

# Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

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February 16, 2011

Dear Senior Administrator of the University of Glasgow:

I write to you as President of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies. ASEES, which has nearly 3000 members, is the largest international organization of scholars, educators and other specialists in Slavic, East European and Eurasian studies, with a substantial participation from the UK. Our members range from experts on language and literature, to historians, political scientists, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, and specialists on international relations.

We are very concerned by the University of Glasgow's proposed closure of its foreign language programs, including Czech, Polish, and Russian.

As you know, East European and Russian studies have long had an important place across the British, European, and north America educational systems. The importance of this world area is undiminished and in some ways greater than ever today. Recognizing the importance of Russia as the largest country in the world, for example—still a nuclear super power and with growing political and economic influence and key interests that both complement and clash with our own—we were gratified to see more and more government agencies consider Russian to be a “critical needs” language. Even under today's strained financial circumstances, it means that we are seeing more effort to extend Russian studies for undergraduates and even secondary school students. The study of Czech and Polish, in turn, has only grown with the rapid integration of these countries into a greater European home.

In a globalized world, we all intersect with Russia and Eastern Europe far more than we did during the Cold War. And for these interactions we need specialists and professionals, who have an awareness of the region that these university offerings make possible. Just as medical doctors need undergraduate courses in mathematics and the natural sciences, so lawyers, business people, diplomats and others who will have dealings with Russia need at least a first level of understanding of this important country, an understanding that is dramatically advanced by even an elementary knowledge of these pivotal languages.

At Glasgow, perhaps as in many other colleges and universities, the Russian program is a relatively small one. But it opens doors to other departments by providing the language training students need to study Russian, East European, and Eurasian history, culture, politics, foreign policy, and economics. In that sense such courses advance our knowledge not only of language, but of broader economic, political, and social questions.

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We all understand that these are difficult financial times, but such closure would weaken your students' and all of our ability to be successful in the twenty-first-century world. On behalf of the association, we very much hope you will reconsider your decision.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Grant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Bruce, Grant  
President, ASEEEES  
Professor, New York University