



JANUARY 30, 2014

# PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF SEMITIC AND EGYPTIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES,  
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA  
Washington, DC 20064



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**Program Assessment Review**  
**Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures**  
**Catholic University of America**  
**January 30, 2014**

## 1. Introduction

### A. Nomenclature

The Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures offers courses in ancient Semitic languages and their literatures, particularly Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Syriac, and Classical Arabic. The Department also offers courses in Coptic, the latest stage of the ancient Egyptian language. The Department does not currently offer courses in modern Semitic languages.

### B. Historical Background

The Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures (DSELL) had its beginning in the nineteenth century. The first faculty member appointed at the new Catholic University of America in 1889 was Msgr. Henri Hyvernat, an Orientalist and archaeologist of international stature who initiated the study of the languages and literatures of the Christian and Ancient Near East at CUA and continued as professor until his death in 1941. He founded the Department in 1897. Hyvernat described the origin of the department in later years:

I obtained from the Board of Trustees (though not without much effort) that the teaching of Biblical Archaeology and Semitic languages be transferred to the School of Philosophy in McMahan Hall ..., there to be organized as a distinct Department of a wider scope to be known by the name it now bears, of Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures.

Eventually the Department was moved to the School of Arts & Sciences.

The Department has included many distinguished scholars among its faculty throughout the years including Rev. A. A. Vaschalde, CSB; Rev. R. F. Butin, SM; Rev. T. C. Petersen, CSP; and Rev. E. P. Arbez, SS, the first president of the Catholic Biblical Association. The last of Hyvernat's students, Msgr. Patrick Skehan, taught from 1938 to 1980, and was a member of the original publication team for the Dead Sea Scrolls. From Skehan's time until the present, prominent scholars and faculty members have included Père Albert Jamme, M. Afr; Rev. Alexander DiLella; Fr. Roland Murphy; Rev. Aloysius Fitzgerald; Rev. Dennis Johnson, S. J.; Richard Frank; Michael Patrick O'Connor; Douglas Gropp; and (currently) Prof. Sidney Griffith, ST.

A long-standing and essential feature of the Department is its association with the Institute of Christian Oriental Research (ICOR) and the ICOR library. Hyvernat's personal library of some 20,000 volumes, with strong holdings in Biblical (Hebrew, Aramaic) and Christian Oriental studies (Coptic, Syriac, Arabic) form the core of the library, which was founded in 1931 and has grown into a major international research location.

The Department weathered a faculty crisis in 2007 when one tenured faculty member died and another left to take up another post. Prof. Douglas Gropp resigned his post in the Spring 2007 semester, and Prof. Michael Patrick O'Connor, who was chair of the department, passed away in June 2007 of liver cancer. The two professors together composed the entire faculty responsible for the Ancient Near East curricular track of the Department. After a transitional year in which ANE classes were taught by visiting scholars and recent graduates, two new faculty were hired: Edward M. Cook and Andrew Gross.

The Department currently includes three full-time faculty members: Rev. Sidney **Griffith**, tenured Ordinary Professor; Edward M. **Cook**, M. Div., Ph.D., Associate Professor (granted tenure in August, 2013) and Andrew **Gross**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor (applying for tenure and promotion in AY 2013-2014). In addition, three part-time instructors are an essential part of the Department: Adjunct Associate Professor Janet **Timbie**, Ph.D., Lecturer Shawqi **Talia**, Ph.D., and Lecturer Monica **Blanchard**, M. Ln., Ph.D.

Prof. Griffith is also secretary of ICOR, and Dr. Blanchard serves chiefly as curator and head librarian of the ICOR/Semitics library. Dr. Blanchard has full faculty status in the Department of Library and Information Science at CUA.

In the summer of 2013, Prof. Griffith announced his retirement from full-time teaching at the end of the spring semester 2014. He was granted Emeritus status on Dec. 10, 2013.

### **C. Mission and Mission Statement**

The following is the Mission Statement adopted by the Department in its Annual Report of AY 2007-2008.

The Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures is committed to excellence in research and instruction in the languages and literatures of the Ancient Near East and of the Oriental Christian communities of the Levant. Through its courses in Hebrew, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic and Coptic, the department seeks to serve the needs of students in its own MA and PhD programs, to provide language instruction for the program in Biblical Studies in the School of Theology and Religious Studies, to support the offerings of the Center for the Study of Early Christianity and the Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies, and to contribute its resources to the needs of other departments in the university. Particularly with its courses in Arabic language and literature and its participation in the Honors curriculum, the department is committed to doing its part to enrich the course offerings for CUA's growing undergraduate student body. The department seeks to join with other departments and schools, such as Theology,

Philosophy, History, Anthropology and Comparative Literature, to develop appropriate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural courses of study, particularly on the undergraduate level.

This statement highlights the essential structure of the department into two main curricular tracks: the Ancient North-West Semitic Languages and Literatures (ANWSL) and the Near Eastern Christian Languages and Literatures (NECLL).

#### **D. Summary of Previous Assessments**

The last major internal departmental assessment was made in AY 2007-08 by then Chair Sidney Griffith, assisted by Dr. Blanchard. It contains: a summary of data relating to graduate student retention and graduation; discussion of needed curricular improvements; and various appendices documenting these issues as well as a list of degree recipients from 1969 to 2008. It is found in the appendices.

#### **E. Resources**

##### *Physical Space*

The Department is located in the “garden level” (basement) of the Mullen Library. (A map will be included as an appendix in the final report.) The space allocated to the Department includes the Semitics/ICOR Library Reading Room (Mullen 032); the Periodical Room (Mullen 033); two rooms allocated to the Head Librarian and Curator of the Library, Dr. Monica Blanchard and her assistant (Mullen 035); a double office shared by Profs. Gross and Cook (Mullen 038); a room occupied by Prof. Griffith and the Arabic Reading Room (Mullen 037); the Coptic Seminar Room (Mullen 031), which contains the Coptic portion of the Library, and also functions as classroom space for Coptic, as well as office space for Adjunct Prof. Timbie; and two seminar rooms (Mullen 034 and Mullen 036). The main reading room of the Semitics/ICOR Library (Mullen 032) also functions as study areas for students, and as office space for Lecturer Prof. Shawqi Talia. There is no common room for the Department, other than the hallway area.

Additional space or alternate space is a desideratum, since the faculty do not have enough office space, the students do not have enough study space, and the library collections are threatened by periodic leakages and drips due to its basement location. It is absolutely necessary for the Library and the Department to be located in the same physical area, however, since accessibility to the collection is an essential part of the educational appeal of the DSELL.

##### *Library*

The Semitics/ICOR library, as noted above, is a central part of the Department. It was established to support the teaching and research activities of the Department and ICOR. The holdings reflect the twofold interests of the department: the languages and thought of the Bible and the Ancient Near East, and the languages, literature, and history of the Christian Near East. The library contains some 50,000 volumes of books, serials, and pamphlets, formed around the original private library of Msgr. Hyvernat.

The various collections of the library provide for different research emphases within the broad spectrum of Near Eastern studies, including Semitic philology, Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), pre-Islamic epigraphy, and the Christian Orient. The collections of Coptic, Syriac, and Christian Arabic materials are especially noteworthy. The library is rich in early Catholic imprints from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward. Its collection of “Mosul imprints” from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century printing presses of the Dominican Mission in Iraq deserve special mention. The Departmental and ICOR research collections also include antiquities devoted to early writing in its various manifestations: Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform tablets and cylinder seals, coins from Syria-Palestine, Coptic ostraca, as well as Demotic, Coptic, and Arabic papyri, and some 120 manuscripts in Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Coptic, Ethiopic, Persian, Samaritan, Syriac, and Turkish. In facsimile (photos, microfilm, microfiche) there are an additional 1200+ Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew manuscripts. The library contains the original casts, photographs, and other materials from the 1930 Catholic University—Harvard University joint expedition to Serabit el-Khadim (Sinai), relating to the “Proto-Sinaitic” early alphabetic inscriptions.

