Religious Studies Department Program Highlights
April 8, 2011

Dedicated specifically to the academic study of religion, the Department of Religious Studies is comprised of seven 1.0 FTE and two fractional appointment faculty who specialize in diverse religious cultures across the globe while finding common ground in the question of how religions shape human experience, identity, and history. The Department offers two undergraduate degrees, the B.A., B.G.S., and a single terminal M.A. degree. In addition to maintaining strong undergraduate and graduate programs in Religious Studies, department faculty carry a high load of general education courses that fulfill the HR requirement, and they contribute substantially to area studies centers and interdisciplinary programs across the College. All regular faculty have traditionally maintained active research profiles by publishing books and articles in a variety of scholarly venues and by presenting their work regularly in various professional contexts.

Religions have long moved across and mediated multiple geographical, geopolitical, linguistic and ethnic boundaries, sometimes softening them, sometimes ramifying them. They have impacts on other less visible domains as well. Bound up with bodies, environments, and social interactions at large, religions have never been strictly confined to a world of abstract inner belief or faith. They (d)evolve in and shape the worlds that we inhabit all the way down. Having grappled with these complexities from the time it first emerged as an academic field in the nineteenth century, Religious Studies traditionally combines expertise in area-specific traditions and historical developments with interdisciplinary reflection on core theoretical and methodological issues that attend “religion” as an object of intellectual inquiry. This inherently pluralistic and trans-disciplinary orientation allows the Department of Religious Studies to make valuable contributions to the growing collaborative research and discussion on religion at KU. As the only free-standing unit at Kansas Regents institutions specializing strictly in the academic study of religion, the Department of Religious Studies at KU provides an important resource for the enhancement of religious literacy among Kansas institutions of higher education and the general public—a resource that is all the more crucial given global trends and the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of our state.
The University of Kansas

Department of Religious Studies

Self-Study Document

2009

Conducted by the department sitting as a committee of the whole
Religious Studies Department Organizational Chart

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

SMITH HALL

Department of Religious Studies
Dan Stevenson, Department Chair

Administrative Staff
AAgje Ashe and Sara Lundberg,

Moore Religious Studies Library
Sara Lundberg, administrative

Moore Religious Studies Library Student Staff

Faculty
Daniel Stevenson, Department Chair

Studies Committee
- Robert Minor, Acting Chair
- Paul Mirecki, Graduate Director
- William Lindsey, Undergraduate Director,
- Sergey Dolgopoliski, Scheduling Officer
- Graduate Student representative
- Undergraduate Student representative

Prizes and Awards Committee
Timothy Miller, Chair

Faculty Development Committee
Robert Shelton, Chair

Jewish Studies Minor / Program (& Hebrew Language Program)
Lynn Davidman, Director
(rooms 102, 204, 206, 209)

Administrative Staff
Karen Hummel

SMITH HALL

Moore Religious Studies Library
Sara Lundberg, administrative

Student Staff
1. The Department of Religious Studies: An Overview

1.1. The Study of Religion on Mount Oread.

The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas offers degree programs leading to Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of General Studies, and Master of Arts degrees. We are the only dedicated Religious Studies Department in a public university in Kansas, and one of only six such departments in public universities between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains, Canadian border and Gulf of Mexico that offers a graduate degree in the academic study of religion. The department is housed in Irma I. Smith Hall on the main KU campus in Lawrence and is a unit within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. It marks the latest incarnation in a tradition of academic study of religion on Mount Oread that dates back to the turn of the twentieth century.

The teaching of religion at the University of Kansas began under the auspices of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions, an association within the Disciples of Christ denomination. With the active support of university officials, and especially registrar George O. Foster, classes began in 1901 under the auspices of the Kansas Bible Chair, the newly-formed organizational embodiment of the educational venture. Later that year supporters of the project purchased a farmhouse at the corner of Thirteenth and Oread streets, the site of the present-day Smith Hall for Religious Studies. The house, known as Myers Hall, was remodeled in 1913 to provide classrooms, offices, a library, and a student center, as well as a residence for the family of the Bible Chair's director.

The mission of the denominationally-based KBC was expanded and re-tasked in 1921 by the establishment of the Kansas School of Religion, an interdenominational cooperative that enlarged both staff and course offerings. For the first time that curriculum included the historical critical study of traditions other than Christianity. By the 1960s the growth of the endeavor led the leaders of both the KBC and the KSR to plan a new building on the Myers Hall site. Construction commenced in mid-decade and in 1967 Irma I. Smith Hall opened for classes.

In the early 1960s the U.S. Supreme Court issued decisions that explicitly authorized the non-devotional teaching of religion in public institutions. The denominations that supported the School of Religion began to look to the state of Kansas for support, and in 1977 the University of Kansas established a Department of Religious Studies that incorporated the teaching work of the KSR. The KSR, subsequently renamed the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies, continued to hold hard assets in its name (distribution of which was overseen by an Advisory Board), and as such became a support organization for the Department. In addition to University salary and staff support, it provided a yearly grant of approximately $35,000 for the maintenance of the departmental library and Smith Hall, graduate student scholarships, and other needs of the department.

On October 14, 1998, Smith Hall was sold to the university by the Disciples of Christ, who had continued to hold title to the property. With the removal of responsibility for building maintenance, the Friends organization was able to increase the level of its annual grant to between $40,000 and $45,000, based on income from its hard assets. The Department submits targeted requests for funding to the FODORS Board every year, with funded activities ranging from graduate student scholarships and maintenance of the Religious Studies Moore Reading Room (library), to funding for faculty development, outside speakers, and the occasional academic conference (acquired through application from the department).

Oddly, with its tradition of tolerance regarding the natural rights of race, creed, and human potential, the state of Kansas, and the Midwest in general, have in recent decades become increasingly illiterate when it comes to the diversity of religious history in America, and Kansas. This, of course, is not to
mention the intensified global religious encounters in the world at large. No religious tradition or regional culture, indigenous, imported, or colonially imposed, can exist in blissful isolation today. Religion is both a force that unites us and simultaneously divides us. In the spirit of its predecessors on Mount Oread, the Kansas Bible Chair and the Kansas School of Religion, the mission of the University of Kansas Department of Religious Studies is, without religious bias and partisanship, to raise the religious literacy of college students and general public in the greater Kansas region. As a graduate program, offering a terminal M.A. degree, it additionally aspires to provide advanced professional training in the academic study of religion as a global phenomenon of human culture and experience, an academic endeavor that has been a well-articulated professional field of study, and central part of tier-one state universities in the United States, since the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Religious Studies Department, at present, comprises a total of nine full-time tenured or tenure track faculty, whose areas of research and instructional specialization are distributed, broadly, between religion in America (two faculty), religious ethics (one faculty member, largely centered on American Christianity), Western and Near Eastern religions (three faculty), and religion in Asia (three faculty). With a handful of exceptions (some occasional), the Department faculty are highly productive in terms of research and publication, relative to peer departments, while also maintaining an unusually high per capita faculty student credit hour ratio at undergraduate and graduate levels.

The Religious Studies Department offers tracks for a B.A. major and terminal M.A. degree in Religious Studies, while also assuming a heavy service teaching load in terms of university undergraduate “principal courses” and related (e.g., non-Western) distributions. We currently have 34 B.A. majors and 5 undergraduate minors in Religious Studies, and a total of 21 students enrolled in our graduate (M.A.) program. Enrollments in all of these areas have risen steadily in the past few years.

For reasons that will be explained below, Department faculty numbers are, in the meantime, shrinking. Our number of full-time tenured/tenure track faculty will be reduced by two members within the coming 2009-2010 year, leaving a total of seven. This represents a loss of a full two positions from our count of nine in 1999 and three positions form a high of ten full-time tenured/tenure track faculty in 2004. Even with new hires and replacements over the past decade, this relatively stable figure of nine faculty masks significant reductions in certain areas of our curriculum and general spread of expertise, notably, Christianity. Impending faculty losses will reduce us even more drastically. The Department, currently, has no minority faculty whatsoever. With the move of Sandra Zimdars-Swartz from Religious Studies to Humanities and Western Civilizations in 2005, and the departure of our Islam specialist, Margaret Rausch, after spring of 2009, the Department will have no full-time tenured/tenure track women on the faculty. After the retirement of Bob Minor in spring of 2010, we will have only one full professor. These imbalances and attritions in the faculty need to be addressed if we are to maintain a viable B.A. major and terminal M.A., as currently described, particularly given our high percentage of women majors and graduate students.

At present, only seven public universities across the greater Midwest offer graduate degrees in Religious Studies, including KU, five of which are terminal M.A. degrees. Only two of these seven universities provide tracks for the Ph.D.: the University of Iowa and the University of Missouri, Kansas City. The faculty of the Religious Studies Department at the University of Iowa is roughly comparable in size to that of KU, while the Ph.D. at UMKC is offered through a Center of Religious Studies with only one full-time faculty appointment. The remaining faculty are ad hoc affiliates from other departments and institutions. We suspect that there is a market for Ph.D.-level study in the Kansas – City / Topeka region and the central Midwest that has gone untapped. We also suspect (by dint of our limited successes in recruitment) that our graduate enrollments have, in fact, been constrained precisely because we do not offer opportunity for the Ph.D. in religion.

With proper critical mass in terms of faculty numbers and area coverage, the Department is confident that we might mount a modest, but quality, Ph.D. track in Religious Studies at KU. The prospect merits
serious exploration by department faculty and the KU administration -- a project that the department began last year. This self-study was undertaken with the short-term objective that we continue to offer the strongest B.A. major and terminal M.A. programs available in the regional Midwest, and the long-range objective of identifying what it would take to implement an equally viable, but smaller scale Ph.D. track in Religious Studies at KU.

