



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Department of Germanic and Slavic  
Languages and Literatures

Academic Review and Planning  
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

Signed by:  
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# Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures (GSLI) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over April 21 and 22, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

# Past Reviews

The 2016 ARPAC review praised GSLI for its collegiality, strong leadership, and high academic quality, while recommending attention to faculty inclusion in governance, disciplinary balance, graduate program development, resource metrics, and external fundraising. Below, we recap recommendations made to the unit in 2016, along with our assessment of the unit’s progress since that time.

2016 Recommendation	Progress and Current Assessment (2025)
1. Maintain collegiality and address potential tensions between philological and culture-studies approaches.	Limited progress. Through joint seminars, collaborative curricular planning and public humanities initiatives, GSLI has made progress toward bridging its long-standing philological and cultural-studies divide. However, the 2025 external review committee found that structural and climate-related tensions persist, with the department still functioning as two loosely connected subunits rather than a fully integrated intellectual community.
2. Cultivate new private gifts for endowed chairs and student fellowships.	Limited progress. GSLI continues to pursue donor development but remains constrained by divisional fundraising capacity. The unit has successfully attracted smaller gifts and continues to seek endowed support for faculty and graduate fellowships.
3. Take advantage of the Consortium of Doctoral Studies in Literatures and Cultures and monitor PhD placements.	Fully implemented. The German Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program is now well-established, with consistent graduate enrollments and placements. The unit had participated actively in the campus-wide consortium when it was active and clarified funding and placement tracking procedures.
4. Revise bylaws to include assistant professors and instructors in evaluation processes.	Completed. Revised bylaws (2024) formalize inclusive peer evaluation and mentoring structures for tenure-track and teaching faculty.

5. Develop improved metrics for assessing teaching contributions, including minors and double majors.

Partial progress. While GSLL continues to advocate for metrics that reflect the unit's high share of student credit hours from non-majors ( $\approx 90\%$ ), divisional budgeting relies heavily on headcounts of majors. Continued advocacy is warranted.

6. Request a visiting professor line to offset senior faculty teaching & administrative service.

Partially achieved. Temporary lecturer lines have been used to maintain coverage. GSLL continues to seek conversion of these recurring temporary lines into permanent teaching professor positions.

Overall, the unit deserves commendation for meaningful follow-through on each of the 2016 ARPAC recommendations. GSLL has preserved a productive departmental culture, maintained stable enrollments, and shown strategic adaptability amid sector-wide pressures on the humanities.

GSLL continues to face structural challenges noted in prior reviews, particularly the need for funding models that credit its extensive service to non-majors, conversion of recurring lecturer lines to permanent appointments, and expanded donor and library support for graduate research. Continued partnership with the division and the college will be essential to sustain faculty and student support while advancing the department's interdisciplinary and global mission.

## Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at <https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in August 2024, reflecting the state of GSLL as of the academic year (AY) 2022-2023.

Additional data was obtained from the unit's websites:

<https://www.colorado.edu/gsl/>  
<https://catalog.colorado.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/programs-study/germanic-slavic-languages-literatures/>

## Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

GSLL offers undergraduate and graduate instruction in German, Russian, East European and Eurasian, and Nordic Studies. From the CU Boulder catalog GSLL page, here are the degree programs, minors, and certificates offered by the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in German Studies
- Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES)
- Minor in German Studies
- Minor in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES)
- Minor in Nordic Studies
- Master of Arts (MA) in German Studies

- Master of Arts (MA) in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies (REEES)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in German Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Critical Theory

Between 2020-2024, undergraduate programs in GSLL averaged roughly 20 German BA and 22 REEES BA majors each year. Graduate enrollments were small but stable, averaging 8 MA (German), 5 MA (REEES), and 5 PhD (German) students. Although the number of declared majors is modest, GSLL generates a disproportionate share of the college's student credit hours (SCH) through service to non-majors. Overall, GSLL averages ~8,700 student credit hours annually across all degrees, with courses in the BA in German Studies program generating by far the largest instructional footprint (~6,200 SCH/year, ~71% of total). The external review committee noted that "minors, certificates, and double majors remain the lifeblood of the unit's teaching enterprise," and that the department "serves hundreds of students each term who fulfill core or global perspective requirements." For example, approximately 97% of student credit hours in the BA in German Studies program come from non-GSLL majors (across all programs, non-degree students account for ~90% of SCH), underscoring GSLL's essential role in campus-wide humanities education.

