

A Public-Private Partnership at the Forefront of Higher Education

The Joint Graduate Program in German Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

“Universities increasingly are partnering with one another and private industry to maximize the impact of academic programs and research. [. . .] Carolina’s bonds with Duke have grown particularly stronger, building on collaborations dating back to the 1930s that now flourish in the liberal arts, humanities, and health sciences. [. . .] *There is untapped potential for even more robust partnerships with Duke [. . .] to reach mutual goals and serve the state’s best interests.*”

—*Academic Plan* (July 2003), The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies (MA and PhD) represents an innovative response to far-reaching changes in humanities education and research in the United States today. The program—the first public-private joint venture in German graduate education in the nation—aims to become an internationally acclaimed center of excellence for graduate training, research, teaching, and scholarly exchange in German Studies by pooling the resources of two great universities in a curriculum combining disciplinary rigor with interdisciplinary flexibility.

The German faculties at the two institutions envision a fully merged graduate program with a joint admissions process and a single diploma bearing the names of both universities. The joint program would have a single faculty and a single admissions committee. Graduate students—a class of 10 to 12 students yearly—would serve as Teaching Assistants at both institutions. The total graduate student body would be only slightly larger than that enrolling in 2005-06 in the two programs combined, about fifty all together.

We anticipate that the creation of this joint graduate program will immediately catapult the new entity to a position of national and international preeminence. Separately, Duke and Carolina already enjoy positions of prominence in German Studies: the former for its innovative interdisciplinary program, the latter for its venerable tradition of research in German language and literature. At present both programs can boast an enviable placement record of their respective graduates—Duke since the inception of its PhD in German Studies almost fifteen years ago, and Carolina for a much longer period of time. Individually, each department is home to scholars of international reputation and teachers of uncommon talent. The fully integrated graduate program will prove attractive to applicants and could soon rival the most prestigious programs in the country.

It must be stressed that the proposed merger of the graduate programs will not alter the independent status of the two departments, which will remain separate for all other matters, including personnel decisions and the management of their undergraduate curricula. Neither institution relinquishes its right to grant graduate degrees in Germanic Languages and

Literatures; rather, each institution agrees, for the duration of the joint program's existence, to grant such degrees only in cooperation with the other.

By joining together, faculty and students at each institution will gain colleagues in fields that are not well represented at the other now, nor likely to be added in the future. For example, each institution already possesses faculty strength in medieval studies, gender and sexuality studies, literary theory and poetics, European intellectual history, and politics and culture in the twentieth century; but by pooling their resources, the new joint program would become instantly a major center in those fields. Furthermore, the two departments are in an excellent position to quickly enhance their profiles in contemporary German studies by coordinating their next faculty hires to complement existing strengths. Cross-appointing all qualifying faculty in each department as adjunct professors in the other would smooth the course of this collaboration and form the basis for a robust institutional framework for the joint program.

The German faculty at Duke and Carolina believe that such a joint graduate program would become one of the top four graduate programs in German in the country. Such a program would attract the best applicants, and the scholars it produces will be more competitive on the job market. Course offerings could be expanded not only at the graduate but also at the undergraduate level. In a time of rapid and unpredictable change in the humanities generally and in the field of German specifically, this initiative provides a way of committing to and ensuring the long-term success of the German programs on both campuses.

Both Carolina and Duke are vigorously pursuing joint programs of various kinds internationally. *Why not do the same at home?*

In sum, the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German

- I. *capitalizes on the assets*, intellectual and institutional, of Carolina and Duke;
- II. *builds on strengths* of existing resources;
- III. *multiplies opportunities* for using available resources more effectively;
- Iç. *re-conceptualizes the program* of graduate study in light of national trends for the study of German language, literature, and culture;
- ç. *adds innovation* to consolidation;
- çI. *cultivates distinction* by working together.