Administratively speaking, the Department is headed by a Chair, whose term of service is typically three to five years, and a series of regular faculty committees that supervise undergraduate and graduate Studies (as well as award of GTA assignments and Department fellowships), Faculty Development (whose primary task is assessment of annual faculty performance), and Prizes and Awards. We also have a new (2008) ad hoc committee for special events and outside speakers, headed by Lynn Davidman, the Beren Distinguished Professor in Jewish Studies (.25 appointment in Religious Studies). In addition, as a department we are served by two outstanding administrative staff, a full-time 1.0 FTE, responsible for core oversight of Department administration, and an additional .50 FTE who handles the Moore Religious Studies Reading Room, its library collection, and part-time student staff (some five persons), among other duties.

Since 2002, the Religious Studies Department (Smith Hall) has administered, and housed, an inter-disciplinary minor in Jewish Studies. The Jewish Studies minor is constituted and supervised by an inter-departmental advisory committee, with an additional staff of adjunct instructors hired to teach sequences in Modern and Biblical Hebrew language. The program has grown significantly in the past several years, due to the securing of several key outside grants, the appointment of new faculty with specializations in Jewish Studies, and a steady increase in the number of Hebrew language enrollments. The Hebrew instructors and Jewish Studies/Hebrew administrative staff are all currently housed in Irma I. Smith Hall. Space is at present tight—at over capacity for faculty, adjunct lecturers, and administrative staff. With the Religious Studies Department’s added administrative responsibilities for the nascent Hindi Language program in 2009, how to resolve questions of space and location for these programs becomes a critical issue, all the more so if Religious Studies itself is to grow.

1.2. Procedures for the Department Self-Study.

During winter break of 2007-2008, with the assistance of a graduate student volunteer, the Department Chair gathered and tabulated data on faculty area coverage, program design, and degree requirements from peer graduate programs in Religious Studies in the greater Midwest. Similar data were compiled from selected model doctoral programs in the U.S. At our annual all-day faculty retreat (January, 2008) we used this information to discuss the structure of our current M.A. program, its strengths and weaknesses, and the possibility of creating a future Ph.D. track in Religious Studies at KU. Points raised in this retreat were revisited, periodically, in monthly department meetings over the following year.

During fall of 2008, the Department Chair drew up a questionnaire for Religious Studies faculty and lecturers, which was designed to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses of our current B.A. and M.A. programs and solicit views regarding the design of a future Ph.D. (possible areas of concentration, needs for future recruitment, etc.). The Chair met with department faculty in small breakout groups (organized by common area of specialization) to discuss their observations. Input from these meetings was processed and used for collective faculty discussion at our day-long annual department retreat in January, 2009.

In spring semester of 2009, the Chair and department Administrative Associate composed questionnaires (based on examples from the 1999 self-study) to solicit alumni input (years 1999-2008) on their experience in our undergraduate and graduate programs. This was undertaken in lieu of any formal outcomes assessment measures for Religious Studies undergraduate and graduate majors, a lacuna we need to address. Responses to the questionnaire, which are limited in number and of questionable value statistically, are on the whole positive. Several constructive suggestions have, nonetheless, been offered. They are consistent with the questions/suggestions listed below.
1.3. Key Questions and Points of Concern for Reviewers:

1. What can we do to address current and projected erosion of faculty lines/positions in Religious Studies, as well as our exceedingly low number of minority and women faculty?

2. What is the best strategy for redressing critical gaps and imbalances in our department area coverage (Christianity, women and religion, etc.)?

3. What adjustments should we make to lessen the stresses imposed by over-commitment of faculty time and resources to core courses required for the department undergraduate major and university general education?

4. How can we better identify and build inter-disciplinary connections that will enhance the area strengths of our B.A. and M.A. programs, and possibly position us for a future Ph.D. track in Religious Studies?

5. How can we effectively anticipate and address shifting interests in the field of Religious Studies and our student clientele, as we see, for example, with the increasing attraction to professional careers other than that of academic research and teaching?

6. Given the demographics of Midwestern universities and the current number of Ph.D. programs nationwide in Religious Studies, is it to our advantage to create a Ph.D. program in Religious Studies at KU? If so, how can we determine what it would require in terms of faculty (and student) resources, and how it should look in terms of design?

7. How can we accommodate (in terms of program design, funding, and time to degree) the demands that certain graduate students face by way of specialized language and advanced research training, both currently and in the event of a future Ph.D.?

8. What can we do to alleviate the current (and growing) shortage of office and classroom space in Smith Hall?

2. Faculty and Research

2.1. Faculty Demographics

The Department of Religious Studies as of Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 has nine (9) full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members with 1.0 FTE in Religious Studies; a tenth tenured faculty member with a joint appointment of .25 FTE in Religious Studies and .75 FTE in Sociology. On the average we employ four (4) .50 FTE adjunct lecturers per semester (all with Ph.D.), and a fifth .50 FTE lecturer occasionally in spring semesters. One of our five regular lecturers is budgeted as a “continuing commitment” lecturer (spousal accommodation).

Full-time Tenured or Tenure Track Faculty

- Full Professors
  - Tim Miller (apt. 1977), religion in America, intentional communities and alternative Religions, religion in Kansas.
Robert Minor (apt. 1977), religion in Asia, South Asian religions. History of religions methodology, religion and gender. (Scheduled to retire in Spring of 2010.)

- **Associate Professors**
  - Paul Mirecki (apt.1989). Ancient Mediterranean religions, languages, and archaeology; Greek and Coptic papyrology.
  - Dan Stevenson (apt.1992). Religion in Asia, Buddhism and religion in China; institutional, ritual and literary practice. Chair of the Department.

- **Assistant Professors**
  - Serguei Dolgopolski (apt.2006). Judaism and Jewish Studies, Talmud, interpretation, and Jewish Thought, both classical and modern.
  - Margaret Rausch (apt. 2001). Islam, North Africa. (Denied tenure in spring of 2008, she will leave the University after Spring of 2009.)

- **Tenured Faculty with Partial Appointment to Religious Studies**
  - Lynn Davidman (apt. 2008). Beren Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies. Sociology of religion, modern Jewish studies, women and gender. .25 Rel St / .75 Soc.

- **Adjunct Lecturers (continuing or one-time renewing commitment)**
  - Paul Zimdars-Swartz (continuing commitment, spousal accommodation). Christianity (REL 345), Sem. Theories of Religious Experience (REL 780), Sem. Theories of Religion (REL 781).
  - Aaron Ketchell (Ph.D. University of Kansas, American Studies). Introduction to Religion (REL 104), History of Religion in America (REL 339).
  - Molly Zahn (Ph.D. Notre Dame). Living Religions of the West (REL 107), Understanding the Bible, Honors (REL 125); Hebrew Scriptures (REL 311).

- **Courtesy/Affiliate Faculty Appointments, KU**
  - Edward Canda. School of Social Welfare. Spiritual diversity and social work.
  - Eve Levin. History. Russian Orthodox tradition, folk healing, cults of saints and icons.

In spring of 1999, the date of the last department self-study and external review, the Religious Studies Department employed a total of nine regular tenured/tenure track faculty, one of whom carried a reduced teaching load of .50 FTE due to service as the University Ombudsman (Shelton), and a second (Macauley), a reduced .50 teaching load due to phased retirement. We employed two part-time adjunct lecturers, one of whom was an on-going spousal accommodation (Zimdars-Swartz, .50), the other, temporary. Two among the nine full-time, tenured and tenure track faculty were women, one of whom hailed from North Africa.

With the addition of two newly created positions in 2002 and 2003, and the full retirement of one senior faculty member (John Macauley), our total number of regular tenured and tenure-track faculty in Religious Studies rose to a high of ten. As of spring 2009, that figure is once again down to nine, if we include Lynn Davidman, the Beren Distinguished Professor in Jewish Studies, who carries a fractional .25
FTE position in Religious Studies. In effect, we carry the same level of faculty that we had in 1999 (albeit with a decrease from our high of ten in 2004). However, this relative stability in the overall number of faculty has been accompanied by various retirements, new hires, and changes in allocation, which together have had a significant impact on our curricular coverage.

- **Retirements, replacements, attrition, reallocations.** Sandra Zimdars-Swartz (one of the Department’s two full-time female faculty) left the Department in 2005 to assume a full-time appointment in the Humanities and Western Civilizations program at KU. Her Religious Studies line was not replaced. Our Judaism specialist, Dan Breslauer, retired in 2005 and was replaced by Serguei Dolgopoloski in fall of 2006. John Macauley (phased retirement with reduced .50 load) stopped teaching. He was not replaced. Robert Shelton ended his eighteen years of service as University Ombudsman in 2003 and returned to full-time teaching in Religious Studies. Margaret Rausch (Islam) was appointed in 2001 to replace our former Islam specialist, Fatima Harrak.

- **New positions.** Bill Lindsey was appointed in 2002 to fill a newly created position in religion in Japan (seeded by a three-year grant from the Japan Foundation); Mike Zogry was hired in 2003 to fill a newly created position in Native American religion. Jonathan Boyarin was appointed in fall of 2005 as the College’s first Beren Distinguished Professor in Jewish Studies, with .50 FTE appointment in Religious Studies. Boyarin left KU two years later, and Lynn Davidman (formerly of Brown University) was recruited to the Beren Distinguished Professorship, with .25 FTE in Religious Studies. (This allocation will increase to .50 FTE in Fall of 2009.)

Thus, over the past decade we have lost a total of two full-time tenure-track positions in Christianity, one with specialization in medieval Christianity, women and religion, and theory/method (S. Zimdars-Swartz), and the second, later Christianity in Britain and the U.S. (Macauley). We acquired two new full-time positions in Native American religion (Zogry) and Japan (Lindsey). Through our share in the Beren Professorship, we have also gained an additional fractional tenured position in Jewish Studies (.50 FTE in 2005; down to .25 FTE in 2008).

While these changes in faculty demographics have strengthened us in the areas of religion in America and religion in Asia, the loss of Professor Zimdars-Swartz to Western Civ (and the failure to continue her department line) has left a gaping hole in our undergraduate and graduate programs: Three of the four courses that she taught annually, REL 104 (Introduction to Religion) and REL 780/781, were required courses that other department faculty have been forced to cover. Meanwhile, we have no regular faculty member who specializes in later Christianity. This omission has been exacerbated by the full retirement of Professor John Macauley, who as a former .50/.50 appointment to History and Religious Studies with specialization in Christianity in Britain and the U.S., continued to teach his Supreme Court and Religious Issues part-time after his initial retirement in 1996.

