

To: ACTR Board Members

From: **Richard Brecht** & Bob Slater, Co-Directors, American Councils Research Center (ARC), on behalf of ARC

Ref: April 13 Agenda

Date: April 11, 2019

As you will recall, for the past several years Bob Slater and I have been involved in an effort, called PLUS, to explore the accreditation of university/college language programs. Last year, the ACTR Board officially agreed to pilot the effort under the direction of the Executive Committee. Since that time, we have discussed this with other language teachers' organizations and have scrutinized the costs and benefits of the endeavor.

In the process we have come to accept that our original intent to pursue 'accreditation' based on the ABET model was too ambitious and to move to the focus on 'programs of excellence' that we discussed with the board in our last meeting. This approach lessens the political impact of 'accreditation' and lightens the burden for application and approval. In so doing, we have redrafted the Standards and other guidance documents (based on the engineering model (ABET)) to align them with efforts already established in the language community, specifically the "Program of Excellence" of AATG and the Commission for English Language Accreditation (CEA).

The American Councils Research Center (ARC) now proposes to move forward with a pilot testing the feasibility of establishing a *Russian Program of Excellence* (RPE) under the auspices of ACTR. **Accordingly, we are now asking the ACTR Board of Directors at this meeting to:**

- **endorse the revised RPE effort;**
- **determine whether the effort should be limited to higher education or include K-12 as well;**
- **identify two or three programs willing to serve as pilot sites;**
- **review the results of ARC's efforts over this next year; and,**
- **approve (or not) an ACTR RPE at its meeting next spring.**

In the end, we are asking the ACTR Board to determine the feasibility of a national effort that identifies exemplary programs that can serve as models for attracting and serving future students of Russian in the United States. When fully functioning, RPE can be implemented almost without costs, provided that the necessary program documentation is available and that the self-study and peer review as well as final adjudication will be carried out by volunteer professionals.

This effort is one ARC has been working on for some time. Its recent work with K-12 students has made clear the need to ensure that the Russian field is prepared to accommodate the new cadres of K-12 students (from DLI programs and heritage communities, with NSLI-Y & CLP experience as well as AP/NEWL and Seal of Biliteracy certifications) who arrive at college with higher proficiencies and broader educational and professional goals. We believe ACTR should undertake this effort, particularly given its uniqueness as a K-16 organization from its very founding.

Finally, If you agree, we would ask you to review the attached Overview and in the time after the meeting to give us some input to the other attached documents, which we believe are need to support

implementation of RPE. In this regard, we are looking now particularly at the Standards and ways to make them more compatible with realistic constraints of time and personnel on the ground.

- “RPE Overview”
- “RPE Standards,” based on the AATG model, with insights provided by the CEA and the original ABET-based generic standards for language program accreditation.
- “RPE General Guidance for Self-Study” and “RPE Peer-Review Guidance,” based on modifications of the AATG ‘Program of Excellence’ document.
- “RPE Administrative Guidance,” for a RPE Certification Board established by ACTR.