I. MISSION

The faculty members of the Department of German engage in the study and teaching of German language, literature, and culture from disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. The Ph.D. program allows students to create individualized degrees in all areas of German Studies, including work in other departments of the university. It is the only Ph.D. program in German in the State of Iowa. The literature program treats poetry, drama, prose, literary theory, film and other media, translation studies, gender studies, and the relationship of literature to other arts. The linguistics program covers modern and historical linguistics, as well as second language acquisition and instructional technology, including the training of highly qualified German instructors for careers at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

In addition, the department regularly extends its expertise to related academic units on campus and looks to build relationships in areas of common interest. Since 2004, our five faculty members have served on twenty Ph.D. exam committees and eleven dissertation committees in Cinema and Comparative Literature, the College of Education, English, FLARE, History, Linguistics, and Religious Studies. We regularly contribute to the education and research expertise of students enrolled in the Foreign Language Acquisition, Research, and Education (FLARE) program as well as the MAT program in Foreign Language Teaching in the College of Education. In addition, we frequently administer German proficiency exams for other graduate programs, both to fulfill students’ degree requirements and as part of research grant applications.

II. ADMISSION PROCESSES AND CRITERIA

The job market in the field of German Studies has become very competitive nationally; accordingly, even large graduate programs in neighboring states, such as those at Wisconsin and Minnesota, have recently enrolled only 4-5 applicants per year. It is apparent that the CIC German programs are competing for the same limited pool of students. Given such strong competition, the number of graduate applications at Iowa has dropped over the past several years. At the same time, the reduction of our faculty size from 10.5 in AY 98 to 4.5 in AY 09 has severely limited our ability to present an attractive graduate program. This loss of faculty has reduced not only the array of specializations we can offer, but also the number of graduate courses available for students. For many prospective applicants, we will have lost the critical mass necessary for a strong graduate program unless steps are taken to reverse this trend. The loss in faculty numbers has occurred despite a thriving level of scholarly productivity and national visibility among our remaining faculty.

The entire tenured and tenure-track faculty serves as the admissions committee to the doctoral program. After reviewing a student’s dossier, which must include a writing sample comparable to an M.A. thesis, the faculty discusses and votes on each applicant. At the M.A. level admissions are based on the recommendations of three faculty members. All applicants must possess a level of language proficiency that will enable them to pursue graduate work in German. Great reliance is placed on the recommendations of colleagues, while GPA and GRE scores—especially for foreign applicants—play a subordinate role.

Nonetheless, the GRE scores of our entering graduate students compare favorably with the national average for graduate study in the Foreign Languages and the Humanities as a whole. We have consistently exceeded the national averages in these areas since 2002; for the 2003-06 time
frame, our entering students scored 71 points above the Foreign Languages and 104 points above the Humanities average nationally. In addition, we have recruited one Presidential Fellow in this period.

We have a high representation of women and have graduated a small contingent of minorities over the years. Among the five doctoral students currently enrolled in our program, two are from the US, two from Germany, and one from Russia. One Hispanic student has recently completed our M.A. program, and several international students from non-German-speaking countries have numbered among our TAs.

III. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Five students are currently engaged in doctoral studies in our program, a result of recent recruiting efforts. Two students have scheduled their dissertation defenses for Spring 2010, with a third on track to finish by Fall 2010. Altogether, this cohort of candidates is on track to complete their degrees within 4-5 years of enrollment in our Ph.D. program, which compares favorably with the time-to-degree outcomes of other UI Humanities programs.

Moreover, the quantity and quality of professional activities among our doctoral students is comparable to that of other CIC German graduate programs. All told, our current Ph.D. candidates have successfully competed for research and study awards totaling $97,375. This includes on-campus funding such as the Presidential Graduate Fellowship and the Stanley Fellowship for Study Abroad as well as off-campus sources such as the Linguistic Society of America. Recent graduate students have also been recipients of DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and Fulbright scholarships. Thanks in part to this funding, current students have presented their research at thirteen national or international conferences such as the International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHL), Germanic Linguistics Annual Conference (GLAC), and Women in German (WIG). Locally, three students have presented at the James F. Jacobsen Graduate Conference on campus, with one winning third place in Humanities in 2007. Three students have additionally compiled an impressive publication record, with six co-authored and three single-authored articles in print or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed venues.