Our Islam specialist, Margaret Rausch, failed to meet the College criteria for promotion to tenure in spring of 2008. She is scheduled to leave the university after spring semester, 2009. We have, as yet, received no official word on whether we will retain the Islam position, although (like the former Christianity slot) it is foundational to our program. Our South Asianist, Robert Minor will retire in spring of 2010, after more than thirty years of service to KU. Again, we have no firm commitment from the administration to continue the South Asia line. This means that, come fall of 2010, our full-time tenure-track faculty will be reduced to seven (one of whom carries a .50 reduction in teaching load as Department Chair), one person short of the number of regular faculty serving the department back in 1999. Meanwhile, we are looking at the possibility of two additional retirements in the not-too-distant future (Shelton, Miller).

We will have no women, let alone minority faculty, in 1.0 FTE full-time tenured/tenure-track positions in the department come fall of 2009. (Lynn Davidman holds a fractional .25 FTE appointment in Religious Studies). We will continue to have no minority faculty in the department. With Minor’s retirement in 2010, we will have only one full professor who is 1.0 FTE (Miller).
2.2. Faculty Research

2.2.1. Publication

The department publishes more prolifically than its peer departments typically do. Over the last nine years our current tenured and tenure-track faculty (exclusive of Dan Breslauer, who retired in Spring of 2005) have published or received acceptance of a total of ten books and monographs (five authored, three co-authored, and one edited) and some 35 major peer-reviewed journal or book articles, in addition to many dozens of short articles and reviews. Notable recent books (1999-2008) produced by the faculty included Lindsey’s Fertility and Pleasure: Ritual and Sexual Values in Tokugawa Japan (Hawaii), Minor’s The Religious, the Spiritual, and the Secular: Auroville and Secular India (SUNY), and Miller’s The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond (Syracuse), Zogry’s Playing or Praying?: The Cherokee Aneto Ceremonial Complex and Performance of Cultural Identity (North Carolina), and Dolgopolaksi’s What is Talmud? The Art of Disagreement (Fordham).

Articles: SD 3, WL 2, RM 4, TM 9, PM 4, MR 3, DS 8, MZ 2.

2.2.2. Perceived national and international reputation

All of the tenured faculty members, and several of the tenure track faculty, have national, and in most cases international, reputations. All regularly attend and present papers at international, national, and regional meetings of major professional societies, including the American Academy of Religion as well as several more specialized organizations (Association for Jewish Studies, Association for Asian Studies). Over the past nine years, Lindsey, Miller, Minor, Stevenson, Zogry, Rausch have presented papers in other countries, and virtually all of our faculty (Lindsey, Miller, Minor, Mirecki, Rausch, Shelton, Stevenson, Zogry, and Davidman) have traveled abroad to conduct research, in many cases with competitive grant support. Five faculty members have served (in recent years) as officers for national or international professional societies or institutes, such as the American Academy of Religion of the Association for Men’s Studies. Shelton is a former president and member of the Board of Officers of the University and College Ombuds Association.

Three tenured faculty members have served on the editorial boards of such journals as Nova Religio, Sociological Inquiry, Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion, Association for Utopian Studies, and Communal Societies, and various book series, including the series on Communalism and Utopianism at Syracuse University Press, the Columbia University series on Chinese Buddhism, and the University of Michigan Institute for the Study of Buddhist Traditions series on Studies in the Buddhist Traditions. Miller is a series editor for New York University Press. Nearly everyone has been invited to do publication reviews for articles submitted to professional journals or manuscripts submitted to major university presses.

Seven faculty over the past ten years have been invited to lecture at academic institutions outside the greater Kansas region. Examples include the University of Heidelberg, University of London, London School of Economics, Tokyo University, Kanegawa University (Japan), Chinese University of Hong Kong, Sungkyunkwan University (Seoul, Korea), Somaiya University (Mumbai, India), Taiwan National University (Taiwan), University of Victoria, McMaster University, Bar-Ilan University (Israel), Harvard University, University of California Berkeley, University of California Los Angeles, University of Virginia, University of Oregon, Brandeis University, Boston University. Department scholars are regularly cited in other scholarly works. At least five faculty have recently contributed to reference works with wide readership, including the Encyclopedia of Religion (2nd ed.), Atlas of the World’s Religions, Encyclopedia of World Biography, Dictionary of American History, Religious Leaders of America, the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the Encyclopedia of Hinduism, the Encyclopedia of Apocalyptic, Sources of Chinese Tradition, Harper’s Dictionary of Religion, the Dictionary of National Biography, and the Princeton University Press and Penguin sourcebooks on Chinese Religion and Buddhism.
2.2.3. **External Grants and Honor (since 1999).**

**Major grants for research** (involving semester or longer leave, or awards for long-term research): Lindsey (Japan Soc for the Promotion of Science and SSRC 2 year), Stevenson (ACLS, 2002-2003; Numata Visiting Chair in Buddhist Studies, Leiden University, Jan-May 2000), Rausch (ACLS 2002-2003). **Total of five (5).**

**Minor grants for research** (summer, book subventions, etc.): Zogry (AAR Individual Research Gr., 2007; NEH Summer Stipend Award, 2005), Stevenson (International Research Institute for Advance Buddhology, Tokyo, resident fellow 2002); Lindsey (Korea Society Fall [Education] Fellowship, 2004); Dolgopolski (Association for Jewish Studies Cahnman Publication Subvention Grant, 2007). **Total of five (5).**

**Institutional Grants:** Stevenson (with Tsutsui, Center for East Asian Studies), Japan Foundation Grant for seeding new position in Japanese religion, 3 yr. commitment beginning in 2001 (total $90,000); Boyarin, Jewish Heritage Foundation and Jewish Community Foundation grants for development of Hebrew language at KU (2006-2007, total award, $75,000); applications resubmitted (successfully) by Stevenson in 2008 (total award, $60,000). **Total of five (five).**

**Invitations as Visiting Scholar in Residence, etc.:** Stevenson, Numata Visiting Chair in Buddhist Studies, Leiden University, the Netherlands, Jan-May 2000; Harvard University (Fall 2007, declined).

2.2.4. **KU and FODORS-sponsored Conferences.**

In Fall of 2000 Paul Mirecki organized a conference at KU that led to publication of his jointly edited volume (Mirecki and Meyer) on *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Brill, 2002). Funds were raised from the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies, CLAS, and various college departments. **Total of one (1).**

2.2.5. **Interdisciplinary Research and Scholarly Activity at KU.**

Department faculty participate actively in various interdisciplinary endeavors and programs hosted by other departments, institutes, and area studies centers at KU. Three faculty in the past nine years have been awarded semester research fellowships at the University’s Hall Center for the Humanities; four have participated in Hall Center seminars and research workshops. Individual faculty, by area of specialization, maintain on-going affiliations with programs such as Women’s Studies, Indigenous Nations (now Global Indigenous Peoples and Cultures), Jewish Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, the School of Social Welfare, and the centers for East Asian Studies and African-African American Studies.

2.3. **Areas to Be Addressed**

The Religious Studies Department has been, and continues to be, drastically behind the curve in our lack of women and minority faculty.

We have a small faculty whose members, on the whole, are dedicated to an on-going program of research and active involvement in the profession. By the same token, we have in recent years suffered continuing shrinkage of faculty numbers and/or inadequate coverage in critical areas of specialization (e.g., Christianity, religion in America), despite several new hires. We also face two to three possible retirements within the not too distant future.

Reduced numbers of regular faculty (with more on the horizon) have brought a proportionate increase in the amount of faculty time and energy diverted to covering standard principal course rotations and core undergrad and graduate major requirements.

In effect, imbalances in faculty specialization and curricular coverage, coupled with reduced
resources for managing current requirements, impacts our ability to maintain the sort of broad and balanced faculty demographic and interdisciplinary collaborations necessary to provide advanced (let alone, adequate) training at the graduate level. Such training should, by definition, include more direct participation of graduate students in faculty research. This point will be revisited with more detail in the sections on Undergraduate Study and Graduate Study.

2.4. Questions for Reviewers

How can we increase our number of women and minority faculty sooner rather than later, especially during this financially precarious time? Would direct hire be a useful feasible solution, and if so, how?

What do we need to do to achieve adequate balance of faculty specializations and critical mass by way of faculty numbers to ensure continued faculty research productivity, competitiveness of our current B.A. and M.A. programs (by way of top-shelf training), and overall growth as a department? How can we best maximize our potentials as individual faculty and educators, and as a department?

What can we do to address the erosion in number of full-time tenured/tenure track faculty, and possibly even faculty lines, that we face today and, possibly, over the next several years?

Beyond promotion of our associate professors to the status of full professor, should we think about hiring at the senior level?

3. Undergraduate Program

3.1. Mission Statement

The academic study of religion acquaints the student with religion as an important integral phenomenon of human experience; examines the forms in which religious experience has been described, organized, and practiced in history and in varying cultures; analyzes the interaction of religion with social institutions and areas of personal and group experience; focuses on religion as expressions of meanings and values in the context of what is perceived as being of ultimate concern; and introduces the student to the methods appropriate to the objective study of religion. We envision this task to comprise training in critical skills and theoretical perspectives relevant to identifying and thinking about the multifaceted ways in which religion shapes the lives of individual and community, as well as the acquisition of competent knowledge regarding specific religious traditions/cultures and, ideally, their dynamic interactions within a pluralistic religious world.

3.2. Demographics for the Religious Studies Undergraduate Major and Minor

Between 1998 and 2007, the Religious Studies Department has enrolled between 26 and 50 undergraduate majors per year, for an annual average of 38. As of 2008-2009 we have 34 declared majors. Since 2003/2004 the numbers have increased over previous years. We have typically awarded an average of 9 B.A. degrees per year over this same period, again with the number increasing from between 5 and 6 to as high as 13 and 14 in recent years. The percentage of women majors has remained fairly steady, ranging from a low of 33% to a high of 54%, for an average of 43% per annum. Minority majors range between roughly 3% and 12%. Between 74% and 90% of our majors are in-state.

