers compensate for the disciplinary weaknesses through hiring adjunct faculty and sponsoring lectures, conferences, reading groups, and other activities. Although this creates an informal level

of interdisciplinarity in the centers, it is not a substitute for full-time faculty and regularly offered courses.

International linkages are an organic part of any CMES. The centers are formally affiliated with academic institutions and study abroad programs in the region, and many other linkages are informally sustained through personal contacts. All of the centers have regional linkages but the robustness and viability of these linkages is dependent upon attitudes, initiatives, funding, and priorities at each CMES and its university. Across all the sites, more funding for students to study and research abroad is more important than strengthening existing or creating new international initiatives.

This report has just scratched the surface of issues surrounding Middle East Studies Centers today. There are many other worthwhile research directions to follow and, throughout the report, I hinted at some possible avenues. I will elaborate on these and suggest a few more. First, students' experiences must be investigated further. As exemplified in Student Focus Group B, there is a gap between how MA and PhD students utilize the center. MA students from Centers B, E, and F expressed hesitation and uncertainty with regard to their competency in the field. Many students entered their MA program with aspirations of a career in the government or international development but felt uncertain as to how they would get a job after graduating. It would be worthwhile to examine what students expect from the centers and how these expectations are or are not met.

A center's location and physical space plays an important role in the center's functioning. Center B functions as a social and intellectual meeting place because it has a lounge. When asked what her center needs, Assistant Director C immediately said,

"space". She thought if the center had more space, they would be able to offer more services. For now, she shares an office with the outreach coordinator and an intern. For the past several years, Center A has been housed in temporary offices that are dark, cramped, and located outside of the main quad. Although they are moving to a new building this spring, faculty and staff suggested that students do not fully utilize it because of its office location. Center D has a new, beautiful, and spacious office with a conference room that is used frequently for events. It does not have a lounge and therefore does not act as social hub like Center B. For the larger and expanded study, I recommend thinking more about a center's space and its possible influence on a center's role. It would be interesting to examine how a space hinders or enhances a center's activities and how a space contributes to or detracts from a center's reputation on campus.

Much of what happens at the centers is due to informal and personal connections. When asking about who initiates the co-sponsoring of activities, several center directors and directors of related programs, would reply that they just picked up the phone, and rang their friend over in this center or that department. It takes leadership to sustain center activity. As discussed, Center E's success in faculty hiring is due to the pro-active role of the director. Center leadership is important. Directors have to embrace an academic and administrative role that is different from a department chair because center directors are expected to oversee a range of activities, many of which are not directly related to academics. Directors are involved in everything from community outreach to arranging for visas for visiting scholars to lobbying congress for the re-authorization of

Title VI funding. Center leadership cannot be underestimated and should be taken into account in further studies.

How the events of 9/11 have changed or not changed the centers and MES in general are not discussed directly in this report. I found that much has changed with regard to increased sensitivity and awareness of Middle East issues on campus. However, little has changed with regard to the fundamental mission and purposes of CMES, and in some cases, 9/11 reaffirmed a center's mission and importance. To my surprise, I also learned that language class enrollments at Centers E and F were increasing before 2001, which debunks the common held belief that interest in Arabic language is a direct result of 9/11. Other factors may be encouraging student interest in the Middle East. The politicization of MES after 9/11 is widely discussed in the media, academic journals, and internet blogs. Although threats to academic freedom were a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews, politics or the politicization of the MES did not dominate our conversations. In many cases, I would spend hours talking to directors and faculty about everything from heritage students to the history of CMES to new language pedagogy and not even touch upon politics. One outreach coordinator told me that 9/11 did not really change anything except now he has to continually answer the question, 'why do they hate us?' He finds it unfair that he and his colleagues are expected to speak for an entire geographic region. This point brings me to my last suggested research direction. From my extensive interviews, it became abundantly clear that center faculty and staff feel immense pressure to be and to do everything. As I suggested earlier, this is the greatest challenge facing CMES. A firmer understanding of

what is expected of the centers, what the centers are reasonably capable of doing, and to whom the centers are accountable would be a first step in meeting this challenge.

Appendix A – Interview Instruments

Interview Questions (Formal): CMES Director/Administrator

Introduction: All responses should be related to the last five years unless there is a compelling example otherwise.