The library also holds The Père Albert Jamme, M. Afr., Research Collection with its many resources for the study of the languages of ancient Arabia.

Semitics/ICOR research collections are accessible through published and unpublished sources and finding aids. The collections are non-circulating. The Semitics/ICOR Library participates in the CUA Libraries interlibrary loan program. The Semitics/ICOR Library website is found at the following URL: <http://libraries.cua.edu/semitics/index.cfm>.

#### *Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program (Classical Arabic)*

One of the important ancillary features of the Department is its participation since 2006 in the Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program, or the “Junior Fulbright.” This program, in which a foreign student is placed in American universities to assist in language learning, is sponsored by the US State Department and administered by the Institute of International Education. Our Departmental participation in the program was initiated jointly in 2006 by the Director of the International Students Office Helen Robertson and the late Michael P. O’Connor, chair of the Department of Semitics.

The Department has received a grantee to assist in Arabic language instruction each of the past 8 academic years. The administration of the program for the Department has been undertaken by Dr. Shawqi Talia, who supervises the work of the FLTA and arranges for their housing, board, and instruction while at CUA. The following are the FLTA grantees who have been accredited to our department since 2006, with their country of origin: Sirine Mabrouk, Tunisia, 2006-07; Ghada Atiyya, Egypt, 2007-08; Wissal Dahmane, Tunisia, 2008-09; Hela Hawari, Tunisia, 2009-10; Mona Heeba, Syria, 2010-11; Rim Benromdhane, Tunisia, 2011-12; Ines Khelifi, Tunisia, 2012-13; Latifa Bushehri, Kuwait, 2013-14.

A development that concerns us is the movement of the FLTA program in Arabic to the Modern Languages Department. Since the decision to site the instruction of Modern Standard Arabic in

the Modern Languages department, there has been a competition for the services of the FLTA, although the application to the Fulbright program has been made by on behalf of Semitics only. This competition reached a climax over the summer of 2013, when Dean Lawrence Poos instructed the Chair of the Department that the Semitics FLTA would henceforth have to be shared equally with the Modern Languages department. Dr. Talia was unwilling to undertake the administrative work of supervision of the FLTA for both departments, and indicated that the FLTA, with regret, should be granted to Modern Languages alone.

Fortunately, the administrators of the FLTA program granted two FLTAs to CUA, one for Modern Languages and one for Semitics. It is not known if this will continue, however. This conflict could have been avoided if the teaching of Modern Arabic was sited within the Department of Semitics.

#### *Annual Hyvernat Lecture*

Thanks to a donation from an alumna, the Department has been able, since 2012, to sponsor a high-profile annual lecture by a major scholar from outside the university on a topic central to the interests of the Department.

The inaugural Hyvernat Lecture was given on March 22, 2012, by Prof. Geoffrey Khan of Cambridge University (UK), under the title "The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Dialects and Their Historical Background."

The second Hyvernat Lecture was given by Prof. Lucas van Rompay of Duke University, under the title "Christianity and Scholarship in the Syriac-Orthodox Monasteries of the Early Islamic Period," on March 20, 2013.

The third Hyvernat Lecture is scheduled to be given by Prof. John Huehnergard of the University of Texas at Austin on April 3, 2014.

In addition to the lecture, the Hyvernat speakers spend time with the students, attending a dinner hosted by them, attending various classes of the DSELL, and generally making themselves available to students and faculty.

## **F. Relationship to Other Units and Institutions**

### *School of Theology and Religious Studies*

Besides training our own students, the Department also plays an essential role in providing Semitic language instruction for the School of Theology and Religious Studies (which requires 3 semesters of Biblical Hebrew of all Biblical Studies majors, as well as another Semitic language), so that many STRS students have a deep experience of the Department, especially the ANWSL track. The courses Biblical Hebrew Prose I-II (SEM 611-612) and Biblical Hebrew Poetry I-II (SEM 711-712) are populated principally, though not exclusively, by students from STRS.

*Center for the Study of Early Christianity and Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies*

The course offerings of the NECLL track also provide an essential part of the non-departmental program units the Center for the Study of Early Christianity (CSEC) and the Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies (CMBS). Prof. Timbie of our Department is also Associate Director of the CSEC, and Drs. Blanchard, Griffith, and Gross are on its Faculty Advisory Board. Drs. Blanchard, Griffith, Talia, and Timbie are also affiliated faculty members of CMBS.

*Islamic World Studies Program*

The participation of DSELL in the Islamic World Studies minor and certificate programs should also be noted. Prof. Sidney Griffith and Dr. Shawqi Talia are both Participating Faculty in the IWS curriculum.

*Johns Hopkins University Student Exchange*

Since 2001, the Department has had an arrangement with the Johns Hopkins University Department of Near Eastern Studies, whereby graduate courses in both departments are open to students of both universities, without exchange of tuition or collection of fees. This arrangement has not been taken advantage of to its fullest. (See Appendix.)

## F. Strategic Priorities

The Chair has reviewed departmental assessments from the Annual Reports, as they are available, from the previous ten years, focusing on the period 2008-present.

- The Chair, in common with his predecessors, continues to note the two problems of **understaffing** (not enough faculty and no infrastructural support in the form of Administrative Assistantships, or graduate work-study for clerical help) and **underfunding** (not enough scholarship support to attract the best students, resulting in less selectivity to ensure continued enrollment).

The current number of faculty budget lines (3) is a decrease from the 1990's and early 2000's, when the faculty numbered 5 tenurable positions. With the retirement in the early 2000's of Prof. Richard Frank (Arabic) and Prof. David Johnson (Coptic), these budget lines were assigned elsewhere in the School, and the DSELL has continued with 3 since that time. However, this decrease in faculty strength has coincided with the rise in student enrollment, so that the current personnel is stretched to the limit.

In addition, the post of Chair of the DSELL entails an unusual administrative burden, in that there is no Administrative Assistant for the department, and the limited number of faculty means that the Chair cannot have a reduced teaching load. This could be alleviated by at least assigning a part-time work-study student to the department to help with administrative-clerical matters.

- In recent years, the mandate to develop **undergraduate** courses and programs has grown within the University. Although the Department has made good faith efforts to appeal to undergraduates, the current graduate courses remain beyond the reach of most undergraduates. An effort to initiate a Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) program within the Department in Spring 2011 was aborted by the Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences after one semester, and the program was moved to the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. It is the position of the Department that not enough time was given to the Department to develop this program, and that the proper place for the instruction of Modern Standard Arabic is in the DSELL. However, returning MSA to the department would entail increased faculty strength and a larger budget.

The Department should also explore other means of reaching out to undergraduates, such as through the creation of an undergraduate minor or certificate program which leverages the strengths of the department and utilizes the resources in other units in the University.