3.3. Principal Courses and Service Teaching

Because the faculty of the College has seen the academic study of religion to be a crucial element of any liberal arts education, the category of “Philosophy and Religion” is included as one of the general education, or “principal course,” requirements for the College B.A. degree. The department offers five
courses (each with an equivalent honors section) to meet that College requirement: 1. REL 104: Introduction to Religion; 2. REL 106: Living Religions of the East; 3. REL 107: Living Religions of the West; REL 124; 4. Understanding the Bible; REL 171; 5. Religion in American Society.

A large section of each of these five principal courses, with GTA and enrollment of approximately one-hundred students, is offered on the average every semester. As a matter of principle, the department has considered instruction by regular faculty to be an important component of the principal course rubric, and a fundamental aspect of the department’s mission to raise the level of religious literacy in public educational institutions. Thus, department faculty are encouraged to teach at least one large section of these principal courses for one semester of every academic year. When curricular need (and shortage of faculty resources) demand that faculty time be diverted to other areas, we hire outside lecturers who have a proven teaching record with the department (most with Ph.D. in hand).

3.4. The B.A. / B.G.S. Major Curriculum and Requirements in Religious Studies

In keeping with College specifications, the department offers two degree programs/tracks at the undergraduate level: A Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and a Bachelor of General Studies (B.G.S.). The curriculum for the undergraduate major is divided into three broad topical areas, their rubrics reflective of basic faculty specializations: (1) Western religious traditions, being largely Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; (2) non-Western or, in broader description, religious traditions and cultures alternative to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and (3) religion in North America (mainstream as well as indigenous and alternative). This focus on religious cultures and environs/regions is complemented by an additional focus on theory and method. The theoretical emphasis is specifically reflected in the two required courses, REL 104 (Introduction to Religion) and REL 490 (the capstone approaches seminar for majors).

The undergraduate major requires a minimum of 27 hours of course work in Religious Studies:
(1) 15 of the total hours required must be taken in courses at the junior-senior level numbered 300 and above.
(2) 8 of these junior-senior hours must be completed in residence at the University.
(3) Each student must take REL 104, REL 124, and REL 490 (Senior Seminar in Theories and Methods) which is normally offered only during the spring semester. Majors are advised to enroll in REL 104 and REL 124 early in their course work. They should plan to take REL 490 during the final spring semester of their senior year.
(4) In addition to the three required courses (REL 104, REL 124, REL 490), a student must complete at least one course from each of the three categories distinguished under our Curricular Distribution Requirement*: (A) Western, (B) Non-Western/Other, (C) North-America, and at least three additional elective courses.

Curricular distribution requirements*


b) Non-Western/Other. Overview of Religious Traditions other than Judaism, Christianity or Islam: 106: Living Religions of the East; 108: Living Religions of the East, Honors; 360: The Buddhist Tradition in Asia; 507: Religion in India; 508: Religion in China; 509: Religion in Japan.

d) REL 602 (Topics in Religion), which varies in content per interest of the instructor, may be counted toward appropriate curricular distribution requirements. Departmental permission is required in order to apply REL 405 (Directed Study in Religion) toward fulfillment of the curricular distribution requirements. Students entering the college in the fall of 1987 or thereafter and pursuing a B.G.S. must complete a junior/senior concentration consisting of nine hours of course work numbered 300 or above. Therefore, students planning to have Religious Studies be their area of emphasis are advised to take one course in each of the three areas as designated above.

3.5. Opportunities for Undergraduate Research

REL 499 (Departmental Honors) stands as the department’s primary opportunity for high-achieving, motivated (a minimum 3.5 GPA in the major is required) undergraduates to conduct guided research projects with members of the faculty for up to 6 credit hours. Although there is no undergraduate thesis requirement to cap a major’s career, REL 490, in which all majors must enroll, entails a substantial prospectus and bibliographic component. Any additional opportunities for substantial research depend upon the discretion of faculty to require such projects in their upper-level courses. Some have such a requirement and others do not.

The department offers public, and sometimes monetary, recognition for outstanding examples of undergraduate research through awards announced each spring during the departmental banquet. Few students, however, are aware of these opportunities for recognition of their work. Further, only a handful of faculty employ the expertise of the religious studies bibliographer in Watson Library, Nikhat Ghouse, to instill contemporary data-based research skills in our majors. Drs. Minor (REL 490) and Miller (REL 171) invite Ms. Ghouse regularly to visit their classes; and Dolgolpolski (REL 325) and Stevenson (REL 405) have occasionally employed her services. We tend to be idiosyncratic in undergraduate research training. This is an area to which the department needs to give more integral attention.

3.6. Outcome Assessment Measures

We have not done anything formally by way of undergraduate outcomes assessments, at least for as long as I have been here. As in prior dept self-assessments, for this study Aagje Ashe (our full-time RS staff member) and I composed a questionnaire and comment sheet to assess views of undergraduate majors re department curriculum, program, degree. We mailed it out to alumni majors, and have tabulated their responses and transcribed useful comments. The work was assigned to one of our grad students, to ensure confidentiality of the respondent. Sample questionnaire and tabulation of numerical responses is attached as appendix.

3.7 The Jewish Studies Minor, Hebrew Language and Hindi Language Programs.

3.7.1. The Jewish Studies Minor and Program in Hebrew Language.

The Jewish Studies Minor was created by an ad hoc committee of inter-departmental faculty in 2002, with the decision that it be housed in and administered by the Religious Studies Department. This commitment included creation of courses in Hebrew language and the hiring, housing, and administration of Hebrew language staff. What began as a handful of minors and students enrolled in Hebrew for the purpose of fulfilling CLAS undergraduate language requirement, has since exploded into a field of increasing language enrollments and area interest. New faculty lines in Yiddish language and culture, funded by a grant from the Posen Foundation, and additional funding for a full-time coordinator and additional lecturers for Hebrew language, courtesy of a series of year-to-year grants from the Jewish Heritage Foundation and Jewish Community Foundation of greater Kansas City, have contributed significantly to the growth of the Jewish Studies and Hebrew Language programs at KU. As of fall 2008, with the decision to separate budgetary, staff, and supervisory responsibilities for Jewish Studies and
Hebrew language from Religious Studies, Lynn Davidman, as Beren Distinguished Professor of Modern Jewish Studies, has assumed supervision of the Jewish Studies and Hebrew language programs.

3.7.2 Hindi Language

In Fall of 2009, the University of Kansas will begin to offer courses in Hindi language. Much as we have done with Hebrew language instruction, the Religious Studies Department will administer the developing Hindi language curriculum, one of our long range objectives being to help promote the future growth of Indic and South Asian Studies at KU. Geeta Tiwari, who holds a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology from Pennsylvania State University, with concentration in South Asia, will serve as the coordinator and principal instructor.

3.8. Areas to be Addressed

Of our nine (soon to be eight) current fulltime faculty, six to seven teach regularly (i.e., at least one semester per year) at the 100 principal course level. Three faculty (Miller, Minor, Mirecki) teach a large section of a principal course every semester. Dr. Minor has been teaching increased hours for several years (3 courses per semester), so that his impending retirement effectively removes a 1.5 faculty position from the department in terms of teaching. (As department Chair, Stevenson’s teaching load has been reduced to half time.) Even with two part-time lecturers (Ketchell and Zahn), this commitment of faculty resources is necessary to meet our rotation/objective of offering a large section of each of our five principal courses every semester. Thus, approximately 25% of department faculty teaching hours (with a standard load of two courses per semester) is allocated to 100-level principal courses.

When we factor in the additional burden of the capstone REL 490 and various junior-senior (300-level) courses that meet the department’s distribution and elective requirements, an unusually large proportion of faculty resources go into simply maintaining course rotations necessary to fulfill department and College undergrad requirements. In addition, as much as the Department might desire full faculty participation in sharing the burden of REL 490, not every member of the faculty is prepared to do so, given the specific content of the course and differences in faculty expertise and training. The central role seminars play in the graduate experience places additional strain on undergraduate course rotation, since in any given semester that a seminar is offered it will constitute half of the faculty member’s two-course load.


How can the department enhance and give more integrated attention to research skills in our undergraduate curriculum?

The status of our capstone REL 490 (Approaches and Methods) needs to be reconsidered, given the stress that required curriculum currently places on our increasingly diminished faculty resources. Should REL 490 continue unchanged? Should it be cancelled, and undergraduate majors folded into REL 601, the version of Approaches to Religion required for all first-year graduate students? (This was the original arrangement up until two years ago when REL 490 was created as a stand-alone course for undergraduate majors; and this left REL 601, which had acted as a capstone course for undergraduates and a gateway course for graduate students, an exclusively graduate course.) Should a capstone course even be part of the required undergraduate curriculum? Should faculty who have not taught this course before (or been trained in its content) be urged to take it on, perhaps with a year lead time and summer salary or course reduction to undertake the preparation? It might, in the long run, improve faculty discourse in addition to enhancing department flexibility.

How do we alleviate the heavy load of undergraduate teaching carried by department faculty, without compromising our commitment to providing top-quality instruction in principal courses and our undergraduate curriculum?
4. The Graduate Program in Religious Studies

4.1. Mission Statement

As an established field of academic inquiry, religious studies is supported by a variety of national and international journals and professional societies, including the American Academy of Religion. The academic study of religion is also a pursuit consonant with humanistic inquiry as a whole. The Master of Arts in Religious Studies at the University of Kansas is designed to fulfill two related missions. The first mission is to encourage individuals with an abiding interest in themes bearing on the topic of religion to continue their studies in a disciplined academic environment beyond the undergraduate level. This effort may be directed toward acquiring skills that bear on current or future employment in related areas (e.g., journalism, consulting, social work, education) as well as less quantifiable goals such as understanding one’s self and others, diverse cultures, and relevant issues of class, gender, and race. The second mission of the Master of Arts in Religious Studies is to provide the foundation in critical method and area studies necessary to enter a doctoral program and successfully pursue an academic career in religious studies. In all cases, the student is to achieve an understanding of the multidisciplinary and multicultural nature of religious studies and a competency in its methods, primary data, and its history as a field of academic study. The student is expected to demonstrate the ability to apply these skills to independent research in one specialized area of concentration.

