

THE HELLENIC SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Modern Greek Studies at the University of New South Wales 2009 and beyond

Position Paper By: Spiro Premetis 8/30/2009 THE HELLENIC SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NSW

Introduction

The 2009-10 committee of the Hellenic Society of the University of New South Wales (HELLSOC) has commissioned this document in response to the decision by the University of New South Wales to scale back the study of Modern Greek at the university. HELLSOC would like to emphasise in this document the need for Modern Greek studies at the University of New South Wales not just for the benefit of the Greek Community, but for the education of all students at the university.

An alarming trend is taking place at the University of New South Wales with the scaling back of subject offerings at the university, expansion of tutorial class sizes and decreased tutorial times, in addition to an increasing workload on students over a shorter university semester. It is the view of HELLSOC that when comparing the decision to close down of Modern Greek studies in the overall context of the changes taking place at the university over the past few years it becomes apparent that the university is diminishing the quality of education available to both current and future students.

The proposed changes to Modern Greek studies, which are to no longer offer a major or minor in Modern Greek studies at the university, are a symptom of a much wider problem in declining academic and teaching standards at the university. If these issues are not addressed immediately the branding quality of a Bachelors degree from university will diminish. Additionally, culture and knowledge which may be useful to current and future generations will be lost.

The way in which these and other recent changes made by the university have been implemented have completely disregarded student participation. Students have not been able to voice their views as to the direction they think the university should be taking, and any efforts by the university to engage and discuss with the students have been tokenistic in the opinion of HELLSOC.

This document will set out the position of HELLSOC in regards to what it views as a viable Modern Greek studies department and how the university can take steps towards making this a reality. It also outlines the above concerns of students. Section one discusses the current situation regarding Modern Greek studies at the university. Section two outlines some information about the objectives of HELLSOC and how the current decision by the university conflicts directly with these objectives. Section three outlines HELLSOC'S final position for how Modern Greek studies should be incorporated at the university.

For any enquiries please contact the Hellenic Society of New South Wales University via email at: hellsoc@hotmail.com.

mail.com.

Section One

Modern Greek at the University of New South Wales: The current situation

The current situation of Modern Greek studies at the university is dismal. The university has made a number of decisions that do not promote a viable Modern Greek studies program at the university. Modern Greek will no longer be offered as a major or minor in 2010 or 2011 except for existing students who are completing already commenced studies. Some extracts from a letter from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Professor James Donald, dated 9 June 2009, explain the current position of the university when this document was written:

"Students currently enrolled in Modern Greek at UNSW will be able to complete their studies here by 2011, whether they are taking Greek as a major, a minor or a diploma.

From 2010, two courses in Introductory Greek will continue to be offered at UNSW, one in each semester.

Intermediate and advanced Greek courses will be phased out at UNSW in 2010 and 2011. However, for UNSW students wishing to continue the study of Modern Greek at upper level in the future, arrangements have been made to allow them to do so through cross-institutional enrolment at the University of Sydney. The UNSW Faculty of Arts and Social Science Student Centre will manage the process of enrolment. Students will be awarded credit for their studies of Greek at Sydney in their undergraduate Arts degree at UNSW." (Emphasis added).

This position by the university is unacceptable and unconditionally disputed by HELLSOC. A Modern Greek studies program must be offered at the university. This does not mean a token two courses in introductory Greek, but rather a full offering of a major and minor with research opportunities; which until recently the university did offer. The current offering by the university is not a Modern Greek Program.

Greek is one of the most widely used languages in Australia. HELLSOC believes that opportunities for studying it should be as widely available as possible. The closure of a department deprives many students of this opportunity. Experience has shown that the loss of a discipline in one university does not necessarily mean that interested students will gravitate towards an institution where that discipline is offered. It is essential that the Modern Greek program be offered at the university and not on a cross institutional basis.

The practical reality is that students will not continue to study Modern Greek at the university if it is not made accessible to them at the institution at which they have chosen to attend. The universi-

ty would not allow a student to complete the majority of studies in accounting, engineering or medicine on a cross institutional basis. Modern Greek should be held up to the same standard.

The university has focused on a perceived lack of demand for Modern Greek studies. They have stated on numerous occasions that enrolments are not at a level constituting a demand for Modern Greek. HELLSOC disputes the numbers presented by the university. The university is actively misleading the public in their correspondence. Demand for Modern Greek is stable when looking at enrolments on a subject basis. Additionally, looking at the five year moving average of enrolments, a method adopted by a number of institutions to determine the demand for subjects, suggests that enrolments are stable.

Putting the numbers aside the university has made no reasonable attempt to ascertain what may happen in the future. They have completely ignored the potential future demand for Modern Greek studies and are stuck in a backward looking mentality. If the university truly supported Modern Greek studies they would acknowledge that the best way to move the department forward into the future would be to work to promote it. Scaling subject offerings back demonstrates a lack of imagination, ambition and belief by the university in the future

of Modern Greek studies. HELLSOC is yet to be convinced that the university has acted in the interests of the Modern Greek Program while it has been operating over the past five years. There has been little active promotion of Modern Greek compared to other languages at the university.

The university should not be looking to scale back departments in response to cost cutting measures due to the failure of 'UNSW Asia' and the Global Financial Crisis. This current policy by the university is one of acting against students and students groups like HELLSOC. The university should be working in partnership with HELLSOC and other student groups to help lobby government for additional funding which would serve to increase demand at the university for Modern Greek.

Unfortunately to date no consultation has been made with HELLSOC in relation to this issue until the decision was made to close the department. HELLSOC is clearly one of the key stakeholders that have an interest in a Modern Greek program and our society and members have been completely ignored and marginalised by the university in their hurried actions to scale back Modern Greek without any consultation with HELLSOC.

Position Paper continues in tomorrow's edition

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SAVE GREEK

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15
Sept

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UNSW Hellenic Society to
FIGHT FOR YOUR EDUCATION.
11am – 2pm

- The Arts Faculty of UNSW is being destroyed by the university.
- Russian has been cut, Greek is on its way out, WHAT'S NEXT?
- Do we not live in a Multicultural society?
- Save the Arts by stopping the closure of Modern Greek studies!