- It should be noted that the lecturers and adjuncts do more work than they are paid for. Dr. **Timbie** is paid only for teaching, but also directs dissertations and does student academic counseling; Dr. Talia, in addition to teaching, has also administered the Fulbright Fellow program for the Department, *gratis*; Dr. Monica Blanchard, who holds faculty status in the Department of Library and Information Science, not only teaches classes in the department, but also aids the Chair in various administrative tasks – so much so that by other units she is often identified (wrongly) as the Departmental Administrative Assistant. She is not paid for this administrative work. It should be a priority of the Department and the Administration to recognize the value of these contributions by seeking additional compensation for those who contribute.
- A lack of communication with students regarding requirements for comprehensives and for graduation has been observable from time to time. The Chair believes that the compilation of a **Student Handbook** would help to alleviate this lack of communication; however, the demands of the faculty of teaching, administration, and research have hampered action on this item. A thorough overhaul and updating of the Departmental **website** is also a desideratum (<http://semitics.cua.edu/>). There is currently no one in charge of keeping the website up-to-date, although Dr. Blanchard helps out with web-related matters.

## G. Methodology for Current Assessment

The current assessment relies on data provided by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research (PIR) and on internal records.

The Faculty met as a group in February 2013 to discuss the program review process. The Chair solicited contributions from more senior members concerning past experience with program review and these were forthcoming from Profs. Griffith, Blanchard, Timbie, and Talia. Dr. Gross

was asked to interface with PIR and he was able to get a large amount of usable material from Brian Johnston.

In addition, the Chair met with William Klingshirn, Chair, Greek and Latin; Lilla Kopar, Director, and Katharine Jensen, Associate Director, Center of Medieval and Byzantine Studies; Philip Rousseau, Director, Early Christian Studies to explore possible collaboration in description and assessment of common research areas. This meeting took place on May 9, 2013.

The final assessment was authored by Prof. Cook as chair of the department, but with the incorporation of several prior reports and assessments carried out in the past by Prof. Griffith and Dr. Blanchard.

## **2. Data Collection**

### **A. Statement of Departmental Goals and Objectives**

From its inception, the Catholic University of America was planned as a university in which religious studies would be closely related to the arts and sciences. Our department has always reflected this integration of academic disciplines through its twofold interests: the languages and thought of the Bible and the ancient Near East; and the languages, literatures, and history of the Christian Near East. The department's commitment to research and instruction in the languages, literatures, culture, and history of the Christian Orient is unique in this country, and it is one of the few centers where such studies are actively pursued. It is our departmental goal to preserve these interests and commitments and to expand them where possible.

### **B. Curricula and Requirements**

As noted, the Department offers two primary curricular tracks, one concentrating on Ancient Near East (ANE) and one on Christian Near East (CNE). Both tracks have the same requirements for reaching Master's-level and Doctoral level competence, as follows:

The department offers two masters programs: Ancient Northwest Semitic Languages (ANWSL) (with a concentration in Hebrew); and Near Eastern Christian Languages and Literatures (NECLL) (with concentrations in Syriac, Coptic and Arabic).

#### *ANWSL, MA-Level*

The program in Ancient Northwest Semitic Languages (with a concentration in Biblical Hebrew) leading to a Master of Arts furnishes the linguistic training and other auxiliary studies needed for a scholarly grasp of the texts of the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures in their historical and cultural contexts.

Students must complete 30 semester credit hours for the M.A. These include at least 9 credit hours in the student's major language (credit hours at the 500 level – advanced undergraduate – do not qualify), as well as 6 credit hours in a second Semitic language, which the faculty ascertains best complements the student's major field (usually Aramaic or Akkadian). Up to 6 credit hours of Greek (beyond the elementary 500 level) may be counted. ANWSL students may

take history or language courses (including Syriac, Arabic and Coptic) from the NECLL program. They may take one or more relevant university courses outside the department with the approval of the adviser and chair.

In addition to their course work, M.A. students must select (with the approval of the chair) two research papers they originally wrote for courses (completed with a grade of B or better). After completing the courses, students revise each of these papers to re-submit to the course instructor and one additional reader for approval. This is in lieu of the M.A. thesis option, which for pedagogical reasons the department discourages students from selecting. Students must also satisfy a modern language qualification requirement for reading knowledge of either French or German.

#### *NECLL, MA-level*

The program in Near Eastern Christian Languages and Literatures leading to a Master of Arts (with concentrations in Syriac, Coptic and Arabic) offers future scholars the opportunity to acquire first-hand knowledge and interpretation of the Christian literatures of the Near East in their historical and cultural settings, including Christian interactions with Muslims especially in the early Islamic period. In addition, the department cooperates with the Schools of Theology & Religious Studies and of Philosophy and the Departments of History and Anthropology in the School of Arts & Sciences in the area of early Islamic studies. The department's commitment to research and instruction in the languages, literatures and history of the Christian Near East is unique in this country, and the Catholic University of America is one of the few academic centers where scholars actively pursue such studies.

Major/minor combinations may include: Arabic/Coptic; Arabic/Syriac; Coptic/Arabic; Coptic/Syriac; Syriac/Arabic; Syriac/Coptic. Up to 6 credit hours of Greek (beyond the elementary 500 level) may be counted. NECLL students may take history and language courses (including Hebrew and Aramaic) from the ANWSL program. They may take one or more relevant university courses outside the department with the approval of the adviser and chair. The department permits transfer of graduate credits earned at other accredited institutions in accordance with University regulations.

In addition to their course work, M.A. students must select (with the approval of the chair) two research papers they originally wrote for courses (completed with a grade of B or better). After completing the courses, students revise each of these papers to re-submit to the course instructor and one additional reader for approval. This is in lieu of the M.A. thesis option, which for pedagogical reasons the department discourages students from selecting. Students must also satisfy a modern language qualification requirement for reading knowledge of either French or German.

#### *ANWSL, PhD-level*

The program in Ancient Northwest Semitic Languages leading to a Doctor of Philosophy (with a concentration in Biblical Hebrew) furnishes the advanced linguistic training and other auxiliary

studies needed for a scholarly grasp of the texts of the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures in their historical and cultural contexts.

The Ph.D. program incorporates the M.A. curriculum and requires an additional 30 semester hours of coursework, as well as successful completion of a doctoral comprehensive examination, a thesis and an oral defense of the thesis. Ph.D. candidates must also satisfy modern language qualification requirements for a reading knowledge of French and German.

Ph.D. students engage in course planning with their advisors with a view to completing their course work within three years, if they are full-time students. Among the additional 30 credits for the Ph.D., students are encouraged to take six credits of Greek (or demonstrate an equivalent competence). They also may take two courses, ordinarily six credits, outside the department. In this instance students may propose any courses at CUA that fit into their programs. Because these courses can be at the graduate or advanced undergraduate level (i.e., 500 level or higher) and in a variety of programs or departments, they should complement the student's interests and be adjusted to his or her background and training. Examples of the types of courses Ph.D. students in the ANWSL program have selected include: ENG 625 General Linguistics and TRS 802A Deuteronomistic History. Students also may satisfy this requirement by taking one course per semester from universities belonging to the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Only courses not available at CUA may be proposed, and the approval of the adviser, chair, dean, and consortium coordinator is necessary. Other credit hours are selected from Semitics department courses. ANWSL program students may take history or language courses (including Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic) from the NECLL program.

#### *NECLL, PhD-level*

The program in Near Eastern Christian Languages and Literatures leading to a Doctor of Philosophy (with concentrations in Syriac, Coptic and Arabic) offers future scholars the opportunity to acquire advanced first-hand knowledge and interpretation of the Christian literatures of the Near East in their historical and cultural settings, including Christian interactions with Muslims especially in the early Islamic period. In addition, the department cooperates with the Schools of Theology & Religious Studies and of Philosophy and the Departments of History and Anthropology in the School of Arts & Sciences in the area of early Islamic studies. The department's commitment to research and instruction in the languages, literatures and history of the Christian Near East is unique in this country, and it is one of the few academic centers promoting active pursuit of such studies.