4.2. Student Demographics, Recruitment, and Funding

4.2.1. Demographics

Between 1999 and 2007, annual graduate student enrollments in the Department of Religious Studies have ranged between 11 and 22, for an average of 15. Numbers have increased since 2006, rising from 15 to 20. Percentages of women and minority students have also increased over the past several years, with minorities rising to 10% in 2006 and 2007, and women to between 53% and 59% since 2005. The percentage of Kansas residents ranges between 47% and 73%, for an annual average (1999-2007) of 60%. We typically confer between 2 and 6 M.A. degrees per year. Of the 26 degrees awarded since spring of 1999, 9 of them were thesis track. Approximately 8 of our graduates have gone on to advanced study in Ph.D. programs in religious studies or related fields.

4.2.2. Recruitment

Department faculty actively engage in recruitment activities by encouraging talented undergraduate students in their classes to consider the M.A. program. Recruitment outside of the university is done by faculty who interview prospective students while attending academic conferences or lecturing in other institutions, by mailings of the Department brochures which supply information about the faculty and the M.A. program nationwide, and by the department’s internet homepage, which provides information and receives inquiries globally.

The Studies Committee identifies applicants who show evidence of strong prior academic training in religious studies, outstanding promise in their undergraduate transcripts, supporting letters of recommendation, GRE results (when supplied or required), and who in their personal admissions essay demonstrate keen analytic skills, effective written communication, well-defined objectives for graduate study, and an articulate grasp of their particular area of interest and how it bears on the academic study of religion.

4.2.3. Scholarships/Funding

Scholarships to support graduate study are available on a competitive basis through application to the department, which selects recipients on the basis of the quality of their undergraduate preparation and their demonstrated promise for professional accomplishment. Promising students are also actively recommended by departmental faculty for scholarships, grants, and other opportunities available through
various university agencies.

The Friends of the Department of Religious Studies currently provides the department with $23,000 per year to award to incoming and continuing graduate students. An additional $10,000-15,000 is available for distribution to graduate students through the McIlvain Scholarship Fund. The University also provides us with five GTA slots per year, each of which carries full tuition waiver and a stipend of approximately $12,500. Because GTA awards will cover the high cost of out of state tuition, we often use them, in conjunction with supplementary funds from the FODORS and/or McIlvain Scholarships, to recruit promising students from out of state. When a candidate is particularly strong, we have upon occasion put them up for University fellowships (in most cases, successfully).

The success rate of our graduate recruitment efforts has been spotty, at best. The primary obstacle appears to be that the most outstanding students opt for entry to a program that offers the Ph.D., when we provide only a terminal M.A. Size of the faculty and area coverage (or lack thereof) might also be a factor. To date, the department has neither sought nor kept statistics concerning recruitment, a lack that we might want to address in the future.

4.3. Graduate Requirements and Curriculum

The Department of Religious Studies offers two tracks leading to the Master of Arts degree: the Thesis track and the Non-Thesis track. The Thesis track, consisting of 30 graduate credit hours, requires a thesis, the production of which may count as credit for up to 3 of the 30 credit hours. The Non-Thesis option requires the completion of 33 credit hours of graduate-level coursework. Students who have an interest in going on to Ph.D. level work are encouraged to take the Thesis option. Both the Thesis and Non-Thesis tracks are designed to provide students with the necessary skills to do independent research in religious studies at the scholarly level, while following established academic methods, and to make the results of that research known in a manner that is consistent with professional standards. Evidence of individual student progress is made by regular evaluation of portfolios of student work; evaluation of in-class performance based on participation, written examinations, research presentations and papers; approval by the Studies Committee of a program of study; written and oral comprehensive exams; production and defense of an M.A. thesis (in the case of Thesis Track); and the pursuit of, and appointment to, positions as Graduate Teaching Assistants in the Department of Religious Studies or related departments.

4.3.1. Thesis Program Degree Requirements

The thesis graduate program in religious studies consists of three interrelated but distinct elements: Completion of 30 credit hours in graduate studies, with the following stipulations:

1. At least 18 credit hours must be in courses in religious studies and the rest in fields related to a declared area of competency.
   (1) Coursework must include at least 12 hours (four courses) in the declared area of competency.
   (2) Completion of REL 601: Approaches to the Study of Religion in their first fall semester in the program.
   (3) Completion of REL 780: Theories of Religious Experience or REL 781: Seminar in Theories of Religion.
   (4) One course from each of the following groups:

History of Islam in Africa; REL 539: Greek and Roman Religion; REL 570: Studies in Judaism; REL 732: Seminar in Western Religious Texts:________; REL 761: Seminar in Western Religious Thought:_______; REL 775: Seminar in Religion and Society in the West:________.


(5) Completion of 9 hours (three courses) in graduate seminars numbered 700 or above, the requirements for which include the following elements: (1) a major research paper (approximately 25 pages in length), (2) an oral presentation and defense of student research during the semester for which the student is enrolled, and (3) a limit of 15 students in the class. REL 732: Seminar in Western Religious Texts:_______; REL 733: Seminar in Eastern Religious Texts:_______; REL 761: Seminar in Western Religious Thought:_______; REL 762: Seminar in Eastern Religious Thought:_______; REL 771: Religious Movements and Social Change; REL 772: Religion and Modern Social Criticism; REL 773: Seminar in Religion & National Identity:________; REL 775: Seminar in Religion and Society in the West:_______; REL 776: Seminar in Religion and Society in Asia:_______; REL 777: Seminar in Religion and Gender; REL 780: Seminar in Theories of Religious Experience; REL 781: Seminar in Theories of Religion; REL 787: Ethical Issues in Health Care.

(6) Immediately upon completion of the first 12 hours of course work, a student must, in consultation with an advisor, declare an Area of Competency in which a comprehensive examination will eventually be taken, and determine whether the student is pursuing a thesis or non-thesis option. The student and advisor plan the remaining course work with the declared Area of Competency in mind and propose a program and supervisory committee to the Department’s Committee on Studies for its approval.

2. Students must pass a comprehensive examination, oral and written, over the declared Area of Competency based on a bibliography approved by the supervisory committee.

3. Write and successfully defend a thesis which meets the minimum requirements of the department and the graduate school. As many as three hours in Religious Studies 899: "Thesis," may be included in the 30-hour program. The thesis project includes a prospectus for a thesis to the supervisory committee, approval of which can be granted only after the examination is passed.

4.3.2 Areas of Competency

Competency represents an ability to command a broad general knowledge of a field in religious studies. Students are expected to have a wide understanding of the basic facts, methodological issues, and history of research in their area of competency. Students may wish to focus more narrowly on some aspect of that area for their thesis project or for later research. The department permits students to be examined for competency in one of the following areas of competency: Religion in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean; Religion in Asia Religion in the Middle East and North Africa; Religion in Western Europe; Religion in the USA; Religious Ethics; Jewish Studies; Islamic Studies; Theories and Methods of Studying Religion

4.3.3. Non-Thesis Program Degree Requirements

The requirements for the non-thesis graduate program in religious studies leading toward the M.A. are identical with those for the Thesis option, with two notable exceptions:

1. Candidates for this degree must complete 33 credit hours in graduate studies rather than 30, the distributions of which are governed by the previous Thesis course requirements (with the exclusion of the 3 cr. Hrs. for “Thesis” write-up).
4.3.4. Advisors

The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the default advisor for all incoming graduate students. Upon completion of the first 12 hours of course work a student must choose an advisor, declare an area of competency in which the comprehensive examination will eventually be taken, and determine whether to take the thesis or non-theses option. The advisor will work with the student to develop a program of study, prepare the bibliography for the examination in the area of competency, and serve as an intermediary between the student and the committee on studies. He or she will also chair the committee that prepares and administers the examination in the area of competency and chair the thesis committee. Advisors may be changed during the progress of the student’s program, and both students and advisors are free to suggest such changes to the Director of Graduate Studies. It is expected that the student will consult with the advisor before enrolling each semester; the advisor is responsible for approving the semester enrollment schedule. In the event that the advisor is not available, the student should consult with the director of graduate studies.

4.4. Student research

As noted previously, upper level courses and seminars for graduate students, by department policy, include a significant research and writing component. We take this requirement seriously, as a crucial skill-set of graduate education: how to develop an intelligent problematic, prospectus, program of research, and expository paper that is consistent with professional academic standards. We have departmental competitions, courtesy of the former department and KSR donors, that provide awards for outstanding graduate research projects. We also provide annual competitive grants (courtesy of the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies) for outstanding graduate students to attend or present papers at regional and national meetings of professional societies.

4.5. Outcomes Assessment

Over the past nine years, if not longer, the department has not implemented outcomes assessment measures of any kind for the graduate program (exit interviews, questionnaires, etc.). The exception is distribution of survey questionnaires to graduate alumni at times of formal self-study and external review (e.g., 1999 and 2008), as described above. Limited numbers of responses make the usefulness of such questionnaires minimal at best.

Anecdotal evidence, gleaned from contact between program graduates and faculty mentors, indicates that this has been a most productive strategy. At the graduate level there simply is no substitute for hands-on guidance of research and critique of written product in training students for both critical thinking and intelligible expression of research in religious studies. We need to develop more formal mechanisms for tracking graduates and gathering this sort of input.

