



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

**Expanding Horizons:  
A PR Plan for UNC's Department of German & Slavic Languages & Literatures**

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**Submitted To:**

Dr. Robert Langston  
Chair

Department of German & Slavic Languages & Literatures



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## I: Executive Summary

The Department of German & Slavic Languages and Literatures at UNC Chapel Hill plays a vital role on campus, giving students a special place to learn languages, explore cultures, and build community. The department provides students with the rare experience of a small-collegiate environment inside a major research university where class sizes are usually large. Each year, 600–700 students enroll in GSLL courses, many of them pursuing a double major or minor. The department’s commitment to pedagogy and student support make it a place where learners thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

Despite its many strengths, the department’s unique value is not yet fully recognized across campus and therefore has room to grow in attracting more students. Many undergraduates are still discovering the breadth of new courses and faculty expertise now available — an encouraging sign of growth that highlights opportunities for continued outreach. Department leaders recognize that this period of growth offers a unique opportunity to reintroduce the program to students and faculty across Carolina and provides a natural “news hook” to highlight its expanding offerings.

The following pages outline a recommended action plan to help the UNC Department of German & Slavic Languages and Literatures strengthen its presence on campus, connect with students through clear and compelling messaging, highlight new courses and faculty, and expand awareness of the department’s unique offerings. This plan will equip department leaders with consistent communication tools, engage campus audiences more effectively, and leverage recent growth as an opportunity to raise the department’s profile and achieve its enrollment and visibility goals.

## II: Business Goals

The UNC Department of German & Slavic Languages and Literatures prides itself on having a strong sense of community. It gives students a place to study, and have a small collegiate experience. Dr. Langston emphasized three priorities — introducing new professors, promoting innovative new courses, and highlighting the accessibility of Russian 101 — which directly inform the department's three strategic goals outlined below: increasing awareness of new course offerings, showcasing faculty expertise, and reducing intimidation around language learning. This enables students to take the following two courses that summer and fall — ultimately completing their language requirement in under one year.

### 1. Increase awareness of new course offerings

- **Specific:** Highlight new courses being introduced in Spring and Fall 2026, ensuring students know they are available. Primarily focusing on the Russian 101 language credit opportunity.
- **Measurable:** Increase in clicks/engagement on course promotion posts and fill at least 80% of available seats in the highlighted courses.
- **Achievable:** Use social media campaigns, campus flyers, and student partnerships to promote the courses. Launch a social media campaign specifically for taking Russian 101 Spring 2026.
- **Relevant:** Raising awareness supports the department's mission to expand enrollment and visibility across campus. Highlight the benefits of finishing language requirement in one academic year by taking Russian 101 in Spring 2026.
- **Time-bound:** Campaigns will launch in November 2025 and run through March 2026, aligned with the registration and add/drop periods.

### 2. Promote faculty expertise

- **Specific:** Showcase the three new faculty members and their specialties to emphasize the department's academic strength.
- **Measurable:** Publish at least three spotlight stories (one for each faculty member) on the department's website and social media, achieving at least 250 combined views/interactions.
- **Achievable:** Coordinate interviews and use Canva/social platforms for accessible graphics.
- **Relevant:** Promoting faculty reinforces the department's reputation for high-quality teaching and research.
- **Time-bound:** Spotlights will be published between November 2025 and March 2026, ahead of Spring and Fall enrollments.

### 3. Reduce intimidation around language courses

- **Specific:** Reframe language courses as accessible, emphasizing that many content courses are taught in English and no prior knowledge is required.
- **Measurable:** Increase first-time enrollments in GSLL courses and improve student perception of accessibility.
- **Achievable:** Use "Did You Know?" campaigns, student testimonials, and clear advising materials to highlight approachable course options.
- **Relevant:** Lowering barriers to entry will expand the student base and counter stereotypes about difficulty.
- **Time-bound:** Campaign rollout will occur from November 2025 to March 2026, targeting advising and registration periods.