I. Center Structure, Mission, and Role

1a. Centers will be asked to provide a copy of their mission statement in advance of the interview. For those centers that have a mission statement: When was the mission statement formulated? Is it reflective of how you see/understand the role of the Center on campus? If not, how has the role of the Center changed since the creation of the mission statement? *If the Center does not have a mission statement: how do you describe the mission of your Center? How do you understand the role of the Center on campus?*

1a-2: What is the scope of your Center and is there a specific geographic focus (e.g., specific Middle East cultures, countries, sub-regions)? When and why was this focus chosen? Has the focus changed in any way over the past five years? If so, in what way(s)? why?

1b. Please describe the structure and organization of your Center. How does it relate to the central administration of the university and its schools, disciplinary departments and other international studies centers?

1b.1:In your view, does your Center's structure/organization have any significant effects on its functioning in various areas (e.g., institutional support, research agenda, faculty hiring and tenure decisions, representation of various disciplines, student enrollments)? If so, please describe any positive or negative effects as well as any plans for change. How does it have an impact on your mission?

1c. Are there adequate courses that focus on the Middle East to respond to student demand? Are there enough faculty in different disciplines who can advise student dissertations on the Middle East? To what extent do the various academic disciplines (especially economics, political science and sociology) offer courses that focus on the Middle East? Are these kinds of courses cross-listed or co-taught (with your Center)?

1d: What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? What has changed for your Center since 9/11?

II. Center Autonomy and Interdisciplinarity

2a. Please describe your Center's relationship with other academic departments on campus? (e.g., do you have any involvement in faculty hiring decisions? In the

selection of students and the funding of students? In co-sponsoring guest speakers, visiting scholars, etc.? Do you have any influence over departments? Are any classes co-taught with faculty from other departments or are classes cross-listed with other departments? Dissertation committees?)

2a-1: To what extent does this relationship vary by department? Which departments have stronger relationships with the MES center, and why? Does student use of the Center tend to be heavier from certain disciplines? If so, why do you think this is the case? *(Do you see these relationships with academic departments as enhancing or detracting from the teaching and production of knowledge on the Middle East on this campus? What impact does that have on promoting MES on your campus?)*

2a-2: Are there any special challenges or difficulties that arise from these relationships with departments (e.g., with regard to institutional support, faculty appointments and tenure decisions, curriculum and course development, research agenda, student enrollments and advising, etc.)?

2b. For degree granting programs: What kind of curricular control does the Center have over its own programs and over other degree program curricula? For example, does the Center have a role in selecting the courses that count for degree requirements?

2c. What is the Center's role vis-à-vis the university administration? How does the administration engage with the Center?

2d. How much autonomy does the Center have in terms of its finances, curriculum, or other decision-making, such as student enrollment and funding? What do you see as the major constraints to this autonomy? What enables it?

2e. Does the Center receive funding aside from Title VI? What kinds of funding support the Center? Are there funds or resources that come directly from donors in the Middle East? How would you characterize the Center's relationship with donors?

III. The Center's Role vis-à-vis Other Units and Centers

3a. Do you have a relationship with other area studies centers on campus? What about with other centers focused on sub-regional or national areas in the Middle East and thematic centers, such as religious study centers, conflict/peace study centers, or cross-boundary centers, such as migration or environmental study centers? Do area studies centers here get involved with these centers? Does your center?

3b. Does the Center engage with other university efforts to establish partnerships in the Middle East? (e.g, satellite campuses, partnerships such as Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Qatar)

3c. Have any new areas emerged on campus that focus on the Middle East or related areas? *Note for interviewer: Specifically in the last 5 years. Some examples of recent initiatives include University of Chicago public policy now starting program on Islamic Studies/Politics in the Middle East; Soliya NGO* . How did these come about? What has the Center's role been in facilitating the development of these programs?

3e. Are there any student-run forums or organizations that the Center sponsors? If so, what types of activities? Who is involved in these activities and do they involve students from other departments?

3d. Does the Center have any relationships with neighboring liberal arts colleges? If so, what is the nature of these relationships (sponsor events together, co-teach classes, etc.)?

