

1/12/09

## **SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2008/09**

(The Department of Scandinavian Studies had its last review in 2006. Parts of the material we submitted in the Self-Study prior to that review will also appear in the 2008-09 Strategic Plan).

### **Section 1**

The interdepartmental program in Scandinavian Studies is staffed by two fulltime faculty members in the Department of Scandinavian Studies, one Nordic historian (a member of the Department of History), and adjunct faculty who either come to Gustavus to teach IEX courses during January Term or teach courses in Sweden within the Semester in Sweden program. For several years the program has also had a Scandinavian librarian with training in Scandinavian studies and knowledge of the Nordic languages.

There are generally 14-15 courses per year, not counting Scandinavian studies and Swedish language courses taught abroad. The total on-campus enrollment per year has remained relatively steady over the last decade, with fluctuations occurring when we do/do not offer IEX courses. Averaging the enrollment over the last five years, there have been about 200 students in our courses per year (highest 221, lowest 183). Presently we have seven majors and we generally have about as many minors. Most majors' course-work includes a semester's study in Scandinavia. We have contracted exchange programs with the Universities of Uppsala, University of Växjö and Mora Folkhögskola but we have also helped students to be admitted to other universities and schools in Scandinavia (Umeå University, Lund University, and the University of Copenhagen).

#### **1.1.1. Mission Statement**

Department of Scandinavian Studies provides opportunities for students to learn about the Nordic countries' cultural contributions, their place in history, as well as their varied roles in today's world. The department believes strongly that a true understanding of a given culture can not be gained without knowledge of the language or languages spoken within that culture. The department's mission, therefore, includes teaching student majors to become competent in at least one of the Nordic languages. Swedish is the only Nordic language offered on a regular basis. The department also offers courses in English, intended for both majors and the general student and covering a variety of topics. All students, majors and non-majors, are viewed as prospective world citizens, whose success will be enhanced by their having good communication skills and an ability to discern and respect cultural differences. Majors and minors are strongly encouraged to spend at least one semester in a Nordic country to further hone their language skills and develop a deeper understanding of Scandinavian Studies as an academic discipline.

## VISION

- Interdisciplinarity, integration with other Gustavus programs and alignment with the mission and goals of the College should remain the cornerstones of the Department's efforts.
- The Department's course offerings should continue to have a dual focus. There should be language and literature courses in Swedish, and there should be literature and culture courses, taught in English, with a broad curricular approach.
- We want the department to remain a bridge between the College and the Nordic area, nurturing the many ties we have and establishing new ones.
- We want to assure that the Gustavus community at large is provided with a variety of expressions of Nordic culture and interpretations of current events and changes in the Nordic world.
- The strength of Gustavus as a liberal arts college in the future, we believe, will rest not only on having excellent over-all programs but also on an ability to demonstrate a distinctive "Nordic" identity, an identity that is unique and organic and not ephemeral or artificial.
- As identity is both organic and dynamic, a strong and multi-faceted Scandinavian studies program will interpret, define and refine this identity.
- Scandinavian studies faculty on campus want to continue their roles as fully integrated teachers within the Gustavus liberal arts program but also contribute to making Gustavus distinctive because of its unique connections with the Nordic countries, particularly Sweden. They will do so aided by students who have studied in the Nordic countries and by the College's connections in Scandinavia -- students who come here from Sweden and other Nordic countries, alumni in Sweden, visiting faculty from Sweden and Swedish partners in the *Semester in Sweden* program.

## GOALS:

- The teaching of Swedish language is central to the Department's mission. We want our students to understand that knowing the functions, mechanics and idiosyncrasies of language/s/ leads to greater cultural literacy. We wish that Gustavus had a three-semester language requirement for us teachers and for our students to more easily reach our goals. With the existing two-semester language requirement, however, our goal is to maximize the effectiveness of beginning language teaching and design ways to recruit students for the beginning classes and then make them see the benefits of continuing with second and third year classes (initiative # 2).