The Ph.D. program incorporates the M.A. curriculum and requires an additional 30 semester hours of coursework, as well as successful completion of a doctoral comprehensive examination, a thesis and an oral defense of the thesis. Ph.D. candidates must also satisfy modern language qualification requirements for a reading knowledge of French and German.

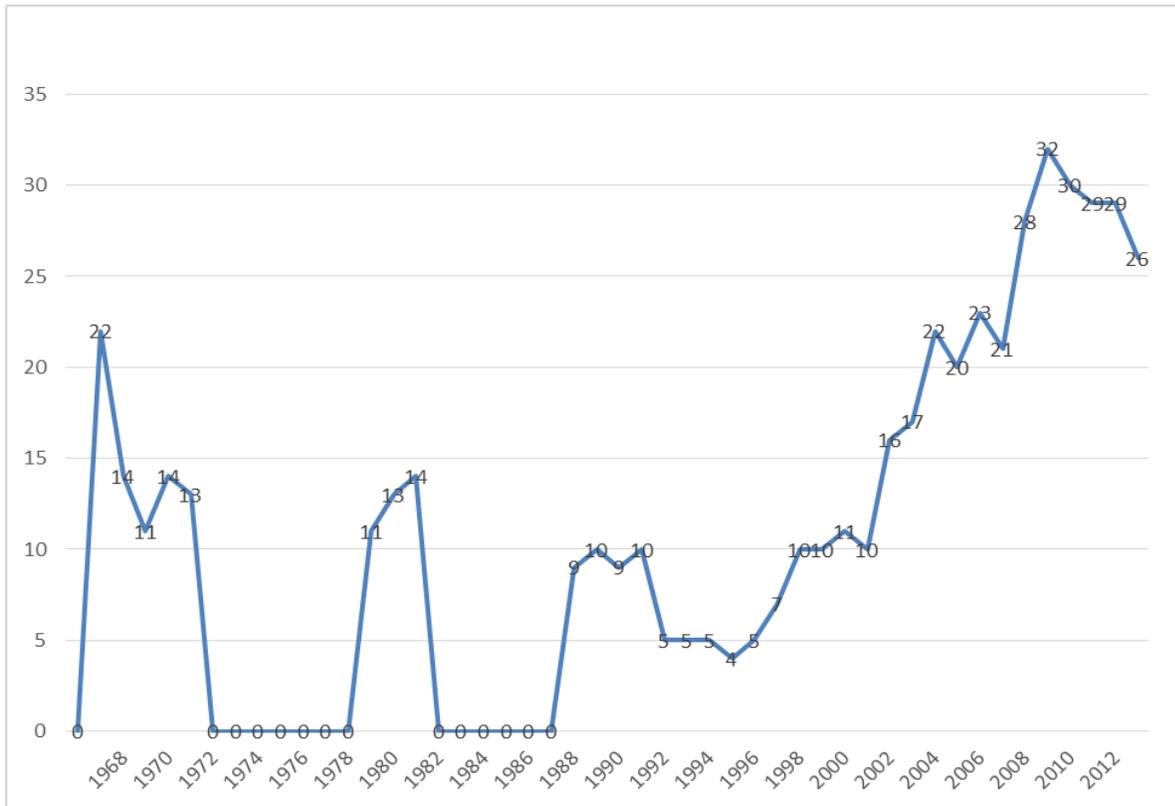
Ph.D. students engage in course planning with their advisors with a view to completing their course work within three years, if they are full-time students. Among the additional 30 credits for

the Ph.D., students must take six credits of Greek (or demonstrate an equivalent competence). They also may take two courses, ordinarily six credits, outside the department. In this instance students may propose any courses at CUA that fit into their programs. Because these courses can be at the graduate or advanced undergraduate level (i.e., 500 level or higher) and in a variety of programs or departments, they should complement the student's interests and be adjusted to his or her background and training. Examples of the types of courses Ph.D. students in the NECLL program have selected include: ECST 778 Monasticism in Late Antiquity and PHIL 747 Plotinus. Students also may satisfy this requirement by taking one course per semester from universities belonging to the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area. Only courses not available at CUA may be proposed, and the approval of the adviser, chair, dean, and consortium coordinator is necessary. One example of the type of course Ph.D. students in the NECLL program have selected is George Washington University's REL 773 Perennial Philosophy. Other credit hours are selected from Semitics department courses. NECLL students may take history and language courses (including Hebrew and Aramaic) from the ANSWL program.

### **C. Student Quality / Demographics**

#### *Enrollment Trends*

The enrollment trends can be examined in the following chart. Although the current enrollment of 26 (as of Fall 2013) is down from the all-time high of 32 (as of Fall 2008), the overall trend is one of increasing enrollment.



(Note: No data is available for 1972-1978, 1982-1988 from PIR; departmental records indicate that the FT enrollments were < 5 for most of the 80's.)

It will be noted that there is a trend of *increasing enrollment against decreasing faculty*. FT enrollment in the Dept. from AY 1984-85 to AY 1990-91 averaged 3.2. Current enrollment (AY 2013-14), both FT and PT, is 26. However, in AY 1990-91 FT faculty was 5 (Frank, Griffith, Fitzgerald, Johnson, Gropp); today it is 3 (Griffith, Cook, Gross) with one adjunct (Timbie) and 2 part-time lecturers (Talia, Blanchard).

*Application and Admission*

The most recent information available from PIR concerning application and admission is contained in the following table:

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA												
Planning, Institutional Research, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment												
APPLICATION, ADMISSION, AND ENROLLMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SEMITIC AND EGYPTIAN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE												
Fall 2008 - Fall 2012												
	Fall 2008				Fall 2009				Fall 2010			
	Master's	Doctorate	Non-Degree	Total	Master's	Doctorate	Non-Degree	Total	Master's	Doctorate	Non-Degree	Total
Applied	7	7	3	17	9	8	1	18	5	13	2	20
Admitted	5	7	3	15	7	8	1	16	4	10	2	16
Selectivity	71.4%	100.0%	100%	88.2%	77.8%	100.0%	100%	88.9%	80.0%	76.9%	100%	80.0%
Enrolled	3	5	3	11	5	4	1	10	1	4	1	6
Yield	60.0%	71.4%	100%	73.3%	71.4%	50.0%	100%	62.5%	25.0%	40.0%	50%	37.5%
<b>Avg. GRE Score</b>												
Verbal	*	668			624	513			*	643		
Quantitative	*	670			644	588			*	690		
Writing	*	5.3			5	4.5			*	4.9		
* GRE score not reported when the number of reported scores is less than two students												
	Fall 2011				Fall 2012							
	Master's	Doctorate	Non-Degree	Total	Master's	Doctorate	Non-Degree	Total				
Applied	10	3	1	14	8	13	1	22				
Admitted	8	3	1	12	6	11	1	18				
Selectivity	80.0%	100.0%	100%	85.7%	75.0%	84.6%	100%	81.8%				
Enrolled	2	1	1	4	2	7	0	9				
Yield	25.0%	33.3%	100%	33.3%	33.3%	63.6%	0%	50.0%				
<b>Avg. GRE Score</b>												
Verbal	515	*			*	646						
Quantitative	440	*			*	674						
Writing	2.5	*			*	4.9						
* GRE score not reported when the number of reported scores is less than two students												

It is clear from these data that the Department is not able to be very selective about admissions, never going below 80% in selectivity; but, even so, the yield is usually very low. The explanation for both sets of figures is the same: the *Department has no financial resources to offer incoming students*. Although the standard doctoral funding at other departments and schools of CUA is a stipend of \$18,000-\$20,000 per year for five years, the Department of Semitics has *no stipends* to offer whatsoever. Even Medieval & Byzantine Studies, a program rather than a department, has a two-year \$15,000 per year stipend to offer to one student. The only funding available for DSELL is that given through the A&S Graduate Office in the form of Deferrari Humanities Scholarships (tuition waivers of 100% or 50%) or competitive University scholarships based on GRE. Although the department's offerings are unique on the national scene, *most of our top-tier applicants choose to matriculate elsewhere*.