IV. The Center's Role in Interfacing with International Initiatives

4a. What opportunities are available for faculty and students to travel to the Middle East for teaching, study, internships, practical training and/or research? How does the Center facilitate these opportunities? Does the Center work with other university departments or study abroad programs to create more opportunities for students and faculty?

4b. *Ask only if not answered in above section.* In the last five years, what role, if any, has the Center played in establishing or supporting collaborations with institutions in the Middle East (e.g., with regard to teaching, research, student and faculty exchanges, sharing of materials, conferences and other significant activities)?

4b.1: Did the University recognize the significance of these collaborations? In what way? Please describe any difficulties that you may have had with these collaborations. Have the difficulties made you more or less reluctant to engage in future collaborations?

4c. Are there any other opportunities in or outside the region?

4d. How often does the center host visiting faculty and sponsor visiting lectures? How have these initiatives been received by both students and faculty of the Center and the larger university? What type of effort has been made to recruit visiting scholars to the campus? How have these efforts been successful? How can these efforts be improved?

4e. Are there any other kinds of international visitors – foreign delegations of teachers, ambassadors, MEPI, etc?

V. Future Directions and Other Issues

5a. How typical is your Center compared to other MES centers that you know? what is unique about your Center?

5b. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting the field of Middle East studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

5c. Do you have adequate staff support and student workers at your Center? If not, what could be done to alleviate the problem or what could be reorganized? What does the Center need?

5d. Is there a lack of ME language teachers at this university? How does the lack of teachers affect students from other disciplines who may want to specialize in the ME (e.g. there may not be enough classes, etc)?

5e. Does the Center have any specific plans to establish new programs and services or to expand or improve existing ones?

5f. If you had more funding, what would you do? For example, in what ways would you expand the center?

5g. Please make any additional comments you wish about Middle East studies either in general or on this campus.

5h. Other questions specifically related to the Center.

5i. What sort of feedback from this evaluation would be helpful to you? Do you have any specific concerns/questions that should be included in our online survey?

Note to interviewer: Asses the extent to which area studies as a paradigm is challenged and questioned. With emphasis on MES, has 9/11 reaffirmed or weakened this paradigm?

Interview Questions (Formal): Provost or International Administrator

Explain SSRC evaluation. Review objectives: We are interested in knowing about the experiences of students and faculty who are studying the Middle East, as well as students who are from the region, at this university and about the role of your university in contributing to the study of the Middle East and the Islamic world in general. Also, we are evaluating the Middle East Study Center in terms of two of the central purposes of area studies programs, achieving balance of interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East, and in terms of the internationalization of the campus.

Questions about International Initiatives and Middle East Studies on Campus. *First, I'd like to get your opinions about international initiatives and Middle East Studies on campus more generally.*

1. ***Look for this information in the website and ask only if info is not publicly available*** What kinds of international initiatives are happening on campus around issues related to the Middle East, Islam, Arab Studies, etc.? (e.g., partnerships with universities overseas, consulting on educational reform, cross-national exchanges, etc.)

2. What are the broad trends in international activities on this campus over the past five years? Are there new kinds of programs or new degrees that have been established that relate to international topics or to globalization, etc. (e.g., in Global Studies)? Where do area studies centers fit in with these trends? Has there been increased hiring for faculty in area studies and languages (e.g. there is often a lack of language teachers, have more teachers been hired to respond to student demand?)

3. What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? What do you think has changed for teaching and research on the Middle East at this university? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? Has there been an increased student demand for courses focused on the ME since 9/11? If so, how has the University responded to this demand?

4. One of the reasons why were are interested in these questions is because currently there is an imbalance within the MES centers – that is there is there are more students/graduates who focus on the humanities (religion, history, literature) and less who focus on the social sciences, specifically political science, sociology, and economics. Do you see anything specific in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences that contributes to this trend? In other words, are there structural or other deterrents to students' engagement with the region or with other international topics? Or specifically, are there any trends in the disciplines that hinder or prohibit an in-depth-focus of a ME region?

5. What can you tell me about your students from the ME region – in general, do they come from one specific region and background? How are they recruited and what sort of support and funding is available to them?