4.6. Where We Are and Where We Want to Be

4.6.1. Faculty attrition and pending retirement.

As we have noted earlier, by fall of 2009 the number of full-time faculty in the Department of Religious Studies will be reduced to eight. With Minor’s retirement in spring of 2010, we will be down to seven. Stevenson, as Chair, is on a .50 reduced teaching load. This compares with a total of nine fulltime faculty in 1999-2000 and ten in 2004-2005. The effort to simply maintain current credit hour levels for our five principal undergraduate courses, and to provide core courses required for the undergrad major and M.A. degrees (REL 490, 601, 780/781, other 700-level seminars, etc.), takes up an excessively large portion of faculty instructional resources. For example, by the 2010-2011 academic year more than half of allotted faculty teaching slots will be taken up with principal and required course offerings (REL 601, etc), even with our current use of lecturers for certain principal courses. If we factor in regular rotation of 300-level and 500-level lecture/survey courses (also necessary for fulfillment of the B.A. major and M.A.
distributions), opportunity for more specialized graduate offerings (including seminars) is reduced even further.

Our most pressing need is for faculty lines to counter past and on-going attrition, and to bring our faculty resources up to what we think would be optimal levels to cover our current B.A. and M.A. programs. Calculated on the basis of existing course offerings and rotations, three full-time faculty in each major area of concentration (America, Asia, the Mediterranean and West), possibly with a fourth faculty line in the West, is the minimum number necessary to maintain viable undergraduate major and M.A. degree programs in Religious Studies, at least as currently defined. This would entail (1) commitment to continue the South Asia line after Bob Minor’s retirement; (2) continue and fill our Islam line after Margaret Rausch’s departure; (3) add a new (third position) in religion in America[s].

- Apart from our regular .50 FTE lecturer, Paul Zimdars-Swartz, who teaches an undergraduate survey of Christianity (REL 345), virtually all department offerings with a Christianity component focus on antiquity. The department desperately needs a regular, full-time faculty line in later Christianity to fill the gaps left by the departure of Sandra Zimdars-Swartz in 2005 and retirement of John Macauley some years earlier.

- The religion in America faculty (Miller, Zogry, Davidman as partial appointment) are stretched thin by core area courses (Miller) and various general education (REL 104) and method/theory requirements (601, 781, Zogry). This has limited opportunity for upper-level offerings in American religion, when, on the contrary, religion in America faculty would like to create additional 500-level courses and seminars to fill lacunae and strengthen graduate competences in American religious history.

The ‘alternative/marginal’ religious movements and ‘interstices’ emphasis that is shared by Miller (new religious movements), Zogry (indigenous religions/first nations), and Davidman (religious/secular) makes the KU religion in America faculty in many respects unique. Not many institutions have it, and it might be developed as a strength. But by the same token, we presently have no faculty who specialize in or offer courses on mainstream Christianity in America (let alone contemporary evangelical movements), a lack noted in our graduate alumni surveys.

Given their common interest in the contemporary period, oral history, and ethnography, the religion in America faculty have proposed future creation of 500-level methodology-oriented courses on “how to study religion in America,” courses that focus on religion and social change, or expansion of courses with fieldwork component.

To achieve sufficient balance and area coverage in religion in America, we need to the total full-time tenured/tenure track faculty in this area up to three, which would require creation of one new faculty line. Ideally such an appointment should complement the “alternative religions” emphasis, perhaps with a specialization/competence that combines mainstream American religious history plus some other specific dialogic focus: Asian religions or Islam in the US, ethics, media, globalization (e.g., evangelical movements), Christianity with Latin emphasis.

- Ethics has been a significant point of attraction for both undergraduate majors and graduate students. However, with Bob Shelton as the only member of the faculty who specializes in this area, the concentration is not effectively represented in the department by way of faculty support or curriculum overlap. How can we better integrate it with other faculty areas, or build it in terms of faculty numbers? Might we consider a move toward applied ethics—environmental ethics, ethics and technology, medical ethics, Social Welfare, religion and social change—that would mesh better with departmental or inter-departmental resources? See, for example, the liaisons with the School of Social Welfare discussed below.

- We need greater faculty participation in our core theory/method courses (REL 601, 490, 780-781), in order to distribute the burden of teaching them more equitably. Again this bespeaks a problem with
faculty over-extension. Many faculty also feel that we should develop more theory/method-oriented electives and give more consistent attention to theory/method as a component of existing area-focused courses. This will help foster students’ critical thinking about “religion” across specific area-studies and topical rubrics, an objective that the department as a whole condones.

- Faculty specializations lend themselves to grouping by regional and inter-religious focus (religions in “Asia”; religions in “America”; or religions in the “European West, Mediterranean, and Middle East”). And yet, the department’s list of specific Areas of Concentration from which graduates choose their areas of competence shows certain imbalances: Students concentrating in religion in Asia and America are required to attain competence in multiple religious traditions (and their historical interactions), past and present, within a given geographical region. Students gravitating to religions in the West/Middle East have the option of choosing a single tradition or period for their Area of Concentration (Jewish Studies/Judaism, Islam, Antiquity). Thus, students with a concentration in Islam might take virtually all of their coursework in Islam (potentially with one faculty member), without exposure to any other traditions, historically connected or otherwise.

These inconsistencies need to be addressed. Perhaps, as one member of the European West, Mediterranean, and Middle East suggested, students should come away with a “secure understanding of one major Western tradition, but with attention to complex social, historical, and literary contexts.” This would be more consistent with the larger design of the M.A. program.

4.7. Work in Progress

4.7.1. Interdisciplinary Strengths and Opportunities in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Research and curricular interest in religion ranges widely across departments and disciplines at KU. They include area studies departments, such as Slavic, Spanish and Portugese, or Latino/Latina Studies, East Asian Languages and Cultures, African and African American Studies, and American Studies; discipline and field-oriented departments such as History, English, Classics, Art History, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, and inter-disciplinary programs such as Global Indigenous Peoples, Gender and Women’s Studies.

A variety of courses offered in other departments that carry a “religion” component are cross-listed with Religious Studies, and vice versa. By the same token, Religious Studies graduate students who are contemplating Ph.D.-level study, or who are intent on having access to primary resources in non-native languages, are encouraged to seek training from faculty and departments outside of Religious Studies in areas related to their concentration. Students working in Christian antiquity, for example, may enroll in classical Greek; or students intent on advanced work in Chinese and/or Japanese religion, may embark on intensive language study and enroll in courses offered by East Asian specialists in History and Art History. Often faculty from outside the Religious Studies Department will be invited to serve on M.A. thesis committees.

The Religious Studies Department has in recent years stepped up its effort to take more effective advantage of these interdisciplinary opportunities across the College and University. We have identified faculty and/or departments for whom the academic study of religion is an established field of inquiry and initiated active discussion on how we might forge curricular ties that would strengthen our connection. For example, with the arrival of Lynn Davidman (.25 Religious Studies, .75 Sociology) in 2008, we began to explore the creation of tiered series of cross-listed undergraduate and graduate courses/seminars in Sociology and Religious Studies that would formalize a collaborative track in Sociology of Religion. Similar discussions have been held with Professor Randal Jelks in African and African American Studies and American Studies, and with Eve Levin, specialist in the Russian orthodox church in the History Department. Jelks and Levin were both approved for courtesy appointments to the Religious Studies
4.7.2. The Religious Studies – Social Welfare Connection

Over the past decade, various students and faculty of the Department of Religious Studies and the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare have undertaken collaborative ventures in the area of enhancing awareness of spiritual diversity in social work. Edward Canda, who currently holds a Courtesy Appointment in Religious Studies, received a Keeler Intra-university Fellowship to work in the Religious Studies for one semester. Stevenson, Lindsey, Zindars-Swartz, and Shelton have worked informally with Prof. Canda in areas of teaching, presentation, and grant development (Schumaker Foundation). Undergraduate and graduate students in Social Welfare have also taken Religious Studies courses, with two students, to date, going on to pursue parallel M.A. and M.S.W. degrees in Religious Studies and Social Welfare.

Inspired by these interdisciplinary efforts, the two programs have begun consultations on how to develop parallel degree tracks in Religious Studies and Social Welfare at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These consultations have been pursued mainly by Professors Stevenson and Edward Canda (School of Social Welfare). As of spring 2009, penultimate drafts have been produced for published brochures and program templates that will advertise parallel B.A. / B.S.W. degrees and M.A. / M.S.W. degrees in Religious Studies and Social Welfare, as well as the B.S.W. degree in Social Welfare with minor in Jewish Studies. Pending approval their approval by the respective department and/or school, the brochures will be printed for circulation and entered on to department websites. For further information on the growing field of spiritual diversity in Social Work, please consult Professor Canda's spiritual diversity website, which can be accessed from his www.socwel.ku.edu/canda.

4.7.3. REL 602, Topics: History of Religion in Kansas

In the 1990s, Professor Tim Miller supervised a project in which students wrote narrative histories of several religious denominations and movements in Kansas; in the early 2000s he offered a class in which students gathered extensive documentation on religious bodies in Douglas County, producing an archival file now at the Spencer Research Library on the KU campus. The next course in this series, listed as REL 602, Topics: Religious History of Kansas, and scheduled for fall of 2009, will be one that collects oral histories from longtime members of religious bodies in Kansas. Could this be developed into an on-going course and collaborative faculty - graduate student research project? With proper outside funding, such a project might be directed to extensive and cumulative documentation of the rich history of the state from territorial days to the present, perhaps with eventual expansion to the regional Midwest. The Moore Religious Studies Reading Library could be equipped to handle a digital archive of documents relating to religious history in Kansas and the surrounding states, which in turn could be made available for public use through the internet.

4.8. Questions for Reviewers

1. What is the best strategy for redressing critical gaps and imbalances in our department area coverage (Christianity, women and religion, etc.)?

2. What adjustments should we make to lessen the stresses imposed by over-commitment of faculty time and resources to core courses required for the department undergraduate major and university general education?

3. How can we better identify and build inter-disciplinary connections that will enhance the area strengths of our B.A. and M.A. programs, and possibly position us for a future Ph.D. track in Religious Studies?
4. What steps can we take to enhance general faculty knowledge of theories, issues, and approaches that bear on the academic study of religion, as well as faculty participation in core undergraduate and graduate courses in these areas?