## D. Student Learning Outcomes

A 2008 document on goals gives an overview of the department, descriptions of the two tracks (Ancient Near East and Christian Near East), goals for student learning in the two tracks, and lists the program milestones, which are equated with the assessment outcome measures. It can be found at <http://pir.cua.edu/res/docs/goal-statements/grad-goals/GR-SEM-goal.pdf> and is given here in extenso.

*ANWSL & NECLL Program Milestones (Direct Student Assessment Outcome Measures):*

1. Admissions Requirements. Requirements for admission to graduate study in the university are published in the General Information section of the Graduate Studies

Announcements. Briefly, applicants for graduate study leading to a degree in the department are required to submit:

- a) An application for graduate study;
- b) Official transcripts of all undergraduate coursework and postsecondary studies;
- c) Three official letters of recommendation from academic sources who are acquainted with the applicants' ability for graduate study;
- d) Official score reports from the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE);
- e) A statement of purpose for undertaking graduate study in this department. Competence in the English language is a requirement. International applicants from countries and areas where English is not the common, spoken language are required to take the standard Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL, and submit the results to support their applications.

2. Course Grades. Graduate students must consistently earn grades of A and B in their courses. Any graduate student who obtains two or more grades of C in coursework for his or her graduate program is subject to academic dismissal.

3. Fulfilling the modern language qualification requirements for French and German indicates a reading level of knowledge of these languages. One of these two language qualification requirements is taken to fulfill M.A. requirements; the other is taken to fulfill Ph.D. requirements. The modern language qualification requirements may be satisfied in various ways:

- a) By presenting a minimum score of 450 on the Graduate School Foreign Language Test;
- b) By passing the non-credit intensive 500-level language course offered by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures;
- c) Unusually, in special circumstances, by passing a Semitics department- administered language test.
- d) A student whose native language is French or German shall be considered to have fulfilled the language requirement in that language without examination, provided that the department chair states, in writing, to the academic dean that the language is a language of scholarship for the student's discipline.

4. Comprehensive Examination. Students in a doctoral program typically register in the academic dean's office for the doctoral comprehensive examination at the beginning of the Fall or Spring semesters and notify the chair of the department of their intention to take the examination. They take their comprehensive examination in one major language/literature and one minor language/literature. ANWSL major/minor combinations may include: Hebrew/Aramaic; Hebrew/Akkadian. NECLL major/minor combinations may include: Arabic/Coptic; Arabic/Syriac; Coptic/Arabic; Coptic/Syriac; Syriac/Arabic; Syriac/Coptic. The

student's graduate advisor and a faculty member with primary responsibility for the student's minor language area of concentration prepare reading lists for the exam. The department also encourages students to review the department file of examination questions from previous years. The two faculty members who developed the examination and at least one other evaluate the completed examination, applying the same specified criteria: linguistic proficiency, and knowledge and interpretation of the examination texts within their historical and literary contexts. The comprehensive examination is taken over the course of two eight-hour days. One day is allotted to the major language/literature and one day to the minor language/literature. While the master's comprehensive examinations assess the linguistic proficiency of the students, the doctoral comprehensive examinations assess linguistic competence, literary analytical skills, and knowledge and interpretation of the texts within their historical and literary contexts. The scoring framework is pass-fail. The three faculty members must agree on the examination score. If a student does not pass one or both parts of the examination, the student may take the failed part(s) of the examination again the next semester. A second failure is final.

5. Admission to Candidacy for the doctoral degree. The faculty of the school and department must evaluate the progress of the student and determine that the student has completed all course and other requirements, has passed the comprehensive examination, and is otherwise qualified to fulfill the requirements of the doctoral dissertation. A department criterion for admitting students to candidacy for the doctoral degree is demonstrated research and writing ability, as evinced by the student's two master's research papers and by the student's subsequent 700-level research papers. All 700-level papers must receive a grade of B or higher to meet this criterion.

6. Dissertation proposal. Students must complete their dissertation proposals within four semesters of completing doctoral comprehensive exams. In consultation with the department chair and the graduate adviser a student selects a committee, consisting of a dissertation director and two readers. The doctoral candidate submits the proposal for dissertation topic and committee on the form Doctoral Dissertation Topic and Committee: Request for Approval, online at <http://graduatestudies.cua.edu>. The approval process for a dissertation topic is described in the university's Dissertation Handbook.

7. Dissertation. The student writes the dissertation to the satisfaction of the dissertation director. Then the dissertation is submitted to the readers for review and approval or rejection. The student's planning and work on his or her dissertation also reflects ongoing conversations with the graduate adviser and department chair along with the rest of the faculty. Students must complete an acceptable dissertation within five years of formal admission to candidacy, including addressing any revisions the committee suggests. Committee members receive regular updates and portions of the dissertation for review; the readers make their suggestions and corrections through the dissertation director. The dissertation director, in consultation with the readers, determines when the dissertation is ready for defense and requests approval signatures from the readers (required for oral defense) at that time. Committee members do not sign until

they agree that the dissertation is ready for defense. All three committee member signatures are required.

8. Oral Defense. The oral defense of the dissertation is conducted in accordance with rules enforced in the School of Arts and Sciences. Briefly, the oral examination board shall include, in addition to the candidate's dissertation committee, two faculty members from outside the department, one serving as chair and the other as secretary during the examination. In order to pass, the candidate must receive a "pass" vote from at least four of board examiners. The examination board is not permitted to pass the candidate conditionally. If a candidate fails in the first oral examination, he or she must obtain permission from the school to retake the examination. If a candidate fails a second time in the oral examination, he or she ceases to be a candidate for the doctoral degree. Criteria for evaluating the oral defense include:

- i. the dissertation constitutes a significant contribution to the field of study;
- ii. the quality of oral presentation of topic, methodology, results;
- iii. the quality of context knowledge, demonstration of analytical ability and awareness of intellectual context of study.

#### *Indirect Student Assessment Outcome Measures*

In addition to the ANWSL and NECLL program milestones, student assessment outcome measures for the department doctoral programs include:

9. Student evaluations.

a) Student evaluations of courses and faculty are captured on a departmental evaluation form handed out in class during the last week of the semester. The forms are filled out anonymously and returned to the department chair. The chair reviews the evaluations with faculty in department meetings at the end of the semester.

b) The faculty evaluate the students with a view to measuring their academic progress at department meetings at the end of the Fall and Spring academic semesters.

10. Student-Faculty interaction. Department offices and classrooms are housed within the departmental library. Students and faculty have assigned work space in the library rooms, where critical library resources are used. This model promotes and encourages student-faculty interaction in a small academic department. The department considers this informal student-faculty interaction valuable because it provides early indicators of difficulties with course assignments and research. It also provides early indicators of a student's research and language interests, which can be used to help students make good course decisions.

11. End-of-program surveys. The department asks graduates to fill out a department end-of-program survey when they graduate. These forms are filled out anonymously and returned to the department chair. The chair reviews the surveys with faculty at department meetings.