- Capitalizing on the competencies and interests of new faculty, the department would develop several new courses: Women (and Children) in Scandinavia, Minority Voices in Scandinavia/Germany, Masterpieces in Scandinavian literature, Intensive Swedish (January), Salsa and Global Culture (January), for example.
- We, as a department, see the upcoming sesquicentennial celebration of the founding of the college as an opportunity to present modern Scandinavia. The Nordic region that today is multicultural, much like “America” was to European emigrants at the time Gustavus was founded. Here we could help the College, in its celebration, to connect its immigrant past with immigrant realities of today. A focus on modern Scandinavia would also illustrate how small nations confront challenges of contemporary societies, such as immigration, policies regarding refugees, human rights, animal rights, the role of churches in a secular society and the whole gamut of environmental policies (initiative # 3).
- Gustavus is in a VERY GOOD position to showcase circumpolar Scandinavia during the fourth Global Insight year, scheduled to be a Circumpolar Year. Gustavus has excellent connections with the Sami people, the indigenous people of Scandinavia, northern Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001), the foremost representative of Sami culture internationally, was the first Out of Scandinavia artist-in-residence at Gustavus (1989); Roland and Edi Thorstensson have translated an anthology of Sami prose and poetry for American audiences (University of Washington Press) and have many contacts in Samiland; Roland Thorstensson has taught a course on Sami culture seven times since 1995; Thorstensson has also team-taught a course on Sami culture with Krister Stoor (three times); Krister Stoor, a Sami, was at Gustavus for five months in 2004, funded by a grant from the American Scandinavian Foundation; Stoor is also an important collaborator in the Semester in Sweden program (initiative # 4).

These are some goals for our students (copied from List of Outcomes in the Department’s assessment plan):

- Students will learn to understand that foreign language study, per se, is a cornerstone of a liberal arts education.
- Students will have a basic knowledge of the history of the Nordic countries and the distinctiveness of Nordic culture as reflected in literature and the arts.
- Students will be aware of important issues and concerns in the Nordic countries today.
- Students will learn to appreciate the Nordic area as a multicultural and multiethnic area and recognize its links with the rest of the world.
- Students, through campus courses, internships and experiences in a Nordic country, will receive a base for comparative value judgments about social systems, the use of environment, public and private morality, and religious traditions.

## 1.2 Programs

In the early 1980s, Scandinavian Studies and Classics, offering both language study and culture/ area studies courses in English, became the first such interdisciplinary departments in the area of humanities at Gustavus. The Scandinavian Studies Department now offers a unique interdisciplinary “language and culture studies program,” while also constituting an integral part of the curriculum and community at Gustavus Adolphus College and contributing to the national advancement of Scandinavian Studies through scholarships by its faculty. By “ language and culture studies program” we mean a program that sees language study, interdisciplinarity and holistic thinking as cornerstones of a liberal arts education. The Department’s courses allow students to understand ordinary and extraordinary life through the study of language, literature, film, art, history, politics and sub-categories such as diversity and multicultural studies, gender studies and the study of indigenous and dominant cultures (working with and working against each other).

The majors take courses from within the department, from the departments of History and from institutions in Scandinavia with which the college has exchanges. In 2009 there will be a new *Semester in Sweden* program, operated and owned by Gustavus. This semester program, led by a different Gustavus faculty member each year, is designed to interest and meet the needs of any Gustavus student, not just Scandinavian Studies majors. The majority of students choosing this program will likely be those who have a strong interest in Sweden and Swedish life, however. It is our hope that the program will also attract new students to Swedish language courses.

The Department contributes to general education at Gustavus in several ways:

- We have offered one First Term Seminar each year since the FTS program was started and, for many students, our FTS has been an introduction to Scandinavia that has lead to their taking more courses from the Department.
- Six of the Department’s courses have a general education area designation
- Four have a WRIT or WRITD designation
- Three courses in the Semester in Sweden program have a general education area designation (sometimes more than three)

We will initiate conversations with other departments to have some of our courses cross-listed or become part of existing interdisciplinary programs. These departments and programs include: Peace Studies, Gender and Women Studies, English, German, Theater, Political Science and Environmental Studies. The hiring of Helena Karlsson in 2006 has created some new opportunities to cooperate with other departments and programs. Dr. Karlsson has academic competencies for teaching courses in Gender Studies, Multicultural Studies and German language and culture. The recent hiring of Glenn Kranking for a position in the History Department will also enhance the Scandinavian studies program. Mr. Kranking is fluent in Swedish, has a reading knowledge of Norwegian, Danish and Finnish. He will teach courses in Nordic history – hence

contributing to the Scandinavian studies course listings the way Byron Nordstrom has done for three decades – and he could also add a new focus, Sweden’s relationships with the eastern Baltic area and Russia (topics his doctoral dissertation is focusing on).

### **1.3 Support relationships**

Presently our only formal partnership with an academic department is with History, which department offers regular courses on Scandinavian history (listed as elective courses for the Scandinavian Studies major). This relationship is crucial for our major and will now continue (see 1.2).

We also work closely with the Office of International Education in planning and carrying out our programs in Scandinavia (the Universities of Uppsala, Växjö and Umeå, Mora Folkhögskola and *Semester in Sweden*) and with Residential Life for operating Swedish House.