5. How can we accommodate (in terms of program design, funding, and time to degree) the demands that certain graduate students face by way of specialized language and advanced research training?

6. Would it be feasible for us to develop a greater emphasis on ethnography and study of contemporary religion, perhaps with a field-work component involving research on religion in Kansas and the Midwest? What would it take to redeploy the Moore Religious Studies Library as a digital archive to process and hold materials connected with Kansas religious history? Could such a component be translated, effectively, to other areas of specialization (e.g., religion in Asia)?

5. The Prospects for a Ph.D. Track in Religious Studies

5.1. A Ph.D. Track in Religious Studies at the University of Kansas

Among the central Midwestern states, from New Mexico and Texas to Montana and Minnesota, the Mississippi River to the Rockies a total of seven state/public universities provide graduate programs in religious studies, including KU Lawrence. With the exception of University of Missouri Kansas City, which offers their degrees through a Center for Religious Studies comprised of faculties drawn from other departments, all of these institutions have (or will shortly have) established departments and faculties of Religious Studies:

- University of Iowa. Eleven full-time tenured/tenure track faculty.
- Missouri State University (Springfield). Twelve full-time tenured/tenure track faculty.
- University of Missouri (Columbia). Eight full-time tenured/tenure track faculty, one of whom is emeritus.
- University of Missouri Kansas City. Center for Religious Studies, with one Director with 11 faculty drawn from other departments and institutions.
- University of Colorado (Boulder). Ten full-time tenured/tenure track faculty, one of whom is emeritus.
- University of Texas (Austin). Though expanding rapidly, Religious Studies at University of Texas Austin, is at present largely an interdisciplinary faculty. The M.A. and Ph.D are offered only as “portfolio” degrees. However, a full M.A. / Ph.D. program has apparently been approved and will be implemented within the next year or two.

The University of Iowa and UMKC are the only institutions that, at present, offer a Ph.D. in religious studies. The University of Texas is due to join this list in the near future. All other programs (including KU) offer only the terminal M.A. These departments/programs are roughly consistent in their number of faculty (Missouri State is the largest), suggesting that there is no single institution that has a substantial advantage over the others in terms of size and area coverage. U of Iowa.

Demographics of past and current students enrolled in the Religious Studies at the University of Kansas has the ability to draw widely across the central Midwest. Of the thirty-two students who received
the M.A. degree in Religious Studies from KU between 1999 and 2009, fourteen were from out of state. Eight have gone on to work at the Ph.D. level (ten took the Thesis option at KU). Although we have no statistics to substantiate this perception, our failure to recruit the more outstanding applicants to our department seems to rest with our lack of a Ph.D. program.

This situation presents the Religious Studies Department at KU with an unusual opportunity. For some years now, departmental faculty have intermittently raised the thought of creating a Ph.D. track in Religious Studies. Over the past two years, we began to gather statistics and give this prospect more sustained discussion: Would there be sufficient market in Kansas and the central Midwest (or from outside the region) to maintain a reasonable enrollment and critical mass of Ph.D. students at KU? What kind of students would we attract (employed professionals seeking advanced study to enhance person and career, students intent on academic careers in religious studies, or social services work, etc.) What would we need by way of faculty lines to both maintain B.A. and M.A. programs at their current level, while adding the new load imposed by training Ph.D.s? What would or should a Ph.D. program at KU look like? Should we strive to develop a department or program “niche”? Or emphasize individual faculty draw and specialization? Finally, what would we need by way of financial resources to recruit and retain quality students?

On-going discussions among the Religious Studies faculty have generated the following points of agreement, and concern:

5.2. Instructional, Financial, and Infrastructural Resources

- Before even thinking of implementing a Ph.D. in Religious Studies we need to strengthen our current B.A. and M.A. programs by recapturing faculty losses and addressing lacunae in our curriculum: Christianity, Islam, soon to retire South Asianist, possibly an additional line in American religion or a related area (to ease the burden of core course rotations). Optimum strength would be a minimum of eleven or twelve full-time tenured/tenure track faculty.
- Increase the number of women and minority faculty in the Department.
- We need to do hard calculations for the number of new tenure track lines, and/or permanent lecturer slots, necessary to provide regular viable training of Ph.D. students beyond the existing B.A. and M.A. curricula.
- We need more thorough “market” analysis to determine the general demand or need for a Ph.D. program, the type of student it might attract (including numbers and demographics thereof), and their motives for seeking the Ph.D. (e.g., enhancement of an existing professional career, personal growth, a career in Religious Studies with specific area concentration). Will it draw regionally, nationally, internationally, and should any one of these areas be targeted over others? Anecdotal evidence from our department Director[s] of Graduate Studies indicates that we have consistently failed to recruit top applicants to our program because we do not offer the Ph.D.
- Given current limits on available space in Smith Hall, what will we need by way of building expansion or remodeling to accommodate projected increases in the number of tenure track faculty, lecturers, grad students, staff?
- Identify and enhance areas of inter-disciplinary strength by formalizing affiliate appointments and joint curriculum with faculty/programs across the university.

5.3. Thoughts on Program Design

- Faculty are in general agreement that, regardless of the specific area of research concentration, all students coming out of a Ph.D. program in Religious Studies should have: (A) a solid foundation in methods, approaches, theoretical models, and issues traditionally brought to bear on the academic study of religion, (B) familiarity with both the history of research in their particular field of concentration and
the history of religious studies as a discrete field of academic inquiry, and (C) significant exposure to multiple religious traditions and/or their pluralistic interactions within specific socio-historical contexts. Ideally, any course or research project with historically specific focus, would require students to grapple reflexively with issues of hermeneutics and analytic category that are foundational to the project of “religious studies” wherever it is exercised. In addition to their providing a basis for solid professional training, together these three emphases are consistent with the dynamics of religiosphy past and present, and above all the intensified encounter of religious cultures brought on by the radical globalization of recent centuries.

- The concentrations of religion in America[s] and East Asia, at present, have strong area studies and inter-disciplinary support at KU, given College strengths in American Studies, American History, Global Indigenous Peoples, and East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the relatively high number of East Asia faculty in History, Art History, etc. Christianity (Christian antiquity) and Judaism also have reasonably solid support, at least support sufficient for training Ph.D. students.

Apart from “area,” department faculty also share overlapping interests in ethnography and social scientific approaches to the study of religion, with common emphases as well on ritual and narrative (Miller, Zogry, Lindsey, Stevenson, Davidman).

Finally, a large percentage of our faculty have a prominent interest in alternative and marginal religious cultures/movements (envisioned, as it were, in dialogic relation to religious mainstreams), discourses of religious commonality and alterity, the religious and the secular, or interstices of social and cultural practice where religious identities are negotiated. Can we develop these interests as a departmental strength?

- Religious ethics and peace and conflict studies have always been a great draw for undergraduate and graduate students at KU. However, the concentration is underrepresented in department faculty. Can we, and should we, develop this area? If so, how? One suggestion has been to build it in ways that would interest with other existing concentrations, such as environmental studies, ethics and technology, medical ethics, Social Welfare, religion and social change, media, globalization (e.g., evangelical movements).

- Can a core ethnographic component, centered perhaps on a multi-course sequence that entails training in ethnography of religion and active field-work in oral history, archiving, and ethnography of religious history in Kansas and the regional Midwest, serve as an effective/useful anchor for the graduate curriculum as a whole (translatable, perhaps, to other area specializations)?

- How do we provide support (e.g., financial and curricular) for students to acquire the advanced language and research skills necessary to do Ph.D. level work in specialized areas beyond those of, say, general religious studies method/theory: Christian antiquity, Judaism, Islam, religion in South or East Asia, aspects of religion in the Americas, etc.

We urge M.A. students in Religious Studies with aspirations for Ph.D. study to start related language study as soon as possible (if they do not already have it). Just to acquire basic competency this typically increases their time to the M.A. degree by as two or three years. To work effectively with specialized lexicons and literatures of, say, Chinese Buddhist or Coptic Christians, not to mention general area studies research tools and resources, requires significant training beyond the level that most language and literature departments are prepared to provide. As a case in point, East Asian Languages and Literatures at KU has manifestly refused to offer regular courses on classical Chinese and Japanese, despite the fact that such training is crucial to any graduate student in East Asian history, art history, and religion. In today’s competitive climate, foundational language training for specialized areas in Religious Studies should start at the M.A. level, if not before. How do we accommodate and instructionally provide for this demand?
6. Physical and Staff Resources

6.1. Physical Resources

The Irma I. Smith Hall was built as a home for the former Kansas School of Religion, later to become the KU Department of Religious Studies, on the basis of private funds raised from individual donors and religious organizations. In addition to offices for faculty members, Smith Hall has traditionally provided one office for the Department’s 1.0 FTE Administrative Associate Sr., a single office for both professional and student reading room staff members, one shared office for GTAs (current total of 5), and two offices (ad hoc) for housing adjunct lecturers. The building contains a 100-seat lecture hall, and five smaller classrooms. We make heavy use of the lecture hall and have “first-pass” scheduling rights to two of the small classrooms, although one of the smaller classrooms is assigned almost exclusively to Hebrew language instruction. The building also contains the Moore Reading Room Library (Smith 109), which houses the former Kansas School of Religion library and expanded collection of the Religious Studies Department (acquired through funds from the Friends of the Department of Religious Studies).

When the Religious Department agreed to administer and house the newly created Jewish Studies minor and program in Hebrew language instruction in 2002, the adjunct Hebrew instructors shared office space with the Religious Studies lecturers. Over the past three to four years, we have seen the creation of the Beren Distinguished Professorship in Jewish Studies, an increase in Hebrew language staff from one to two adjunct instructors, plus the appointment of a full-time Hebrew coordinator. The number of Hebrew language courses and sections has grown sharply, and in 2007 we created a .50 FTE staff position in Jewish Studies/Hebrew, which was raised to 1.0 FTE a year later (2008).