In addition, the Chairs have made yearly assessments for the Office of Planning and Institutional Research since AY 2008-09. The primary issue emerging from these assessments (available at <https://pir.cua.edu/learning-outcomes/index.cfm>) is the need for explicit rubrics for grading comprehensive exams in order to ensure the quality control of graduate progress towards the degree. These rubrics have been created and were implemented in AY 2009-10. The rubrics are given in the appendices.

### **E. Faculty and Student Research**

Full details on faculty publications can be found in the faculty CV's attached to the final document in the appendices.

**Since AY 2007-2008**, the following summary is believed to be accurate for current faculty (Griffith, Cook, Gross):

- Books authored (sole author): 3 (Griffith, Cook, Gross), plus 2 more now in press (Griffith, Cook)
- Books authored (co-author): 2 (Cook 1, Gross 1)
- Books edited or co-edited: 1 (Gross)
- Articles in peer-reviewed journals (not including book reviews): 7 (Griffith 5, Cook 1, Gross 1 [forthcoming])
- Articles in collections of essays, *Festschriften*, etc.: 25 (Griffith 20, Cook 3, Gross 2)
- Articles in Encyclopedias or reference books: 7 (Cook 3, Gross 2, Griffith 2)

**Since AY 2007-2008**, the following summary is believed to be accurate for current staff (adjuncts and lecturers Talia, Blanchard, Timbie):

- Books authored (sole author or co-author): 0
- Books edited or co-edited: 2 (Timbie, Blanchard)
- Articles in peer-reviewed journals (not including book reviews): 2 (Talia)
- Articles in collections of essays, *Festschriften*, etc.: 4 (Timbie), 3 (Talia)
- Articles in Encyclopedias or reference books: 4 (Talia), 1 (Timbie).

It is apparent from the above numbers that Prof. Griffith has been by far the most productive of the faculty in terms of publications.

In addition, current students and recent graduates have been active in publishing and presentations at scholarly conferences. The following is a sample:

Peter Lee (Ph. D., 2011): “A Poetic Analysis of 4Q246, the ‘Son of God’ Text,” presentation at the Society of Biblical Literature National Meeting 2010;

Ryann Craig (current doctoral student): published “Anastasis in the Treatise on the Resurrection: How Jesus’ Example Informs Valentinian Resurrection Doctrine and Christology,” in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, eds. G. Van Oyen & T. Shepherd (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 249), Peeters Publishers, 2012; also obtained position at National Archives and Records Administration, Student Technician/Arabic Cataloger for the Iraqi Jewish Archives Project.

Stephen Coleman (current doctoral student), wrote two book reviews: Review of *The Rhetoric of Remembrance*, by Jerry Hwang, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 23.2, (2013): 265-66, and Review of *Righteousness in the Book of Proverbs*, by Sun Myung Lyu, *Westminster Theological Journal* (forthcoming).

William Fullilove (doctoral student, graduating May 2014) wrote several encyclopedia entries: “Aramaic,” “Aramaic Script,” “Bethany Beyond the Jordan,” “Cuneiform,” “Khirbet el-Kom,” and “Ugaritic,” for the *Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Logos, 2012).

Andrew Platt (current doctoral student) has made several presentations recently: June 2011: Paper, “The Testing of God: Mar Babai on the Union of God and Man in Christ,” Syriac Symposium, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; March 2013: Paper, “Affirming Identity: The Early 7th Century in the History of the Church of the East.” American Oriental Society Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon; June 2013: Paper, “Changing Mission at Home and Abroad: Timothy I Catholicos and the Church of the East in the Early Abbasid Period.” 4th Salzburg International Conference on the Church of the East in China and Central Asia, Salzburg, Austria; November 2013: Paper, “‘Inquiring of Beelzebub’: Christians between the Caliph’s Courts and the ‘Kingdom of God.’” Co-written with and presented by Nathan Gibson, CUA, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Baltimore, Maryland.

Andrew Litke (current doctoral student) has had a paper accepted in the peer-reviewed journal *Aramaic Studies*: “The Semantics of ‘Fire’ in the Targumim,” 2014.

## F. Teaching Load

The average course load per semester per FT faculty member is 3 courses, with both Griffith and Cook occasionally teaching 4 courses in a semester. Average teaching load for part-time faculty (Timbie, Talia, Blanchard) since AY 07-08 is 2. The following table gives the teaching load for the last two AYs (the DSELL course catalog will be found among the appendices):

	<i>Griffith</i>	<i>Cook</i>	<i>Gross</i>	<i>Timbie</i>	<i>Talia</i>	<i>Blanchard</i>
<b>Fall 2013</b>	SEM 631	SEM 711	SEM 611	SEM 681	SEM	SEM 531
	SEM 641	SEM 719	SEM 702	SEM 781	241/541	
					SEM	

	SEM 731	SEM 723	SEM 761		247/547	
					SEM 545	
					SEM 694	
<b>Spring 2013</b>	SEM 505/705	SEM 522 SEM 612	SEM 708 SEM 712	SEM 505/705	SEM 242/542	SEM 332/532
	SEM 732	SEM 722	SEM 662	SEM 782	SEM 247/547	
	SEM 632			SEM 682	SEM 546	
	SEM 642					
<b>Fall 2012</b>	SEM 631	SEM 521	SEM 661	SEM 381/681	SEM 241/541	SEM 331/531
	SEM 641	SEM 611	SEM 707			
	SEM 792	SEM 622	SEM 711	SEM 781	SEM 247/547	SEM 804
	SEM 993	SEM 718			SEM 545	
<b>Spring 2012</b>	SEM 503/703	SEM 612 SEM 522	SEM 712 SEM 718	SEM 503/703	SEM 242/542	SEM 532
	SEM 632	SEM 993	SEM 762	SEM 682	SEM 247/547	
	SEM 642			SEM 782	SEM 546	
	SEM 732					

In addition, the Department appoints one Teaching Fellow per year, an advanced graduate student who teaches SEM 511-512 (Introduction to Biblical Hebrew). In AY 2011-12, the Teaching Fellow was Mr. Stephen Coleman; in AY 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, the Teaching Fellow was Ms. Alexandra Lupu.

**Dissertation Direction:** Profs. Griffith and Cook are responsible for most of the dissertation direction in the department. As of the time of writing (beginning of Spring 2014 semester), the dissertations under direction are as follows:

**Griffith**      Elie K. Estephan

Nathan P. Gibson

Joshua K. Hood

Seon Young Kim

Andrew T. Platt

Colby Scott

**Cook** Stephen Coleman

Alexandra Lupu

William Fullilove (to graduate May 2014)

Andrew Litke

**Gross** Cynthia Park

**Timbie** Vince Bantu

### 3. Analysis and Evaluation

#### **A. Mission Statement, Goals, Objectives**

The 2008 Mission Statement is still an effective and accurate statement of the principal goals and objectives of the Department.

#### **B. Developments (since previous self-study)**

Developments since the 2008 self-study that are relevant to its themes are as follows:

The desire expressed in that document (see Appendix) to develop undergraduate courses has not borne much fruit. The attempt to incorporate Modern Arabic into the curriculum at the undergraduate level was aborted by the Dean of Arts & Sciences after one semester, despite the inherent synergy between Classical and Modern Arabic Studies. Although Arabic is a growth area in our field, our Department has not been able to take advantage of it.

The 2008 document also expresses the belief that staff levels at that time were "inadequate properly to support graduate study, especially in the Christian Near East program." There has been no change in this area. With the impending retirement of Prof. Griffith, we consider ourselves blessed that the Administration, especially Provost James Brennan, has allowed us to carry on a faculty search during a time of budgetary austerity in the University. This will allow us to find a fitting successor to Prof. Griffith. In the long run, however, it still must be admitted that the NECLL track is inadequately staffed in terms of tenured faculty.