6. What can you tell me about the faculty from the region – are there initiatives to recruit faculty? *If they cannot comment about faculty from the region, ask for the name of the person who could address this question.*

Questions about CMES and Interdisciplinarity: *Now I'd like to ask you some questions that are more specifically related to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at this university.*

1. In general terms, how do you see the role of the CMES on campus?

2. How does your office work with CMES? What type of support do you provide?

3. How does CMES work with or collaborate with other centers? Does your office facilitate any of these collaborations?

4. Does your office facilitate any international initiatives with CMES?

5. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting area studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

Please make any additional comments you wish about Middle East Studies or area studies either in general or on this campus.

Interview Questions (Formal): Directors of Russian/East European/ Eurasian and Latin American Study Centers

Explain SSRC evaluation. Review objectives: We are interested in knowing about the experiences of students who are studying the Middle East, as well as students who are from the region, at this university. Also, we are evaluating the Middle East Study Centers in terms of two of the central purposes of area studies programs, achieving balance of interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East, and in terms of the internationalization of the Center. By interviewing the directors of the Russian (and Eurasian, in the case of Harvard) and Latin American Study Centers, we hope to gain a broader understanding of area studies in general on your campus.

I. Center Structure, Mission, and Role

1a. How would you describe the mission of your Center? How do you understand the role of the Center on campus?

1b: Are there adequate courses that focus on the [*insert geographic region*] to respond to student demand? Are there enough faculty in different disciplines who can advise student dissertations on the *[region*]? To what extent do the various academic disciplines (especially economics, political science and sociology) offer courses that focus on the [*region*]? Are these kinds of courses cross-listed or co-taught?

II. Center Autonomy and Interdisciplinarity

2a. Please describe your Center's relationship with other academic departments on campus? (e.g., do you have any involvement in faculty hiring decisions? In the selection of students and the funding of students? In co-sponsoring guest speakers,

visiting scholars, etc.? Do you have any influence over departments? Are there any cross-listed or co-taught courses?)

2a-1: To what extent does this relationship vary by department? Which departmentshave stronger relationships with your Center, and why? Does student use of the Center tend to be heavier from certain disciplines? If so, why do you think this is the case? Do you see these relationships with academic departments as enhancing or detracting from the teaching and production of knowledge on the [*region*] on this campus?

2b. What is the Center's role vis-à-vis the university administration? For example, is the Center involved in any way in helping set the agenda for the university in terms of international education, interdisciplinary linkages, or [*region*] Studies? How does the administration engage with the Center?

2c. How much autonomy does the Center have in terms of its finances, curriculum, or other decision-making, such as student enrollment and funding? What do you see as the major constraints to this autonomy? What enables it?

2d. Does the Center receive funding aside from Title VI? What kinds of funding support the Center? Are there funds or resources that come directly from donors in the [*region*]? How would you characterize the Center's relationship with donors?

III. The Center's Role vis-à-vis Other Units and Centers

3a. Do you have a relationship with other area studies centers on campus? What about with other centers focused on sub-regional or national areas in the [*region*] and thematic centers, such as religious study centers, conflict/peace study centers, or cross-boundary centers, such as migration or environmental study centers?

IV. The Center's Role in Interfacing with International Initiatives

4a.What opportunities are available for faculty and students to travel to the [*region*] for teaching, study, internships, practical training and/or research? How does the Center facilitate these opportunities? Does the Center work with other university departments or study abroad programs to create more opportunities for students and faculty?

4b.How often does the center host visiting faculty and sponsor visiting lectures? How have these initiatives been received by both students and faculty of the Center and the larger university? What type of effort has been made to recruit visiting scholars to the campus? How have these efforts been successful? How can these efforts be improved?

V. Future Directions and Other Issues

5a. How typical is your Center compared to other centers that you know?

5b. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting area studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

5c. One of the reasons why were are interested in these questions is because currently there is an imbalance within the MES centers – that is there is there are more students/graduates who focus on the humanities (religion, history, literature) and less who focus on the social sciences, specifically political science, sociology, and economics. Do you see anything specific in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences or in the disciplines that hinder or prohibit an in-depth-focus of the ME (or a Latin America or Former USSR)?

5d. Please make any additional comments you wish about [region] studies either in general or on this campus.

Interview Questions (Informal): Directors of Graduate Advising Sociology, Economics, and Political Science Departments

Explain SSRC evaluation. Review objectives: We are interested in knowing about the experiences of students who are studying the Middle East, as well as students who are from the region, at this university. Also, we are evaluating the Middle East Study Centers in terms of two of the central purposes of area studies programs, achieving balance of interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East, and in terms of the internationalization of the campus.

1. How many students do you have who are working on dissertations—or preparing for dissertation work—on a topic related to the Middle East? Has this number changed much over the past 5 years?

2. Do these students have trouble finding faculty with expertise in the region who can serve as advisors, dissertation committee members, etc.?

3. Do you find there is adequate support for students who want to do international fieldwork for their dissertations? (e.g., how easy is it for them to find funding to travel to the region for language training, research/fieldwork, conferences, etc.)

4. What kinds of challenges, if any, are involved with combining a regional specialization with disciplinary training in sociology/economics/political science? (e.g., is there adequate space in electives for language training?)

5. Is there a requirement for foreign language proficiency or mastery for the degree?

6. What do you know about your graduate students' relationship with the MES Center (meaning those students who are working on a topic related to the region). Does the Center provide resources, faculty expertise, etc. to these students? What is still needed?

Interview Questions (Informal): Individuals who Organize Activities within CMES

These individuals may provide a richer understanding of how the Center is used, who uses the Center, and may help us map the Center on campus.

1. In general terms, what do you think is the Center's role at the University?

2. Outside of attending classes, please describe how students use the Center (e.g., lectures, fellowships, language training, hub for information, etc.)? How do faculty use the center (e.g. for meetings, research – and the quality of these visits, are the substantive or just lunch)?

3. Specific question about the individual's project – e.g. what does the Arab Education Forum do? How and why was it started? Funding? Do you hire students to work for your (journal/research project/outreach work/etc.)? What departments do they typically come from?

4. Besides working for your [*activity],* do students from other departments participate in your [*activity - journal, ed forum*]? If so, how do they become involved and are they from any particular discipline?

5. In what ways do you work with other centers or departments?

6. What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? What has changed for your Center since 9/11?

7. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting the field of Middle East Studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

8. Please make any additional comments you wish about Middle East Studies either in general or on this campus.

9. What sort of feedback from this evaluation would be helpful to you? Do you have any specific concerns/questions that should be included in our online survey?

Interview Questions (Informal): Landscape of Activities Related to the ME

These questions are aimed for individuals who direct or organize projects related to the ME but are not part of CMES. Would these activities exist without CMES?

1. Specific question about the individual's department/project/program/activity – e.g. please describe the actual activities in more detail. How and why was it started? Funding?

2. Do students from other departments participate in your department/project/program/activity? If so, how do they become involved and are they from any particular discipline? Do you hire students to work for your department/project/program/activity? What departments do they typically come from?

3. As part of our evaluation of the CMES, we are trying to understand where knowledge about the Middle East is produced on campus and where teaching and learning about the ME takes places. Among the many activities related to the ME here on campus, is there a central hub for the production of this knowledge and for the training of students? What is this hub and what is its role on campus? *If the Center is the hub, ask:* How does the Center's role differ from the role of your department/project/program/activity? *If the Center is not the hub, ask*: Please tell me about the Center's role in relation to this hub and in general terms, what do you think is the Center's role at the University?

4. In what ways do you work with other centers or departments?

5. What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? What has changed for your department/project/program/activity since 9/11?

6. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting the teaching and learning of Middle East Studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

7. Do you have any other additional comments?

Interview Questions (Informal): Related Departments

For Directors of NELC and other related departments.

1. As part of our evaluation of the CMES, we are trying to understand the role that the Center plays on campus. In general terms, how do you see the role of the Center and how does it differ from the role of your department?

2. Apart from overlapping faculty and courses, how does your department work with CMES? Are there any types of collaborations – visiting scholars, international initiatives, and so forth? Who initiates these and who is involved in the projects?

3. Apart from CMES, does your department work with any other departments or centers in a formal capacity (e.g., joint hiring committees, co-sponsored talks or workshops, etc.)? How much formal or information collaboration takes place between faculty in your department and faculty in other departments, centers, or schools?