The Department has accommodated these expansions in the Jewish Studies/Hebrew program by reallocating the limited space of Smith Hall. Beginning in 2005-2006 the Religious Studies Department provided full-time office space to the Beren Distinguished Professorship in Jewish Studies, even though the appointment was at the time .50 Religious Studies. (This arrangement continues today, with a reduction to .25 Religious Studies appointment, with .75 in Sociology.) We have provided full-time office space for the 1.0 FTE Administrative Associate staff member in Jewish Studies/Hebrew; we have accommodated the increase in Hebrew language instructional staff, by coordinating their office schedules with our adjunct Religious Studies lecturers and providing partial use of the second floor of the Moore Reading Room; and we have turned one of our two first-pass classrooms almost entirely over to Hebrew language instruction. Our second classroom is used intermittently.

Meanwhile the decision was made this year to begin administrative separation of Jewish Studies/Hebrew from Religious Studies currently underway, the objective being to create an a fully independent Jewish Studies program at KU. If the Religious Studies Department is to retain existing and add future faculty positions as planned, and the Jewish Studies Program is to grow as well, then we face significant questions about the future use of Smith Hall and its space. GTA and lecturer accommodations have already their limit, and with our housing of the current Beren Professorship and Jewish Studies staff member, there simply is no office space available for expansions of Religious Studies faculty, let alone the new Jewish Studies program.

Our spatial collaborations with Jewish Studies/Hebrew have been amicable, cooperative, and productive. If we are to share building space with any program, Jewish Studies makes perfect sense, particularly with Lynn Davidman as Beren Distinguished Professor with partial appointment in Religious Studies. However, a clear plan for future remodeling and use of the building is of utmost importance. We have repeatedly urged the University to sit down with us to discuss remodeling of Smith 100, the large lecture hall, which if handled properly could give us at least four new offices while maintaining current seating capacities. Several years ago maintenance crews showed up (unannounced) to paint and refit the seating in Smith 100. While this has certainly improved the room, remodeling for additional office space could have easily been undertaken at this time had the department been given opportunity to consult with
the University planners.

6.2. Support Staff

The Religious Studies Department currently has one full-time (1.0 FTE) Administrative Associate Sr. staff person, who serves as assistant to the Chair and manages department budgets, scheduling, events, and other routine operations, and a second part-time Administrate Associate Sr. (.50 FTE) who manages the Moore Reading Room, its student staff, as well as various budgetary and office duties assigned by the full-time Administrate Associate Sr. and Chair. In addition, the department employs some four to five student assistants, who work for limited hours in the Moore Reading Room and on behalf of department faculty.

The 1.0 FTE Aministrative Associate Sr. supervises the .50 FTE Administrative Associate Sr. and student staff in the Moore Reading Room Library. The .50 FTE Administrative Associate, who is responsible for the MRR, also carries a .50 FTE staff position in the Museum Studies Program, which means that her hours are divided between the two programs (and locations). Although the arrangement is at times awkward, it has worked reasonably well. The only significant problem has been MRR student staff impinging on the time of the 1.0 FTE staff member with questions and problems that arise during hours when the .50 FTE MRR staff member is absent. As the department expands, and the role of the Moore Reading Room Library is redefined, an additional .50 FTE staff position in Religious Studies might be in order.

Faculty members and students are asked annually to comment on the performance of the department staff. Responses have always been quite positive, even with the significant changes in personnel and reallocation of staff duties of the past two years. Faculty, students, and student staff have been unanimously enthusiastic about the courtesy, commitment, professional skill, and promptness of our two Associate Senior staff members. We consider ourselves fortunate.

The department professional staff has been invited to comment annually on their work environment. While they have expressed consistent satisfaction with the department workplace and ethos, they have offered constructive suggestions in several areas. Additional staff support will be necessary as the department and its duties expand. (Increases in online technologies, while convenient, have required ceaseless retraining of staff and ever-increasing demands on staff time. Recent changes in university IT support have been cumbersome and, at times, been crippling.) In the department self-study undertaken in 1999, and again in this 2009 self-study, the professional staff expressed a desire for greater faculty responsiveness to observance of deadlines and memos circulated by the staff, as well as sensitivity to making demands on staff time that are not a defined part of staff duties. The department chair concurs on this point. Staff are not personal secretaries for faculty.

6.3 Questions for Reviewers

What can we do to alleviate current and projected shortages of classroom and office space in Smith Hall?
**Mission.** The Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas is the only department among the Regents’ Universities of the state of Kansas that is dedicated fully to the academic study of religion. In keeping with the specifications of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the department offers two degree tracks at the undergraduate level: a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and a Bachelor of General Studies (B.G.S.). In addition we offer a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Religious Studies. The academic study of religion is a trans-disciplinary endeavor to understand from an objective perspective how religious traditions are constructed by and shape the lives of their adherents. Our goal is to help students develop the critical skills and theoretical perspectives necessary to understand the multifaceted ways in which religion impacts individuals and communities, as well as the interaction of traditions in a pluralistic religious world.

**Faculty.** The Department currently has nine (9) full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members; of these, one is a joint appointment with .25 FTE in Religious Studies; another faculty member is on phased retirement, with .75 FTE. Our total Tenured/Tenure Track FTE is thus 8.2, which represents a slight decrease from the 9.0 Tenured/Tenure Track FTE reported in the documents included in our departmental self-study (this number represents Fall 2007). Since the 2009 Department Self-Study, we have had one faculty retirement, one faculty member depart for another institution, and one faculty member leave KU because of denial of tenure (departed after 2008–09 AY). On the other hand, two new tenure-track faculty, both women, were hired in Spring of 2010. In addition, the department currently employs three part-time lecturers (all with PhDs) according to curricular need. All regular faculty maintain active research programs, including publication and presentation in professional venues.

**Programs**

**Bachelor’s Degrees (B.A., B.G.S.).** As highlighted in our self-study document, and noted by our external reviewers, the Department of Religious Studies takes seriously its mission to increase religious literacy at KU and in the state of Kansas. This mission is pursued each year through the hundreds of students who enroll in our principle and mid-level courses and through the deeper education of our undergraduate majors. Though our faculty numbers are small, the evidence shows that we continue to make a distinguished contribution to undergraduate education at KU and in the state of Kansas.

Our ratio of Student Credit Hours per Tenured/Tenure Track FTE (479.6 in AY 2010–11; average 457.0 over the past 3 years) compares very favorably with both that of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (361.7 in AY 10–11; 3-year average 379.9) and that of the University as a whole (334.2 in AY 10–11; 3-year average 344.5). As of Fall 2010, the number of majors and of degrees granted is down slightly from the previous 5 years (average of 40 declared majors from 2005–2009), although not inconsistent with past averages. In AY 2009–10, 22% of our graduates were minorities, and 67% were women. We have had academically strong graduating classes in the past two years: the classes of 2009 and of 2010 both had an average GPA of 3.4 and a median time to degree of 4.0 years. External reviewers evaluated our undergraduate program as very strong.

**Master’s Degree (M.A.).** The Department of Religious Studies offers a terminal Master’s Degree that comprises two tracks: thesis and non-thesis. Students who show the initiative and
ability to continue their studies at the Ph.D. level are encouraged to take the thesis track, as well as to acquire languages and other specialized research skills relevant to their future area of concentration. As a small department, personal attention to student needs is high. The percentage of students who go on to Ph.D. programs tends to be relatively low (reflecting the general lack in Religious Studies curriculum at Regents institutions and the fact that KU offers only a terminal M.A.). All of our faculty have, nonetheless, had success in placing graduates in Ph.D. programs.

Several weaknesses were noted in the Department’s self-study and external review. Attrition in the number of full-time tenured or tenure track faculty has resulted in a disproportionate diversion of faculty resources to cover our core general education courses and courses required for the undergraduate major and graduate degree. The graduate program has also been impacted in recent years by ineffective supervision of student recruitment, applications, admissions standards, and student progress-to-degree. For the academic years of Fall 2004 through Fall 2010, the Department’s M.A. program averaged 10 applicants per year, with 8 admitted, for an average 80% admission rate. Although the program is designed to be completed in 2 to 3 years, we identified students who were taking up to 6 or 7 years to completion.

Changes as a Result of the Review Process. Since the Department’s external review in spring of 2009, Religious Studies has recruited two new full-time tenure track faculty, both of them women. While this has improved our gender demographic, and our range of course offerings at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, since 2010 two faculty have left the Department (one by retirement) and a third enter phased retirement. Hence, faculty attrition, as noted by the external reviewers, continues to put negative pressure on both our graduate and undergraduate programs. The area of Asian religions has been particularly affected.

Acting on our own concerns, which were confirmed in our external review, the Department has vigorously addressed weaknesses in the M.A. program built up over years of inattention to two related problems: an admit rate that was too high and a time to degree average that was too long. In Fall 2009 steps were taken to seek voluntary discontinuation or dismissal of 15 students who had ceased to enroll. In addition we graduated 9 students in SP/SU 2010, of whom 5 had been in the program between five to seven years. We also substantially revised our application review process, resulting in an “applied to admitted yield” of 68.8%, which was the lowest in the previous six years. The result is an exceptionally talented and motivated group of graduate students. Of the 13 students currently enrolled, 7 are making active preparations to move on to Ph.D.-level work after graduation.

Discussions of program design and curriculum revision are currently underway, guided by comparisons with peer and exemplary programs at other institutions. Over the past two years, measures have also been taken to enhance inter-disciplinary synergies across the university (e.g., courtesy appointments, collaborative teaching, guest speakers from other departments) and to engage graduate students more directly in faculty research.

Overall evaluation. The Religious Studies Department contributes substantially to the KU general education curriculum, as well as to the research and instructional endeavors of various area studies centers and inter-disciplinary programs. The Department carries a very strong undergraduate B.A. major and a circumspect but solid M.A. program. Though the M.A. program has stumbled in recent years, since Fall of 2009 it has seen a steady trend-line toward improvement. For these reasons, and for the crucial role that the academic study provides for public education today, this program will be continued.