New professors and courses (details to be confirmed by Dr. Langston):

- Dr. Wilson — GSLL 259 (Marxism and Literature) and GSLL 481 (Inventing Central Europe) Spring 2026
- Dr. Herskovitz — SLAV 469 (Yiddish Literature of New York) Spring 2026

- Dr. Wolverton — GERM 416 (The Viking Age) Spring 2026
- Dr. Wilke — GERM 474 (Literature and Photography of the 20th Century) Spring 2026

### III: Communications Audit

The UNC Department of German & Slavic Languages & Literatures currently uses a mix of in-person and digital strategies to reach students. The department emphasizes its sense of community and small-class structures, but faces challenges in promoting new courses and adding new students who may find German and Slavic language study intimidating.

#### Current Communications Tactics

- Posters and visual materials created by Michaela Woodward to advertise classes
- Involvement of the German and Slavic student clubs for peer engagement
- “Cafestunde” events and other informal social events to create visibility and increase engagement
- Use of the departmental website and social media to highlight course offerings and news

#### Stakeholders

The GSLL Communication Committee includes:

- Dr. Priscilla Layne
- Dr. Trevor Wilson
- Dr. Yaakov Herskovitz
- Dr. Jocelyn Aksin
- Michaela Woodward

Our team will attend the committee’s upcoming meeting (Wednesday, Oct. 1 at 1:10 p.m.) to align our PR plan with the department’s current efforts and identify things where our additional help is needed.

#### SWOT Analysis:

**Strengths:** Department fosters strong community, offers diverse courses, and invests in teaching quality.

**Weaknesses:** While the department has made progress in outreach and visibility, there is still room to strengthen communication strategies and refresh marketing materials to reach students beyond current majors and minors. The Instagram account could better highlight new faculty, courses, and student opportunities to reflect recent growth. Refining website navigation would make key course and program information easier to find and more inviting to prospective students.

**Opportunities:** Utilizing Instagram by increasing post frequency and showcasing student testimonials, new faculty, and “behind-the-scenes” will make the department more visible and relatable. An update of the website’s homepage and course landing pages would support promotional efforts. Canva posters, social media, and campus partnerships can highlight new professors and their courses. This can also be used to promote taking Russian 101 in Spring 2026 as an accelerated way to fulfill the language requirement.

**Threats:** Politics; persistent stereotypes about countries/cultures discourage students from enrolling.

While GSLL highlights its sense of community and academic rigor, these strengths are not yet communicated consistently across platforms such as the website and flyers. Strengthening the department’s social media presence and course advertising will help connect more effectively with undecided students and better convey GSLL’s value across campus

#### IV: Recommendations

Based on insights from department leadership and our own research, we recommend a set of targeted strategies to help the UNC Department of German & Slavic Languages and Literatures achieve its goals of boosting enrollment, raising visibility, and strengthening its community. Below is a chart that explains our recommendations and their key components.

| Audience                                                      | CTA                                               | Message                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Message Delivery Tactics                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Prospective Students (underclassmen, undecided majors)</b> | Enroll in GSLL courses                            | Explore Europe through culture, history, and ideas — no prior language required.                                                                                                                                                   | Canva posters, Instagram reels, in-class presentations, tabling at advising fairs, CLE credit + focus capacity featured in course ads. |
| <b>Current Students (minors, double majors)</b>               | Deepen engagement with GSLL                       | Expand your studies — GSLL courses fit alongside your major.                                                                                                                                                                       | Faculty announcements, club events, Instagram highlights, and student testimonials.                                                    |
| <b>Media/University Communications</b>                        | Run a story highlighting GSLL's unique offerings. | Showcase GSLL's revitalization — growing in size, leadership, and relevance across campus. New faculty, new courses, and an inclusive student community reflect UNC's commitment to global learning and cross-cultural connection. | News releases, feature stories, coordinated campaigns with UNC Global and Arts & Sciences comms, faculty profiles.                     |

## V: Timetable & Hours Allocation



### Hours Allocation

|                               |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Writing PR Plan               | 4 hours |
| Personal faculty meetings     | 4 hours |
| Department Meetings           | 2 hours |
| Data Collection/Research      | 2 hours |
| Social media content creation | 5 hours |
| In-person content creation    | 5 hours |

**Total** **22 hours**