We have always worked closely with Admission but would like to work even more closely (see below under “Strengths” and initiative # 2).

See 1.2 for departments and programs with which we plan to establish support relationships.

In Minnesota, we would also like to cooperate, when possible, with the American Swedish Institute (Minneapolis) and institutions that offer programs in Nordic studies (St. Olaf, Concordia College, and the University of Minnesota). We would also like to establish more formal ties with Sjölund, the Swedish language village of the Concordia College Language Village system.

## **Section 2            Strategic review**

The Department had its ten-year review in 2006. The self-study made for this review and the external review itself, with reviewers from both a similar institution (North Park University) and a large research university (University of Wisconsin/Madison), provided a plethora of information and ideas for us to ponder and include in the Department’s strategic plan. The review also called attention to upcoming changes in the composition and leadership of the department: *The present self-study has as a major objective to provide helpful information and guidelines for the Department’s new faculty, since all the present faculty will be retired when it is time for the next review.* The College has now hired replacements for Roger McKnight (Helena Karlsson) and Byron Nordstrom (Glenn Kranking). Roland Thorstensson will retire in 2010. To secure the success of the Department in serving the students and carrying out the goals listed above, it is imperative that Thorstensson be replaced by a tenure-track faculty who will teach both Swedish language and Scandinavian studies courses (initiative #1).

## 2.1 Strategic issues

### Strengths:

- In the years to come the new department faculty can work from the base of an established program.
- The College has recently made two excellent appointments, Helena Karlsson and Glenn Kranking, to replace two retiring faculty, Roger McKnight and Byron Nordstrom. Both Karlsson and Kranking know and understand what the program has been; both have new ideas and competencies that will form the new foundation for a viable and vital program for the next decades.
- We have excellent connections with Scandinavian Studies programs in this country and in the Nordic region, particularly Sweden.
- The Department's mission is well in line with the Gustavus mission and its courses are well integrated with the Gustavus curriculum.
- We have good exchange programs in Sweden and a new Semester in Sweden program (for both majors and the general student).
- We have a direct line to Sjölund, the Concordia College Swedish language Village (for young people ages 7-18). It was founded by Gustavus faculty (Roland and Edi Thorstensson were its first deans), employs Gustavus students as counselors, and many Sjölund villagers select Gustavus as their college.
- We have a Swedish House, a separate dorm on campus for Swedish language students, listed as the "gem of the program" by the outside reviewers in the 2006 department review (initiative #5).
- We have excellent library holdings and library acquisitions budget.
- We have community and outreach programs such as Out of Scandinavia writer-in-residence program and Scandinavian Yuletide Breakfast.
- While they are not organized and run by the department, we can be part of the planning of the College's Nobel Conference, Raoul Wallenberg Lectureship and Linnaeus symposium and gain recognition "by association."
- We have been fortunate in receiving endowed support for our departmental programs (used for out-reach purposes – Out of Scandinavia writer-in-residence program, Scandinavian Retreat for faculty and students in the upper Midwest, hosting Nordic artists and guest speakers, library acquisitions, and we benefit indirectly from the endowed support the College receives for the Nobel Conference, Raoul Wallenberg lectureship, Jacobson scholarship for pre-medical students, the travel scholarship for summer study at the Nobel Museum, Karlskoga, Sweden, and a host of scholarships given to students coming from Sweden and Gustavus students going to Sweden.
- We have a large number of loyal alumni, many of whom work in fields where they can build on their Scandinavian studies work at Gustavus. A great number of our majors come from out-of-state. These are often students who have some previous knowledge of a Nordic language (because of family or because they have studied in Scandinavia during their high school years). If they prefer to study at a liberal arts college and not a university, Gustavus generally comes up in their

Internet searches. In order for this to be an even greater strength, the Department and Admission have to become more intentional, more focused in their attempts to recruit such out-of-state students (see initiatives below).

- In sum, Gustavus has plenty of concrete evidence to put forth when people ask *How Swedish (Scandinavian) is this college these days?*

### **Weaknesses (internal/):**

- In spite of the Department's involvements in a great many aspects of college life (academic, outreach, social), we are sometimes concerned about our visibility on campus as an academic unit. New faculty and administrators sometimes fail to see how integrated the department is and may look at our curriculum as "on the fringe" or non-traditional. It takes time to explain one's existence, but maybe that is inevitable for a department that has a focus not generally found at other colleges.
- While we have good endowed support for programs related to events and activities, we do not have an endowed chair. It would strengthen our program immeasurably if we had one (initiative # 6).