The 2008 document therefore expressed an interest in adding full-time faculty members in the area of Coptic and Arabic (i.e., returning to the previous full faculty complement of 5), as well as possibly adding a position in post-Biblical Hebrew and an additional position in Arabic. In the current budgetary atmosphere, it would seem that such faculty growth is a long way off, but it remains a desideratum.

In short, the felt needs of the Department in 2008 continue to be felt, and largely unmet, in 2014. Nevertheless, the Department feels that the Administration (beyond the School level) is sympathetic to the DSELL's problems and prospects, and we shall continue to forge ahead in the hopes of better days to come.

### **C. Trends (analysis against past performance)**

There is some lack of clarity about what precisely is demanded under this rubric. The only observable trend of note is a slight drop-off in applications and enrollments from a historical high point of 32 in 2008 (currently 26). Nevertheless, the growth of graduate studies in the humanities nationally is reflected in the Department's growth, with the concomitant problem of producing more Ph.D's than the job market demands. Nevertheless, the great majority of our graduates are able to find jobs in academia or in a closely related field.

### **D. Comparative Analysis – analysis against peer and aspirational groups**

It is difficult to identify an aspirational target for the Semitics Department from among local universities, since our offerings are almost unique in the area, both among Catholic and non-Catholic colleges. The only true analogues, except for Johns Hopkins, are found farther afield. In terms of size, the Hopkins program is comparable (currently 28 graduate students compared to CUA's 26), although their faculty is larger (11 faculty, both full- and part-time) compared to CUA's 6, both full- and part-time.) In terms of course coverage, the most comparable program is Yale's (see below).

#### *Local Catholic Colleges*

**Georgetown:** no program in Semitic languages as such; has degree programs in Arabic (BA, MA, PhD) and a minor in Hebrew (BA). Both of these are based on the modern, not the ancient, languages. Georgetown has no regular course offerings in Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, Syriac, Coptic, or Classical Arabic.

**Mount St. Mary's:** No programs in the Semitic languages.

**St. Joseph's:** No programs in the Semitic languages; an undergraduate "Ancient Studies Minor" is offered with concentrations in Greek and Latin.

**Villanova:** Has BA and MA programs in Classical Studies, but no program in Semitic Languages. They have an undergraduate minor available through their Center for Arabic and Islamic Studies, but no graduate courses in the ancient languages, including Hebrew, Classical Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, Aramaic, etc.

### *Local Non-Catholic Colleges*

**American University:** Has a Center for Israel Studies, which, however, has no Hebrew component, as well as a minor in Jewish Studies (no Hebrew required). AMU also has a World Languages and Cultures Department with course offerings in Modern Arabic and Modern Hebrew. No graduate programs in ancient Semitic languages are offered.

**George Mason:** Offers an MA in Middle East and Islamic Studies, with language courses available in the following modern languages: Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, Urdu. No courses are offered in the ancient Semitic languages such as Biblical Hebrew, Akkadian, Classical Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, or Aramaic.

**University of Maryland:** Has a School of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures with programs in Arabic Studies, Hebrew Studies, and Persian Studies (all modern). In addition, UMD's Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies hosts programs in Jewish Studies, Israel Studies, and Religious Studies, and offers an MA in Jewish Studies, as well as a non-degree certificate program. The Jewish Studies program includes classes in Biblical Hebrew, rabbinic Hebrew, and medieval Hebrew. No classes are offered in Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic, Akkadian, or Classical Arabic.

**George Washington:** Has a Department of Classical and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, with undergraduate majors and minors in Arabic (modern), Classics (Greek and Latin), Hebrew (modern), Yiddish, Persian (modern), and Turkish (modern). In addition, an undergraduate Semitics minor is offered that combines courses in modern Arabic and modern Hebrew. No classes are offered in the ancient Semitic languages, either graduate or undergraduate.

**Howard University:** Offers a 4-semester undergraduate sequence in modern Arabic, but no other offerings in modern or ancient Semitic languages.

**The Johns Hopkins University:** The Department of Near Eastern Studies is most similar to CUA's Department of Semitics, although it is larger. They currently have 6 full faculty and 5 adjuncts and lecturers, and 28 graduate students. Advanced degrees (MA, PhD) are offered in Assyriology, Egyptology, and Northwest Semitic Languages (all ancient), as well as an undergraduate minor. They are similar to Chicago in that the focus of their curriculum is in Assyriology (Akkadian) and Egyptology, but they have significant course offerings in Biblical Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Northwest Semitic Epigraphy as well. Their course catalog lists only 2 courses in Aramaic and none in Syriac.

### *National Colleges with Similar Programs*

**University of Wisconsin-Madison:** Offers the MA and PhD from the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, with a faculty of 3 professors, and 2 lecturers. The principal component of the curriculum is Hebrew, especially Biblical Hebrew. A 2-semester sequence in Aramaic is offered and a 2-semester sequence in Syriac.

**University of Chicago:** Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations offers MA and PhD programs in a wide variety of areas; currently they list over 125 students in the graduate program, in diverse areas such as Islamic History and Civilization, Cuneiform Studies, Comparative Semitics, Northwest Semitic Philology, Egyptology, Hebrew Bible, and so on. Their concentration is ancient languages and cultures. They currently list 39 faculty, both professors and lecturers. They are the behemoth of ancient Near Eastern studies in the US, but their offerings in Christian Near Eastern languages are few.

**University of Notre Dame:** There is no Semitics department or Near Eastern languages department as such at Notre Dame. They offer the MA in Classics and in Early Christian Studies. Graduate study in Syriac is offered on a rotating basis as part of the Early Christian Studies MA, and Arabic Studies is offered as part of the Classics curriculum. The UND Department of Theology offers the Ph.D. in the area of Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity, and as part of the curriculum, classes in Biblical Hebrew and Akkadian are offered. Apparently no classes in Aramaic (other than Syriac) are offered, and no regular classes in Coptic, although they have a successful summer program that offers instruction in Coptic and Syriac.

**Harvard University:** The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations offers the undergraduate as well as MA and Ph.D. degrees in several major subfields: Histories and Cultures of Muslim Societies, Jewish History and Culture, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Arabic and Islamic Studies, Akkadian and Sumerian Studies, and Hebrew Bible. They currently have 65 graduate students and 33 faculty. They have a similar range of courses in Aramaic and Hebrew to the DSELL (although Aramaic is taught through the Harvard Divinity School and not from the NELC department), and they have richer offerings in cuneiform languages and in modern Semitic languages. There are no classes at Harvard in Syriac or Coptic.

**Yale University:** The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in the areas of Arabic & Islamic Studies, Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Assyriology, Graeco-Arabic Studies, and Northwest Semitic Languages. They currently list 19 graduate students, 8 faculty members, 3 lecturers, and 10 lecturers. They currently offer graduate courses in Akkadian and Sumerian, Classical and Modern Arabic, Egyptian & Coptic, modern Hebrew, Persian, Ugaritic, Syriac, and Turkish. In terms of course coverage and student population, the Yale Department is probably overall most similar to CUA's Department, although Yale has an undergraduate degree program, requiring a larger faculty.