4. How would you characterize the relationship between your department and other departments or schools at the university? E.g., we know these relationships vary quite a bit from university to university, and we are trying to understand how your department collaborates or competes with other departments or schools for resources, etc.

5. What opportunities are available for faculty and students to travel to the Middle East for teaching, study, internships, practical training and/or research? How does your department facilitate these opportunities? Does your department work with other university departments or study abroad programs to create more opportunities for students and faculty?

6. How often does your department host visiting faculty and sponsor visiting lectures? How have these initiatives been received by both students and faculty of the department and the larger university? What type of effort has been made to recruit visiting scholars to the campus? How have these efforts been successful? How can these efforts be improved?

7. What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? What has changed for your department since 9/11?

8. What sort of feedback from this evaluation would be helpful to you? Do you have any specific concerns/questions that should be included in our online survey?

Focus Group Questions: Faculty

Explain SSRC evaluation. Review objectives: We are interested in knowing about the experiences of students and faculty who are studying the Middle East, as well as students who are from the region, at this university and about the role of your university in contributing to the study of the Middle East and the Islamic world in general. Also, we are evaluating the Middle

East Study Center in terms of two of the central purposes of area studies programs, achieving balance of interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East, and in terms of the internationalization of the campus.

Review consent forms and stress that all interviews will be anonymous. Ask each to state name, discipline, area of research, how many years he/she has been at the Center either as appointed faculty or affiliated faculty, courses taught (past and ongoing), and other relevant activities to the Center (e.g. sponsor of student group, admissions committee, etc.). Note for interviewer: As informed by the administrative/director interviews, there may be questions specifically related to affiliated faculty. For example, were they hired initially to work with the Center or did they become affiliated later? If so, why, how?

I. Center Structure, Mission, and Role

1a. In general terms, what do you think is the Center's role at the University? Do you think your opinions are similar to those of your peers or of the administration? Why or why not? In what ways do your opinions differ? *Note for interviewer: Are the focus group participants in agreement with each other?*

1b. *For affiliated faculty:* Apart from teaching classes, in what ways do you use the Center? Outside of attending classes, how do your students use the Center – for lectures, fellowships, language training, hub for information, etc.? Which students access the Center – only students from MES or from other departments? *Note for interviewer: Try to establish a sense of the quality of these visits – are the substantive or just lunch?*

1c. What can you tell me about the resources available at the university to support teaching and research on the Middle East? How do you feel about it - what is the university doing well, what could it be doing better? What is the Center's role in all of that? How does this center compare with other MES centers you know or other area studies centers you have experienced?

1d. Are there adequate courses that focus on the Middle East to respond to student demand? Are there enough faculty in different disciplines who can advise student dissertations on the Middle East? Tell me about what might be done differently.

II. The Center's Role vis-à-vis Other Units and Centers

2a. In what ways do you collaborate with faculty from other departments? Please describe any conflicts that may exist between the Center and other centers or departments (*e.g. ideological conflicts or conflicts over funding, student admissions, and so forth*, *especially with disciplinary departments*).

2b. What other Centers on campus do you visit and why?

III. The Center's Role in Interfacing with National and International Initiatives

3a. Do you think the Center facilitates connections in the region in a way that is helpful to the faculty? What might be done differently (*more scholars, more networks, etc.)?*

3b. What kind of support does the Center provide to faculty who wish to initiate collaborative national or international projects (or just wish to initiate new projects in general)? Is this support adequate? If not, what else would be helpful? Is there any support from the University as well?

IV. Future Directions and Other Issues

4a. What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? For example, are there more speakers, more efforts to hire faculty with specialization in the Middle East, etc.? What has changed for your Center since 9/11?

4b. In your view, what are the main challenges confronting the field of Middle East studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges?

4c. Please make any additional comments you wish about Middle East studies either in general or on this campus.

4d. What sort of feedback from this evaluation would be helpful to you? Do you have any specific concerns/questions that should be included in our online survey?

Focus Group Questions: Students

Explain SSRC evaluation. Review objectives: We are interested in knowing about the experiences of students and faculty who are studying the Middle East, as well as students who are from the region, at this university and about the role of your university in contributing to the study of the Middle East and the Islamic world in general. Also, we are evaluating the Middle East Study Center in terms of two of the central purposes of area studies programs, achieving balance of interdisciplinary production of knowledge on the Middle East, and in terms of the internationalization of the campus.