### **Opportunities:**

- The turnover of Scandinavian Studies faculty, because of retirements, will present new challenges but also great opportunities for assessing what old "directions" to keep and new directions to take.
- The new Semester in Sweden program will, if operated and advertised well, add to the Department's visibility on campus. The program is intended for any Gustavus student and not just those specifically interested in Scandinavian Studies, and the program director will be selected from applicants from any academic department on campus.
- The semester in Sweden program will provide continuous opportunities to nurture our connections with Swedish institutions and make new connections.

### **Challenges (external/internal):**

- Thorstensson's personal comments: The Department will soon have only junior faculty working without any senior departmental mentors. They will need to focus on what any not-yet-tenured faculty needs to focus on: teaching as a first priority, program maintenance and program planning as a second priority, scholarship as much as can be expected, and college governance to become better acquainted with college policies and meet Gustavus faculty.
- Maintaining the department's programs and planning new ones can be a daunting task. The department has few faculty members and they have many different kinds of responsibilities that members of other larger departments do not have.

We get request for giving lectures and presentations on specific topics and “anything Swedish/Scandinavian”; we get requests for administering Swedish language placements tests from people around the country; we get request for translating personal letters...even recipes sometimes; we get requests from Swedish artist who want to come here to perform; we get requests from Swedish groups and individuals who want to come to Gustavus and be given guided tours; we get phone-calls, now e-mails, from media wanting both facts and opinions ...and more. The new, not-yet-tenured faculty need to set their own priorities, as said above, and the College Personnel Committee needs to know how the responsibilities of the members of the Scandinavian Studies department are as unique as the department itself. It has taken decades to build a department with a broad curriculum and an array of out-reach activities. New faculty should not feel as though they are stewards of a legacy, but instead feel free to build, renovate and innovate as they themselves see fit.

- Thorstensson continues: With entirely new faculty very soon, there will be new challenges (and opportunities ... see above). While becoming familiarized with policies and ways at Gustavus, the new faculty will also have to provide leadership for a new program, their program. As said before, they will have to assess what parts of the existing curriculum to keep and what to add to it; they will have to become familiar with the Department’s outreach programs, keep those that need to be kept, drop some and add new ones; and they will have enhance both their own and the Department’s visibility on campus and nationally. It will be important for them to set personal and program priorities early, looking for ways to achieve a balance. They will need to take ownership of the program at large and avoid being owned by it.
- Hiring itself may present challenges. In a small department every members will have multiple tasks. Every candidate will not have the willingness or ability to be” diversified.” We will need to find faculty who complement each other, work well together, and are willing to try new things, experiment. In a few years there will be an entirely new department. Exciting!

## 2.2 Barriers

- Individual departments’ policies sometimes makes interdisciplinary cooperation difficult
- The size of our department, with each member carrying a large percentage of the department’s workload, makes leaves for an individual faculty member a bit challenging. It is sometimes difficult to find a one-year or one-semester replacement for a regular teacher.



## **Section 3 -- Strategic Initiatives and recommendations**

### **Strategic initiative # 1**

We recommend that a search for a tenure-track position in Scandinavian studies/Swedish be begun in the late summer of 2009 to replace Roland Thorstensson who retire in the spring of 2010.

### **Strategic initiative # 2**

We recommend a thorough exploration of ways to recruit more students to Swedish language classes. The Swedish language teachers should meet, perhaps as a summer workshop, to coordinate their efforts and design ways to maximize enrollment. The Department should also work more closely with Admission in order to attract more out-of-state students.

### **Strategic initiative # 3**

We recommend that the College and the Department work in concert while planning the sesquicentennial celebration and that planned events focus on contemporary Sweden/Scandinavia.

### **Strategic initiative # 4**

We recommend that the study of Sami culture be a significant part of the third Global Insight year since the focus that year will be circumpolar cultures. We have good contacts with Sami scholars and should seek their help to design appropriate programs. We should consider inviting a Sami scholar to campus for January term or a full semester.

### **Strategic initiative # 5**

Swedish House has been a good informal classroom for students of Swedish. We should consider, again, having a native speaker with responsibilities for programming and informal language instruction. The person selected for this role should receive remuneration, perhaps a free room.

### **Strategic initiative # 6**

The Department has good funds for program-related purposes. We should still seek to have some of our programs endowed – the Out-of-Scandinavia artist-in-residence program, the Semester in Sweden program, to mention two – and we are still hoping that, someday, there will be an endowed chair in Scandinavian Studies.

## **Section 4 Assessment Plan**

We feel the goals for the department are realistic, but we can not yet state the means by which we will determine whether or not our objectives have been met.

Respectfully submitted by

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