The program statistics are consistent with GSLL's positioning of its teaching mission as an interdisciplinary and globally oriented enterprise that serves both majors and the wider university community. The BA in German Studies "provides an interdisciplinary and transnational approach to German studies," with classes "in language, literature, art, media studies, film, philosophy and more, as well as courses that connect German-speaking countries to broader contexts," and courses build "liberal arts skills including complex problem solving, analysis, and writing" according to GSLL's degree program report. The BA in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies is "a small but strategically significant program that serves a large number of students," offering "diverse courses ... [that] use and teach both humanities and social science research methods," while language instruction "focus[es] on linguistic proficiency and advanced intercultural competency". The external reviewers add that teaching faculty "balance large sections of courses taught in English with small language sections," enabling "diverse classes and an ability to focus on individual students," and they highlight that curricular collaboration "within the department ... and outside of the department will help to secure the department's future".

Assessment of learning outcomes follows a structured process described in the Program Learning Assessment Reports (2023–2024). Faculty review capstone essays, research papers, and oral presentations using shared rubrics measuring linguistic proficiency, analytical reasoning, and intercultural competence. These reports indicate that most students achieved performance levels meeting or exceeding expectations across all assessed learning outcomes, particularly in language proficiency and analytical writing. The unit's goal setting exercise confirms the department's plan to continue using assessment results to improve course design and align learning outcomes across curricular levels—evidence of a sustained, data-driven approach to teaching improvement. Graduate program assessment centers on faculty evaluation of comprehensive exams, dissertations, and teaching performance, supplemented by annual progress reviews and post-graduation placement tracking. The German PhD program now has a complete feedback system aligned with learning outcomes such as original research, theoretical mastery, and scholarly communication.

No new degree programs are currently planned, but the department is exploring certificates or micro-credentials in translation and global media. The department also plans to formalize professional development workshops on pedagogy, grant writing, and diverse career pathways.

The Swedish language sequence is being phased out while cultural content remains within the Nordic Studies minor.

In summary, GSLL demonstrates teaching excellence characterized by breadth, innovation, and systematic assessment. Its programs serve a broad cross-section of students while maintaining academic depth and adaptability. Future priorities include strengthening experiential opportunities, expanding flexible course delivery, and sustaining adequate instructional staffing to meet continuing student demand.

## Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

The scholarly identity of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures is rooted in its interdisciplinary and transnational approaches to its German Studies; Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies; and Nordic programs. Faculty research engages with contemporary frameworks, including critical race studies, environmental humanities, and media studies. The department actively supports “innovative research content and expression beyond traditional publications,” which encompasses public-facing scholarship and translations, aiming for “excellent research output and active research engagement both nationally and internationally”. The external review report notes that nationally, GSLL is housed within a “comprehensive national research university” and holds significant prestige, particularly as its graduate program in German is regarded as a “national leader”.

As described in the GSLL bylaws and salary procedures documents, the department evaluates faculty research productivity through a structured, quantifiable point-based system administered annually by the elected Peer Evaluation Committee (PEC). For tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, the standard measure of satisfactory performance is defined as refereed publication, which is assigned precise point values based on type and length. For instance, a refereed book earns 78–90 points depending on the size of the book and the quality of the publisher (credited over 2–5 years), while a refereed article earns 36–66 points depending on word count. The point system also quantifies other research outputs, such as edited books (45–77 points), applications for major external grants (up to 5 points), and invited external lectures (up to 15 points). The PEC applies consensus judgment to adjust point assignments based on the significance and quality of all publications, and these calculated points ultimately determine the faculty member's annual merit salary raises.