Review consent form and stress that all interviews will be anonymous. Ask each student to state name, discipline, status in program, and dissertation topic (if relevant).

How did you decide to come to this university? Did you already have an interest in the Middle East, or did it develop here? What attracted you to this Center?

I. Center Structure, Mission, and Role

1a. Outside of attending classes, please tell me about your use of the Center -- what kinds of things do you use it for (e.g., lectures, fellowships, language training, hub for

information, etc.)? *Try to establish a sense of the quality of these visits – are the substantive or just lunch*

1b. Please describe the role of the Center at the University more generally?

1c. How do you feel about the resources that are available at the Center? Are they adequate – why or why not? What is the Center doing well, what could it be doing better?

1d. Is there adequate funding for graduates students (MA and PhD)? Are there adequate works-study position or teaching/graduate assistant opportunities?

1e. How do you interact with other students at the Center, outside of the Center? How do you meet, etc.?

II. The Center's Role vis-à-vis Other Units and Centers and Interdisciplinarity

2a. Are there adequate courses that focus on the Middle East to respond to student demand? Are there enough faculty in different disciplines who can advise student dissertations on the Middle East? To what extent do other departments offer courses that focus on the Middle East? Do you think there should be more (or fewer) offerings?

2b. What other Centers on campus do you visit and why?

III. The Center's Role in Interfacing with National and International Initiatives

3a. How does or does not the Center facilitate connections in the region in a way that is helpful to students? What might be done differently? (e.g., more scholars, more networks, more funding, etc).

3b. Are these connections biased towards one geographic region? Does the emphasis of these connections fit your needs?

IV. Future Directions and Other Issues

4a. What are your career plans and how has the Center prepared you for following out these plans? Have your plans changed since you entered graduate school? How typical do you think your experience is, compared to other students you know?

4b. What have been the biggest challenges for you in studying issues in the Middle East at this university? What have you done to meet these challenges?

4c. Please make any additional comments you wish about Middle East studies either in general or on this campus.

Appendix B – Sample Interview Invitation Letter and Consent Forms

Social Science Research Council
Program for Middle East and North Africa
810 Seventh Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10019
Ph: (212) 377-2700
Fax: (212) 377-2727

Date

Dear:

The Middle East and North Africa Program of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) has received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study of Title VI funded Middle East Studies (MES) centers on U.S. campuses, with a special focus on the role of these centers in promoting interdisciplinarity and internationalization in the field. One of the promises of area studies programs is the potential to combine the comparative strengths of the social sciences with in-depth cultural and linguistic competence. The study will especially focus on the state of the fields of political science, sociology, and economics in Middle East studies as well as the robustness of current academic linkages between the region and U.S. campuses. The SSRC has been working during the past year to assemble the research team and develop the appropriate methodology and research tools.

We are now ready to begin the fieldwork component of the project, which will include site-visits to 6 leading MES centers. The Harvard Center for Middle East Studies has been selected as part of this sample and we are writing to solicit your participation. We will be conducting interviews with faculty and staff to better understand Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. In the interview, you will be asked to share thoughts and opinions on these issues. Some of the specific interview questions include: What, if anything, has changed on campus since 9/11? In general terms, what do you think is the Center for Middle East Studies' role at the University? In your view, what are the main challenges confronting the field of Middle East Studies in the next several years, both in general and on this campus and what can be done to meet these challenges? Participation is voluntary, it will require approximately 1 hour of your time, and all discussion from the interview will be kept confidential. You will be asked to sign a consent form at the time of participation.

The project researcher, Elizabeth Anderson, will be on campus next week and will be contacting you directly to request an interview. If you have any questions in advance of this, please feel free to contact her at eanderson@ssrc.org.

Your participation in this study will be an invaluable addition to the quality and outcome of the research. At a time when there is a great deal of polemic concerning Middle East Studies in the U.S., which has important funding and policy implications, we think that it is vital that any future discussions or evaluations be based on solid evidence and thoughtful analysis.