THE CAROLINA-DUKE PROGRAM IN GERMAN: AN INTELLECTUAL OVERVIEW

The faculty of the German Departments at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are scholars of the languages, cultures, and intellectual traditions of German-speaking lands. In addition to serving students intending to specialize in German Studies, each department maintains a strong presence in the broader university community. We regularly teach core liberal arts (general education) courses for undergraduates and advise not only our own graduate students but also those of our colleagues by serving regularly on MA and PhD committees in other departments. Both departments maintain strong ties to German, Austrian, and Scandinavian universities through undergraduate study abroad programs, international conferences, and exchanges involving both students and professional colleagues. These and other intellectual and institutional ties have led to lively scholarly exchange and faculty research collaboration between the two departments. Our complementary strengths have convinced us that a formal collaboration would benefit us both. We believe it is now time to carry that collaboration even further by merging the two German graduate programs into one.

The history of German Studies at the two universities is somewhat different, but it leads naturally to a convergence. At Duke, three circumstances stimulated the initiation of the German Studies doctorate in 1992:

- çII. the interest in things German resulting from the fall of the Berlin Wall;
- çIII. the emergence of "cultural studies" as a force reinvigorating the humanities;
- ÏE. Duke's commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and to collaborations among scholars in differing fields of study.

The Graduate Program in German at Carolina has a longer history (going back to the 1930s) and a somewhat different profile, but one which would mesh nicely with the program at Duke by adding different areas of emphasis. Carolina has over the years focused on three interrelated aspects of German Studies:

- Ë. the investigation of literature as a preeminent resource for understanding past and present German-speaking communities;
- ËI. the study of broader cultural practices and social expression that intersect with literature;
- ËII. the analysis of language, both synchronically and diachronically, as the essential medium of cultural expression and exchange.

The faculties of the two German departments are committed to designing a joint program that further deepens the interdisciplinary paradigm that governs German Studies at both institutions. German Studies itself is founded on an interdisciplinary principle that recognizes the fundamental interrelation of all the cultural expressions of societies where the German language is spoken. Though German Studies has a two-hundred-year history in the modern university (the first chair for the study of Germanic philology was established at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 1810), our field has been renewed by an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. Such an interdisciplinary approach is necessary if we are to understand fully the social movements, the intellectual developments, the artistic triumphs, and even the catastrophic misfortunes that German culture has brought to the modern world.

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The study of German language, literature, and culture is changing rapidly across the entire educational landscape of North America. The intellectual trends of the past fifteen years have changed the kind of knowledge and skills that entering students bring to graduate study. Most students enter graduate study with respectable linguistic skills in the German language, but often with less adequate training in reading sophisticated texts (whether philosophical, historical, or literary) than was the case twenty years ago. Moreover, in the past fifteen years the idea of teaching a received canon of literary and cultural texts to undergraduates has eroded almost entirely. For individual students this means that those holding an American BA in German now enter graduate training with scant exposure to literary and cultural history, often limited to the twentieth century alone. For the learning community it means that there is often no common base of knowledge among any cohort of incoming students. German graduate curricula must today provide the foundational knowledge that students no longer have upon matriculation.

Providing graduate students with solid grounding in their discipline becomes all the more necessary as the trend towards interdisciplinary studies continues. The members of the German departments at Duke and Carolina, all of whom take an interdisciplinary approach in their own scholarship and teaching, believe it is their responsibility to provide graduate students with the set of fundamental methods, ideas, and texts that form the foundation of intellectual discourse within the discipline. Interdisciplinary practitioners of German Studies can best—indeed can only—contribute to interdisciplinary conversations if they know intimately the terrain and horizons of their core field. Interdisciplinary work that makes a lasting contribution always begins with and arises out of the unique contributions and perspectives of one's own field. Disciplinary mastery is the essential prerequisite.

The organizing principle of the new joint program is therefore a careful combination of *disciplinary rigor and interdisciplinary flexibility*. This combination builds on the strengths of two distinguished faculties and two great universities. It will make a powerful argument, sure to be heard and heeded throughout the academic world, that a collaborative public-private partnership best fosters path-breaking work in the humanities.