While comprehensive, the external reviewers commented that the faculty merit evaluation process relies upon a “byzantine document with its point values for various tasks.” The faculty themselves acknowledged this complexity in their own goal setting exercise, noting that the extensive work done to ensure equity (such as giving credit for a wide range of activities) has simultaneously resulted in a process that is “complex and time intensive.” ARPAC encourages GSLL to streamline and simplify this evaluation process if possible.

ARPAC notes the following major achievements for the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures. First, GSLL has successfully placed German PhD graduates into tenure-track and long-term faculty positions both at research 1 (R1) institutions (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of Minnesota) and liberal arts colleges (Hamilton College). Second, REEES MA graduates have also been successful, securing positions in federal departments (National Security Agency (NSA), Defense, State) and gaining acceptance to prestigious PhD programs nationally, such as Yale University and the University of Illinois. REEES



MA students are actively encouraged to present their work at national and international conferences. Further, the REEES program officially changed its name from Russian Studies in 2023 to better align its mission with decolonization efforts and the broader geographical scope of Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

## Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2022-2023, faculty personnel in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures consisted of 10 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, 6 teaching-track faculty, and 6 “other” faculty (hon/lec/visit/adj.), as well as 15 teaching assistants (TAs) or graduate part-time instructors (GPTIs). According to the same D&A profile, staff personnel in GSLL consisted of 2 classified staff members and 3 student hourly employees.

Comparatively, according to the GSLL goal setting exercise, the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures faculty roster consists of 20 total faculty members, broken down into 9 tenured and tenure-track faculty (5 full professors, 1 associate professor, 3 assistant professors), 7 teaching-track faculty (3 teaching professors, 1 associate teaching professor, 3 assistant teaching professors), 3 lecturers, and 1 other instructional personnel (visiting professor). Since 2022, GSLL has experienced faculty shrinkage consistent with division-wide trends caused by resignations and retirement incentives. In particular, the Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies program has lost at least one tenure-track faculty member and one teaching professor, and the department has not been able to replace those two faculty members.

To address roster instability, GSLL aims to convert long-term temporary lecturer positions into permanent teaching professor roles. Future hiring focuses on interdisciplinary expertise, seeking faculty in areas like digital humanities, environmental humanities, and media studies for both German and REEES. The external reviewers suggest making a ‘cross-over’ hire between German and REEES to help unify the department. However, the department’s degree program report noted challenges in research support and faculty recruitment; guaranteed funding for conference travel and research is limited, with Arts and Humanities (AHUM) teaching professors receiving only \$600 and tenure/tenure-track professors receiving \$1,500 guaranteed, which is often insufficient to cover travel to most conferences.

GSLL operates a formal mentoring system detailed in its bylaws for both tenure-track and teaching professor faculty. Assistant professors are assigned two tenured GSLL mentors who are required to meet with them at least once per semester during the probationary period to discuss progress toward comprehensive review and tenure. Similarly, new teaching professor rank faculty are assigned one tenured mentor, who must meet with them at least once per semester during the first three years to discuss progress toward reappointment and promotion. Mentors are expected to be regularly available to discuss research, teaching, and service expectations. The mentoring process is formally integrated into faculty evaluation, as the Peer Evaluation Committee (PEC) consults with faculty mentors to prepare a specific “Advice and Comments” form for early career faculty regarding their progress toward career milestones. Despite this formal structure, the department recognizes a need to improve the system by developing clear mentoring guidelines. This goal is a direct response to Campus Climate surveys that suggested the necessity of improving orientation and providing clearer guidance specifically for the mentors of early career faculty.

[According to the department website](#), personnel in GSLL consist of 3 university staff members: the undergraduate and graduate program coordinator, the manager of finance and business

operations, and an academic advisor, who also advises students in other departments. Regarding staff, the external reviewers note: “We were impressed to meet dedicated staff with long-term investment in the programs who are very happy in their positions. Their flexible work schedules in particular make them pleased to come to work and to support faculty in all their needs.” Opportunities for staff development and integration include incorporating staff into unit governance discussions. Furthermore, staff assistance is needed and valued for facilitating new goals such as supporting faculty in implementing equity initiatives, outreach, and public humanities-oriented work.

## Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

The Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures supports undergraduate success through strong curricular design and focused student engagement efforts, although it operates within a challenging enrollment environment where the broader Arts and Humanities division has recently lost 50 percent of its students.

According to the GSLL degree program report, the BA in German Studies had 18 majors and awarded 1 bachelor's degree in fiscal year (FY) 2024, reflecting a net decrease from 27 majors in fall 2020. The BA in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies maintained 22 majors and awarded 7 bachelor's degrees in FY 2024, remaining stable since fall 2020. Minor enrollment is a critical strength, documented in spring 2025 as 58 German, 22 REEES, and 23 Nordic minors.

In FY 2024, German Studies delivered 7,215 student credit hours (SCH), with 97% taken by non-majors. Total SCH increased from 6,406 in 2020. REEES delivered 977 SCH, with 91% taken by non-majors, a significant decrease from 2,908 SCH in 2020. Non-major SCH percentages have remained stable for both programs (96–97% for German, 89–92% for REEES). The sources do not provide the exact percentages of SCH taught by TTT faculty versus other ranks.

The unit appoints an Honors Liaison, but data regarding formal Honors program participation percentages or trends are absent. Opportunities for undergraduates include internships (ad-hoc teaching and local schools), with goals to develop more curated practical experience both locally and abroad. Students participate in community-building through groups like the German Club and Kaffeestunde.

GSLL provides intensive mentorship and professional training to its graduate students, although all programs have experienced headcount declines: according to the GSLL degree program report, the German MA dropped from 9 students in fall 2020 to 5 in fall 2024 (3 degrees awarded FY 2024), the REEES MA decreased from 7 to 3 students (1 degree awarded FY 2024), and the German PhD fell from 5 to 4 students (1 PhD awarded FY 2024). The department leverages these small cohorts to provide intensive mentorship, offering dedicated language pedagogy courses and individual guidance for teaching assistants and PhD students teaching courses in English. Graduate students participate in department governance via representatives on the Executive Committee. As noted previously, career preparation is effective, with REEES MA graduates successfully entering prestigious PhD programs (such as Yale University) and securing employment in federal agencies (including NSA and State), and German PhD graduates placing at R1 institutions and liberal arts colleges. A critical challenge for GSLL graduate students is the high cost of living in Boulder, which impairs recruitment. Therefore, the unit is focused on securing better financial packages for students, including summer funding and adequate wages.

## Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy.

The Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures supports inclusive excellence primarily by structurally integrating Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) principles into its pedagogy and governance. The Executive Committee, serving as the departmental JEDI committee, leads efforts to promote knowledge of inclusive, anti-racist, and anticolonial pedagogical practices through regular professional development workshops. This commitment extends to faculty evaluations, which reward teaching practices that create learning spaces promoting equitable and successful outcomes for every student. When incidents of incivility or bias arise, the unit addresses them formally through its bylaws, which specify that grievances must be submitted in writing, initially handled by the chair informally, and then referred to an ad hoc Grievance Committee composed of tenured faculty. GSLL also seeks opportunities to better incorporate staff and graduate students into unit governance and discussions.

Although GSLL has well-developed formal pedagogy and governance procedures to address inclusivity, the external reviewers note that GSLL culture is marked by internal divisions and varying morale. The GSLL external review report notes that GSLL essentially functions as two separate units (German and REEES), which contributes to a lack of intellectual community and low morale among some faculty, who described the atmosphere using phrases like “frozen and unfrozen conflicts.” Adding to that challenge, faculty at various ranks noted an imbalance in workload and service distribution, which also contributes to climate problems. Further, teaching faculty feel undervalued and “grossly underpaid” by the institution, which affects perceptions of equity. However, the external reviewers note the student culture is characterized by high motivation and engagement – undergraduate students are described as “very motivated and true fans of the department.” The department is proactively attempting to build community and address climate issues through regular pedagogy workshops and increasing efforts to integrate the German & REES sides, such as an “all hands-on deck” day suggested by the external reviewers.

ARPAC acknowledges the systemic challenges of integration but concurs with the external reviewers that the unit should prioritize addressing the cultural (and administrative) divide between its Germanic and REEES sides, which contributes to a lack of intellectual community and low morale.

## Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures envisions its future as an interdisciplinary and externally engaged humanities unit that addresses contemporary global issues. Its goals include creating a broad intellectual community across the arts and humanities and developing a reputation for providing students with career-relevant skills through practical experience. For future faculty, the department hopes to hire in areas such as environmental humanities and media studies and to support faculty in innovative research expression, such as curatorial work and translations. For staff, the department hopes to better incorporate staff into unit governance and discussions and raise salaries commensurate with their indispensable contributions.

GSLL employs robust, transparent planning and governance structures, though the latter may be overly complex. The planning process involves the chair and the Executive Committee (EC) proposing goals, which are then circulated to all faculty, discussed, and revised until unanimous support is garnered. This collective process, noted for its reflective quality, appears effective in identifying key needs like community building and expanded course offerings. Governance is formally documented in its bylaws (updated in 2024), which detail the roles of the chair, associate chairs (undergraduate associate chair (UGAC) and graduate associate chair (GAC) for each major program), program heads, and the EC, ensuring representation of German and REEES in leadership. However, the external reviewers suggest that the departmental governance structure, which features duplicated administrative positions across the Germanic and REEES programs, seems over bureaucratized and contributes to the lack of unity in the department. The complex Peer Evaluation Committee (PEC) merit process, though designed for equity and detailed point assignments for a wide range of activities, is also described as complex and time intensive.

The department's goal setting exercise and the external review report note the need for structural reform to address inefficiencies stemming from GSLL's dual-program structure. Specifically, the external reviewers suggest "streamlining the administrative positions rather than appointing two separate associate chairs (UGAC and GAC—one in German, one in REEES) and two separate directors of graduate studies and undergraduate studies." ARPAC concurs with this assessment and generally encourages GSLL to consider a long-term plan that streamlines administration and further promotes unit integration.

# Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures and to the offices of responsible administrators:

## To the Unit:

1. Engage the faculty to develop a plan to unify the department's divided structure and then implement that plan. The external reviewers identified GSLL's "fatal flaw" as the split between Germanic and REEES. ARPAC joins the external reviewers in urging the department to take any measures that would draw these wings together—including, for example, shared graduate student symposia, faculty lectures, and a departmental "common day" to foster intellectual and social cohesion.
2. Address faculty climate and communication issues. The external reviewers observed serious communication barriers and divergent faculty experiences. ARPAC agrees with their recommendation for department-wide conversations to acknowledge tensions and possibly engaging an external mediator or comparable campus support resources (e.g., [restorative practices](#) or [Ombuds](#)) to help rebuild trust and collegiality.
3. Streamline administrative structures. The external reviewers called for simplifying GSLL's administrative framework, specifically suggesting the elimination of duplicate associate chairs and directors for Germanic and REEES. A single set of two associate chairs for graduate and undergraduate affairs would promote unity and efficiency and address concerns about service equity.
4. Improve equity in service distribution. Some early career faculty were described as insufficiently shielded from service burdens, while some senior faculty had shifted service away from the department.
5. Continue efforts to advocate for an Arts & Humanities-specific budget process that accounts for and rewards the unit's high share of student credit hours from non-majors (≈90%).

## To the Dean of Arts and Humanities:

6. In concert with the AHUM Futures work that is ongoing, work with the department on unit recommendations 1-3 above, which reflect issues from consolidating two previously independent departments.
7. Continue efforts to advocate for an Arts & Humanities budget process that accounts for units' high share of student credit hours (SCH) from non-majors and develop a plan to robustly account for and reward these SCH, recognizing units' significant educational contributions. Under the current budget model, there are concerns that GSLL will not be allocated appropriate resources for the courses taught/students served.
8. Consider a consolidated departmental/administrative structure for languages or groups of languages that would allow for consolidated administrative support while also retaining successful

degree programs and minors and maintaining strategic strengths in discrete areas of research, scholarship, and pedagogical excellence.

9. Emphasize and support the important role that GSLL—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

### To the Provost:

10. Emphasize and support the important role that GSLL—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

## Required Follow-up

The chair of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.