### *Summary and Recommendations*

From this survey it should be clear that universities differ widely in the siting of the particular disciplines and areas of study found in CUA's Department of Semitics, when they offer them at all. The most common trend is to combine ancient and modern areal studies in one department of "Near Eastern" or "Middle Eastern" languages and literatures. This has the advantage of leveraging the very real synergies between ancient and modern in this part of the world, but inevitably the ancient side of the equation tends to suffer loss of resources and attention compared to the modern. Many of the programs described above (e.g., Harvard, Yale) have

actually experienced shrinkage in the area of ancient Semitic language studies, while the modern languages (especially Arabic) are growing. Such retrenchment is not an option for Catholic University, since one of the *raisons d'être* of the Department is to maintain focus on the ancient Near Eastern matrix from which Christianity and Judaism emerged, and to underline the importance and contribution of Catholic Christianity in the East. In this focus, CUA remains unique and this uniqueness should not be undermined.

At the same time, the Department feels that there is an opportunity to grow the Department and to capitalize on the ancient-modern linkages of the Middle East. This could be done by returning the Modern Standard Arabic classes to the Department as well as looking for opportunities to expand the modern language offerings of the Department – not only in Arabic, but in other relevant modern languages such as Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, and Ethiopic. In this respect, CUA may well look to such other departments as Yale and Johns Hopkins as aspirational models.

This could only happen if the faculty were expanded and more resources given to the Department to develop courses, hire lecturers, and offer student financial support. In view of the recent budgetary issues of the University, it is doubtful if such steps can or will be taken in the near future. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind as an aspirational ideal.

## 4. Conclusions

### A. Overall Assessment

The overall assessment of the Department is that, while it has the resources to maintain its current level of student enrollment, faculty quality, and national and world profile, it does not have the resources to significantly increase in any of these areas.

### B. Identification of Strengths

To the question, “Is the program advancing the state of the discipline or profession?”<sup>1</sup> the Department responds “yes.” Due to the uniqueness of its configuration and its curriculum, DSELL offers opportunity to incoming students to master the Semitic languages and to advance research in the area. The great majority of our graduates have gone on to positions in national and international graduate schools and seminaries, where they have the opportunity to use their training to train others. Both the graduates and the faculty participate regularly and productively in conferences and meetings, as well as writing well-respected and well-reviewed publications. The current faculty search has drawn applications from scholars trained at and employed by some of the finest research universities in the US and in the world, all of them expressing an aspiration to be a part of a highly influential and well-known program.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs: A Policy Statement* (Council of Graduate Schools, 2005)

To the question, “Does the program meet the institution’s goals?” the Department responds with an emphatic “yes.” We feel that the linguistic and literary work that we do is “scientific” in the broadest sense (*wissenschaftlich*) and our dedication to academic rigor reflects this approach.

The mission statement of the University includes the following passage:

*The Catholic University of America gives primacy to scholarship and scientific research and to the training of future scholars through its graduate programs, not only in order to advance scientific work but also because it recognizes that undergraduate and professional education of high quality also demands the presence of a faculty that combines teaching and professional activity with fundamental scholarship.*

The DSELL, in its historical emphases, which give priority to scholarship and research, and in its present tasks, particularly the training of future scholars, is committed to and doing an overall good job of advancing research, training scholars, and influencing future generations through these means, in a way that is not only consistent with, but actively supportive of Catholic identity and teaching.

To the question, “Is the Department’s teaching and training of students effective?” the answer must be a qualified yes – qualified because of the inherent limitations of the small size of the department and because of the limited resources available for student support. The small faculty size means that the same faculty must teach the same core courses year after year, and the scope for offering electives and special seminars is limited. The limited student support imposes a kind of ceiling on incoming student quality, in that many (but not all!) gifted students choose to study where they can get more financial support. Applicants who do matriculate in the DSELL, even with the benefit of tuition waivers and other means, are often stressed and concerned in the latter stages of their program with making ends meet. Still, within these limitations, DSELL’s outcomes are generally high, its graduation rate is strong, dissertation quality is generally high, and most students go on to get jobs in the field and have productive careers.

### C. Identification of Weaknesses

Some of the weaknesses were adumbrated in the previous paragraph. Although the department’s research resources (such as the Semitics/ICOR library) are rich, and the faculty quality is high, the limited size and enrollment keeps DSELL from having the impact it could have, both within and without the University. Within the University, despite sporadic attempts to engage undergraduates, undergraduate interest and awareness of the few offerings open to them in DSELL remains low. The image of DSELL within the University in general is of a small, specialized “boutique” department with limited connections to the broader interests of the campus. Matters were not helped by the removal of the nascent Modern Arabic program to Modern Languages, a move which effectively barred the Department from expansion and kept its campus profile low among undergraduates.

The small faculty size also prevents enrichment of the curriculum, especially for those who take the full 60 credits necessary for the Ph.D. Especially in the ANE track, the two responsible

faculty are obliged to repeat the same core courses year after year for the benefit of entering MA students and Theology students, so that doctoral students, before their comprehensives, have only limited options, which include independent studies, courses outside the department or field, or taking classes within the Department which are somewhat tangential to the central interests of their area. In the Christian Near East track, as noted, the available faculty – even after the current faculty search for a successor to Prof. Griffith is complete – are barely sufficient to support a full doctoral program.

#### D. Recommendations for Moving Forward

One way in which to leverage the current offerings of the Department, increase its appeal to undergraduates, and also increase collaboration between units – without hiring more faculty – is to create an undergraduate Minor or Certificate in Christian Near East Studies, which would draw upon the expertise of current faculty, while leveraging the abilities of other faculty who teach in the relevant areas. Faculty such as Wilhelmus Valkenberg (STRS) and Lev Weitz (History) could be added as "Participating Faculty," and the required courses could include at least one of the CNE languages currently taught within the department such as Syriac, Coptic, or Arabic. Such an interdisciplinary program could also make use of the extensive contacts in the Middle East enjoyed by the faculty members and explore the possibility of incorporating opportunities available through CUA Abroad. The curriculum would be sited within Semitics but would incorporate an interdisciplinary approach.

To create such a program, information on the probable interest of undergraduates in such a program would have to be determined, as well as the willingness of other units to be involved. This would be a task for a committee from the Department.

Another way of increasing curricular richness without adding more faculty is to explore the course offerings available within the Washington Area Consortium, and to renew the connections with the Johns Hopkins University Department of Near Eastern Studies.

The Department also recommends exploring the feasibility of returning Modern Standard Arabic to the Department, under the following conditions: (1) increased clerical support for the Department through the appointment of an Administrative Assistant or a work-study graduate student, since the addition of MSA would mean an immediate doubling of the student population of DSELL; (2) the willing collaboration of the Modern Languages Department; (3) recognition that the DSELL retains the services of the Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant; (4) support from the Dean of Arts & Sciences for this move.

The Department recommends in any case the appointment of an Administrative Assistant or a work-study graduate assistant to aid in the clerical needs of the Department.

The Department recommends the return of a fourth full-time faculty budget line to the Department.

The Department recommends that at least one graduate student stipend in the amount of \$20,000 for 5 years be made available to the Department, in addition to the tuition waivers and scholarships currently available from the Graduate Office.

## 5. Action Items

Department Action item #1: Appoint a committee to explore the feasibility of forming an undergrad Minor or Certificateship in Christian Near East

*Responsible party*: Edward Cook, Chair

Department Action item #2: Invite student participation in the formation of a Student Handbook.

*Responsible party*: Edward Cook, Chair, in collaboration with DSELL GSA representative

Department Action item #3: Research the available supplementary course offerings through the Consortium and explore the possibility of a renewed relationship with Johns Hopkins through the Exchange Agreement

*Responsible party*: Andrew Gross, Assistant Professor

All other action items on recommendations given above lie within the responsibility of the University Administration.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward M. Cook, Ph.D.

Chair, Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures