**Student Interest**

1. “Russian Studies is an important program for any university because it is a widely-spoken language and can be very beneficial to American students particularly. Hundreds of millions of people speak Russian, and it is a language not only spoken in Russia. Since it is very prominent, having Russian language skills can boost one’s chances of getting a certain job, and could be used regularly in certain jobs that pertain to things such as foreign service, international business, or politics. Not many college students are learning Russian, so those who do will be highly valuable to companies who want employees with that language knowledge. With the ways the United States and Russia are intertwined in trade, politics, multinational organizations and historical events, it is extremely important for today’s generation of college students to have the opportunity to learn such a valuable skill set.

Personally, since I have taken 20 credits of Russian, I know that I love learning Russian and would keep taking the courses, regardless of if it is for a Russian Studies minor. I would sign up to get the minor if it was offered, but I wouldn’t stop taking Russian if I couldn’t get a minor in it. For me, just being able to say I have a Russian Studies minor wouldn’t be a large incentive, but I think for other students considering if they should learn Russian, the opportunity to obtain a Russian Studies minor may convince them to begin the courses. A Russian Studies minor should be offered. Hopefully, the attractiveness of a minor would recruit students to start Russian, but the greatness of the language would motivate them to finish!” **Shannon Wilson, B.A.’20**

1. “Russian Studies is important because Russian is the eighth most spoken language in the world with over 250 million speakers. The language also has a rich literary history, with Russian authors being among the most renowned in the world. It is no surprise that many people learn Russian just to read the likes of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Pushkin in their native tongue. Russian Studies is also crucial for understanding Russia’s tumultuous relationship with its neighbors, both past and present. The Russian language is still used as a lingua franca in the neighboring regions of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Baltic. Additionally, Russia has close economic and cultural ties with these regions that continue to grow. The United States is always in need of more Russian speakers to facilitate engagement in business and diplomacy with Russia and its neighbors. Through Russian Studies, students can better understand the history, culture, geography, and relationships of these regions. With these skills, students can make an impact globally.” **Philip Purifoy, B.A.’19**
2. “I began studying Russian as a Junior because, as an International Studies major, I had always been fascinated with Russian language, politics, and culture. My study of Russian was also a big factor in my decision to go to Ukraine and teach English for the second time the Summer after my Junior year. I loved the people and being able to impart a useful skill (English) the first time I went two years before, but understanding more about the language and culture allowed me to connect with my students and the country in an even more meaningful way. My next steps after graduation are law school in New York City and, someday, a career in Human Rights Law. I am 100% confident that my Russian skills are going to help me connect with new and interesting people in my new city and find a job that will make a real difference in the world. Hopefully my studies and career will also allow me to travel even more throughout the Russian-speaking world! My advice to those who are thinking of studying Russian would be to open yourself to all of the amazing opportunities that language can bring and to remember that there is always something new to be learned!” **Sydney Gower, B.A.’19**
3. “Russian studies, to include language, history, and culture, is important to understanding a radically diverse region’s connection to the rest of the world.  The term Russia is rather narrow to describe an area that covers over 10 percent of the world’s land surface and encompasses nearly 200 ethnicities, with an equally enormous diaspora of languages, religions, cultures, and ideologies to accompany them.  Even the most rudimentary knowledge of this Eurasian giant lies beyond most students’ horizons, though many students pursue studies in international politics, economics, and cultures, earning a degree in a “global” field without ever scratching Russia’s surface.  Considering the United States’ dominance in the 20th century’s spotlight, Russian studies offers a lens which can corroborate one aspect of the American narrative of the past century while simultaneously shattering another. It is important in any field to consider multiple, contrasting points of view

If a Russian Studies minor were to be offered, I would sign up for it and encourage others with an interest in history, language, politics, and literature to also consider it.” **Christopher Beltran, B.A.’19**

1. “Russian Studies is especially important for anyone who wishes to have a career in the federal government. Whether your dream career might be in politics, defense, diplomacy or something else entirely, having a background in Russian studies is sure to help propel your chances as a suitable candidate for that position.
I believe that the study of Russian culture and language is especially important in the current geopolitical climate of our nation. Our two nations are constantly engaging with each other, so culture exchange is an essential step for understanding one another’s position. That is, through the exchange of knowledge and understanding, our two nations will benefit. I would sign up for a Russian Studies minor to learn about the fascinating history, culture, and language of a nation which Americans often hear about, but rarely take the time to understand. Not only is it a fascinating topic, but it is also an excellent resume builder. Russia is becoming increasingly more relevant to the lives of everyday Americans. In a globalized world where international business is constantly being conducted and information travels instantaneously, it is important to be a globally aware citizen. We live in a world where places like the Russian Silicon Valley, Zelenograd, become sister cities with places like Tulsa, Oklahoma. Average people are becoming more exposed to cultures they would hardly ever engage with just a few decades ago, so it is important to have the knowledge and skills required to adapt to these societal changes.” **Alicia Gillum, B.A.’19**
2. “I am a Junior Political Science and International Studies major from Harrison, Arkansas. One of the main reasons I chose to attend the University of Arkansas was the fact that they offered a Russian language program. Not only does the Russian language offer supplements to the other subjects I am studying at the university, but it’s also important to my future career opportunities. If Russian Studies was offered at Arkansas I would surely sign up so that I could better meld components of the language with components of literature, history, and culture. The prospects of a separate studies course also increase the attractiveness of the Russian program for students engaged in other programs. Why would students devote more than 2 years of their academic career to a critical language without the benefit of earning a major or minor of some kind? Adding Russian Studies provides an incentive for what could be an incredibly valuable language at the University of Arkansas.” **Skyler Caldwell, B.A.’19**
3. “The Russian studies program is an incredibly important program. Our country’s relationship with Russia has been a heated rivalry and, within this rivalry, are thousands of jobs with the federal government, military, contracting agencies, and businesses. A lot of students at the University of Arkansas, particularly in the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences, wish to pursue careers that could benefit greatly from Russian language proficiency. I have met countless students who aspire to work as diplomats, national security officials, and international businessmen--and a greater, more formal inclusion of Russian into our university’s foreign language program would attract many more applicants to the University of Arkansas. Russian is among the most critically in-demand languages in the modern world and I believe it could become one of this university’s most popular language programs if it (1) had an associated major/minor and (2) was better advertised by school administrators. There is no reason that the University of Arkansas cannot offer a minor in Russian Studies, a field directly affiliated with a plethora of high-demand careers, while it offers minors in subjects like Southern Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Gender Studies. Professor Nadja Berkovich is a passionate Russian teacher with an amazingly vast knowledge of literature, history, and languages. She is more than capable of administering a Russian Studies program and such a program would thrive under her administration.” **Cooper Hearn, B.A.’18**
4. “As I look forward to graduation in May 2017, I realize that I will have 15 hours or more in Russian credit. I know that the school does not offer a minor in Russian, but I am writing to you in petition for help in hopefully receiving a concentration in Russian, if the minor is not doable.
I really want my hard work to show on my diploma, and I feel obtaining either a minor or concentration in the Russian language will set me apart from other applicants in the workforce and also provide as some form of proof that I do actually know the language to the extent that I claim I do.

Four years ago, I chose Russian over Spanish or French because I had insomnia and thought, “Hey, that looks harder and like it will take up a bit more time.” If I’m not sleeping, I might as well study something. Fast forward, and here I am living in Moscow, Russia. Russia is like a whirlpool. It pulls everybody in. You don’t know how you got here, you just did. I chose to continue onto my master’s in the Management of Science, Technology, and Innovation at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow because, hey, education is free here. (It’s not 100% free but it’s like $1000 for the whole year. Master’s program is in English and Russian. You can pick classes. But thesis is in English.) And now I’m working with the Moscow City Government, working in the Agency of Innovations and helping the project Open Challenges that is striving to make Moscow a “smart city” by looking for VR solutions for high school labs, high rise fire evacuation, and high-tech recycling. It’s exciting to know we’re bringing about positive change for the public. Moscow is rich in history and in culture. It’s impossible to live here and not be exposed to it. In addition to that, it’s a giant international hub. I imagine every fifth person on the street is a foreigner. I’m not advising anyone not to sleep or anything, but I would hands down recommend studying Russian.” **Natali Hall, B.S.I.B.’17.**

She pursued studying Russian and graduated with a Master’s Degree from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow in July 2019. She has been working for a Russian company in Moscow.

1. “Learning Russian challenged me in many ways, and expanded my world view. Diving into the language and culture gave me the opportunity to meet and interact with new people who experience the world very differently than I do. I feel that taking Russian not only gave me a useful skill set for the future, but also opened my eyes to a history and culture to which I would not have given much thought otherwise. It was critical in shaping my perspective and pushing me forward intellectually.” **Stephen Tate, B.A.’18**
2. “While learning Russian at the UA, I definitely experienced challenges with the grammar, spelling, etc. I always reminded myself that learning a language so intricate and layered as Russian would help me in my future. As it turns out, I’m currently pursuing a Master’s degree in International Business from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. I have enjoyed many experiences and opportunities in Russia - from participating in bilingual clubs to traveling to different cities and being able to utilize my language skills to enrich my time in this stage in my life. Overall, I believe studying the Russian language, and by default learning more about the culture has enhanced my understanding of the world around me and has taught me to appreciate and love cultural peculiarities that I notice around me in my daily life!” **Yulia Batalina, B.S.I.B.’18**

After graduating from the U of A, she studied business at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, from which she graduated with a Master’s degree in 2020.

1. “My relationship with Russia is not an easy one, but my heart is wider and deeper because of the education I received and the close friendships I made there. I read The Master and Margarita standing in packed subway cars, ate many bowls of borsch with sour cream (or mayonnaise), and spent hours drinking tea and eating dried bread with friends at the kitchen table in my apartment. Now, as a translator, my work gives me the chance to return to Russia in some way through the texts in front of me. Russia has a beautiful language and a rich tradition of literature, music, cinema, art, thought, faith, and more. Knowing the language opens the door to all of this – it is a hard language, but one worth the effort.” **Jesse Irwin, M.F.A.’17**
2. “I’m working as a certified flight instructor at ATP Flight School right now and once I have built up the required hours flying, I intend to get hired by one of the airlines as a pilot. Thus, while learning Russian has not directly impacted my career, it has indirectly. My long-term goal is to work the international flights, which will hopefully have me flying to countries like Russia someday for work. I absolutely love traveling, and studying abroad only increased my love for learning about different cultures, languages, etc. With my career choice, I will have a lot of down time, during which I fully intend to continue improving my Russian, as well as other languages for both work and fun. For future students, I highly recommend studying abroad. It was one of the best choices I made during my college years. Russian might seem intimidating in the beginning, but if you are willing to put in the time and effort, it is well worth it!” **Brit Jacobson, B.A.’17.** Brit spent one semester studying at the St. Petersburg Polytechnic University in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Other students who are interested in having the Russian Studies minor: Daniel Weiss (B.A.’21), Anna Rumpz (B.A.’23), Spencer Hazeslip (B.A.’22), Macklin Luke (B.A.’23), Michael Silcox (B.A.’22), Cassidy Acker (B.S.’20), Kyle Casey (B.A.’22), Henry Forteith (B.A.’22), Amy McCampbell (B.A.’22), Charles Micklavzina (B.A.’21), Jay Turner (B.S.’22), Angelika Wallace (B.A.’23), Kaeli Davidson (B.A.’23), Kalyn Vansandt (B.A.’22), Alex Joffe (B.A.’23), Henry Hines (B.A.’23), and Kason Brewington (B.A.’20).