Sincerely,

Seteney Shami
Program Director

Social Science Research Council
Program for Middle East and North Africa
810 Seventh Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10019
Ph: (212) 377-2700
Fax: (212) 377-2727

Consent Form for Individual Interviews (audio-taped)

You have been invited to take part in a research study about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. This study will be conducted by Elizabeth A. Anderson, Social Science Research Council. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

> Participate in an interview, in which you will be asked to share your thoughts and opinions about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus.

Your interview will be audio-taped. You may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes be destroyed. Participation in this study will take 1-2 hours of your time. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator understand Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at anytime without penalty. For interviews, questionnaires, or surveys, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Elizabeth A. Anderson at (703) 615-6225, eanderson@ssrc.org. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Social Science Research Council, [insert contact name and number].

___ Yes, I give the investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her report or publications.
___ No, I would prefer that my name not be used. In which case, confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by assigning code numbers to each participant so that data is never directly linked to individual identity. Your real names or identifying characteristics will not appear on written transcriptions of taped interviews. The data will be kept at the SSRC office in locked file cabinets for the duration of the project, and thereafter in the SSRC archives. If the data is used in future research , all guarantees for confidentiality will apply.

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.
Agreement to Participate

I agree to participate in the research study.
I do not agree to participate in the research study.

_____
Subject's Signature & Date

Social Science Research Council
Program for Middle East and North Africa
810 Seventh Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10019
Ph: (212) 377-2700
Fax: (212) 377-2727

Consent Form for Individual Interviews (not audio-taped)

You have been invited to take part in a research study about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. This study will be conducted by Elizabeth A. Anderson, Social Science Research Council. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

> Participate in an interview, in which you will be asked to share your thoughts and opinions about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus.

Participation in this study will take 1-2 hours of your time. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator understand Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at anytime without penalty. For interviews, questionnaires, or surveys, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Elizabeth A. Anderson at (703) 615-6225, eanderson@ssrc.org. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Maureen Abdelsayed at the Social Science Research Council, at (212) 377-2700 ext. 613, abdelsayed@ssrc.org.

___ Yes, I give the investigator permission to use my name when quoting material from our interview in her report or publications.
___ No, I would prefer that my name not be used. In which case, confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by assigning code numbers to each participant so that data is never directly linked to individual identity. Your real names or identifying characteristics will not appear on written notes of the interviews. The data will be kept at the SSRC office in locked file cabinets for the duration of the project, and thereafter in the SSRC archives. If the data is used in future research, all guarantees for confidentiality will apply.

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.
Agreement to Participate

I agree to participate in the research study.
I do not agree to participate in the research study.

_____
Subject's Signature & Date

Social Science Research Council
Program for Middle East and North Africa
810 Seventh Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10019
Ph: (212) 377-2700
Fax: (212) 377-2727

Consent Form for Focus Group

You have been invited to take part in a research study about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. This study will be conducted by Elizabeth A. Anderson, Social Science Research Council (SSRC). If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in an interview, in which you will be asked to share your thoughts and opinions about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus.
2. OR participate in a focus group with 2-5 of your peers, in which you will be asked to share your thoughts and opinions about Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus.

Your interview or focus group will be audiotaped. You may review these tapes and request that all or any portion of the tapes that includes your participation be destroyed. Participation in this study will take 2 hours of your time. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator understand Middle East Studies and the role of the Middle East Study Center on your campus. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by assigning code numbers to each participant so that data is never directly linked to individual identity. Your real names or identifying characteristics will not appear on written transcriptions of taped interviews. For the focus group participants, your responses will be kept confidential by the researcher, but the researcher cannot guarantee that others in the focus group will do the same. The data will be kept at the SSRC office in locked file cabinets for the duration of the project, and thereafter in the SSRC archives. If the data is used in future research , all guarantees for confidentiality will apply.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at anytime without penalty. For interviews, questionnaires, or surveys, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer. If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Elizabeth A. Anderson at (703) 615-6225, eanderson@ssrc.org. This study has been approved by the a committee on human subjects at the Social Science Research Council. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Social Science Research Council, (212) 377-2700.

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.
Agreement to Participate

I agree to participate in the research study.
I do not agree to participate in the research study.

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Subject's Signature & Date