Above all, our graduate students excel in teaching and service to the university. In nearly every year since 2000, we have successfully nominated a candidate for the annual Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award from among TAs teaching in our program, including those from FLARE and the College of Education. Two of our current Ph.D. students are recipients of this award. In the area of service, our University Fellow has also served as President of the Graduate Student Senate in 2006-07 and is a recipient of the Hancher-Finkbine Medallion for 2007. Another student currently serves in the Graduate College as the chair of the Dean’s Graduate Student Advisory Committee and co-chair of the Educational Outreach Committee.

Students who receive a Ph.D. in German from the University of Iowa should expect to find teaching positions in colleges and universities, particularly in the Midwest. Nine out of the eleven Ph.D.s awarded since 1990 were earned by students who found jobs at liberal arts colleges (e.g., Coe College, Wheaton College, Knox College, UW-Oshkosh, UNI), while our M.A. students have been accepted into top-tier Ph.D. programs (Johns Hopkins, Yale, Washington University, Indiana University, University of Minnesota). Other graduates now teach at the high school level in Iowa and elsewhere, engage in cultural and library work, or work as professional translators. This mix of post-degree careers is typical for graduate programs in the foreign languages.
IV. PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The Department of German maintains a small graduate program, promoting close mentoring relationships between individual graduate students and faculty. The small size of the program has traditionally been its strength, allowing for a high quality of graduate education. To maintain the vitality of our program, faculty members have responded to lower enrollment figures by forging new relationships with related units on campus, such as FLARE and the MAT program in Education. We look to continue building strategic alliances with campus colleagues in growth areas of interest, such as globalization, media studies, and environmental issues.

Our current program size stands at eight students (including one student in residence in Germany in our graduate student exchange program at the University of Dortmund). The target program size envisioned by our faculty is 10-12 students, based on the assumption that we can recruit and graduate 1-2 Ph.D. students per year, plus an additional student intending to complete the M.A. and move on, for example, to the MAT in Foreign Language Education or the Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition. This is somewhat higher than recent enrollment, but can be realized with institutional support.

We recognize that creating new areas of expertise among our faculty will require novel partnerships in research, education, and program administration. In Spring 2009, our faculty voted in favor of joining a proposed Division of Languages and Cultures within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; although such a Division is currently on hold, we believe that a well-considered framework for cross-departmental collaboration will allow us to build new research alliances on campus, not only with colleagues in other foreign languages, but also with those in related disciplines such as Cinema and Comparative Literature, Communication Studies, English, Geography, History, Political Science, Sociology, and Women’s Studies.

Given the unique position of Germany as the largest country in the European Union and the world’s leading exporter, we believe we can make substantial contributions to new initiatives in global studies and sustainability issues, to name just two examples. Germany is home to the largest Muslim community in Europe, and the study of German-Turkish culture is central for an understanding of migration and globalization issues in the twenty-first century. Moreover, Germany leads the world in sustainable energy and environmental policy. We have recently lost the expertise of Prof. Wolfgang Ertl concerning the cultural discourse surrounding such “green issues” and would welcome the opportunity to recruit again in this area.

V. CONCLUSION

The faculty of the Department achieves a high level of research productivity, which has led to a growing recognition of our faculty nationally. We are committed to training students in the field of German studies while engaging in close collaboration with neighboring fields. Our students construct their own academic program of study that includes courses from affiliated departments. Faculty members work closely with advisees at all levels of their work and closely monitor students’ progress. Our small classes allow attention to student writing and other research skills, while our dedication to language acquisition ensures that our graduates have strong teaching skills when they enter the job market.

Recent Ph.D. enrollment increases leave us optimistic that we can successfully maintain and possibly expand our current program, given an enhanced recruitment effort, one or two additional faculty lines, and increased collaboration in growth areas of research and teaching. Small changes in our resource base will have a substantial positive impact.