1. Executive Summary

Middle East Peace Studies (the “Program”) supports an interdisciplinary minor and contract major in Middle East Studies for interested Loyola University undergraduate students and fosters general interest about the Middle East and Peace Studies on campus and within the larger community through its programming and outreach.

The Program officially was formed in 2009. Yet, its preparation dates back to the Fall of 2007. A number of public events and months of discussion and consultations preceded the formation of the Program. While Peace Studies and Middle East Studies programs exist in a number of institutions, Loyola is unique in combining these two areas into a single academic program. The Program originated in the Department of History, and though it draws resources from other colleges, it is basically housed in the College of Humanities and Natural Sciences.

The Program, by utilizing the already existing potential and capitalizing on the University’s new permanent and temporary hires, has been developing at a rather fast pace. The Program already has added seven new courses to its inventory, including a core course, has revised two of its courses to reflect the program’s mission and has been the principle force of the Students Annual Peace Conference in the last three years. The Program has its own endowed scholarship and has been offering merit scholarships annually to two students since its inception (2009). The Program has also offered prizes to students’ papers for the Student Peace Conference. Perhaps the most important achievement of the Program is its capacity to draw students to its rank. Only in its second year, we had our first graduate (she will be attending Law School), and eleven other students (four from Honors Program).

The Program has hosted a number of lectures and forums by scholars of national and international distinctions. The Program also has been able to do some local fundraising for its events and its endowed scholarship and Dr. Moazami (“Program Director”) has been invited to give public lectures outside of the University. He had been also interviewed on number of occasions on the local television and radio networks.

The Program started with no operating budget for the first year and acquired an operating budget of $1,350.00 for the 2010-11 academic year. Working with a tight budget has not stopped us from expanding. Most often we sought support, especially for lectures, from the Biever Lecture Fund. For other expenses we solicited support of the History Department, the College of Humanities and Natural Sciences, the School of Mass Communication, the Department of Sociology and from the members of Middle Eastern community in New Orleans. Our programs are well-attended, but financial support for it is currently insufficient. The Program Director spends a good part of his energy for different aspects of the Program and gets enormous support from Mrs. Sonia Borders, the Administrative Assistant of the History Department, yet she receives neither any stipend nor has the Program Director been given course release. The Program has shown its potential to become a source of prestige, attracting students and fundraising for the University, yet the Administration needs to support it further by providing a stipend for Mrs. Border, course release for Dr. Moazami, sufficient budget for its expanding operation (estimate $5000) and meaningful support for fundraising by the Office of Institutional Advancement.
2. Unit Identification/Profile Summary

2.1. Name and Mission

Middle East Peace Studies (Interdisciplinary Minor)

While Peace Studies and Middle East Studies programs exist in a number of institutions, Loyola is unique in combining these two areas into a single academic program. Building on the Jesuit tradition of engaging the world by promoting a value-based education, the Middle East Peace Studies Program seeks to provide an intellectual and practical response to the spread of war in the Middle East and to increased militarism throughout the world. Middle East Peace Studies courses encourage inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue in a non-partisan fashion.

Middle East Peace Studies curriculum exposes students to the history, politics and culture of the Middle East and to the impact of religious, philosophical, and cultural discourses on war and peace in a global context. It combines studies of historical memory and institutional practices to promote ideals of peace and stability. In addition to courses and seminars, MEPS offers cultural events, student conferences, public lectures, and personal contacts with internationally known scholars and conflict resolution experts.

2.2. General Statement and Descriptive Information

The Middle East Peace Studies Steering Committee includes all its founding members in addition to the Executive Director of Jesuit Social Research Institute (College of Social Sciences). The founding members represent all the Humanities Departments of College of Humanities and Natural Sciences (History, Religious Study, English, and Philosophy) and a representative from the Department of Theater and Dance (College of Music & Fine Arts). In the ideal world these representatives would serve three-year terms and their terms would be renewable by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. Dr. Moazami has become by default the Program Director because of the time and energy he has invested in developing and promoting the minor. In theory the Program Director should be elected from among the members of the Steering Committee to serve a renewable three-year term. The Steering Committee maintains the academic curriculum and arranges for extra- and co-curricular programming.

By defining Peace Studies as a multidisciplinary examination of obstacles to and the conditions for peace making, and by focusing on the Middle East, we regroup our courses into three distinctive areas: Middle East Studies (courses in this area familiarize students with different aspects of Middle Eastern history, languages and culture), Normative Views (courses in this area of study explore the impact of religious, philosophical, and cultural discourses on war and peace), and Historical and Institutional Practices (courses in this area investigate the institutional and historical underpinnings of war and peace in history and at present). A minor in Middle East Peace Studies will require a minimum of 21 hours (seven courses) to be taken from a list of courses in these three distinct areas. Students are required to take
four courses in Middle East Studies (including a seminar in a major conflict or issue). The students are required to complete a foundational team taught course entitled “Fundamentals of Conflict and Peace.” The other three courses should be chosen from both of the two remaining areas of study (Normative Views and Historical and Institutional Practices).

The nature of MEPS makes it a minor with extra- and co-curricular programming. It has at least one major lecturer/event per year. It has been the supporting program for the Annual Student Peace Conference in the last three years. The program is also becoming active outside of the campus too.

2.2.1. Headcounts of staff: n/a
2.2.2. Headcounts of faculty: n/a
2.2.3. Headcounts of undergraduate students: 12 as of 10F
2.2.4. Headcounts of graduate students: n/a
2.2.5. Retention rates: n/a
2.2.6. Graduation rates: 1/12 in its second year.

3. Assessment

3.1. General Statement on Assessment
There has not been any policy or mechanism of assessment for the minor. The only available assessments are the college/department teaching evaluations. Planning for similar assessment as separate from that of the department/college could only be addressed if the relationship of minors and departments and the place of minors in the overall organizational structure of the university become clearer. However, such assessment will add unneeded administrative tasks to the job of Program Director and undermine work and efficiency of departments and colleges from which the courses are drawn.

3.2. Program Goals for 2010-2011
The Middle East Peace Studies plan was to keep the momentum of its successes by offering new courses, organize events to attract new students and enhance our community services. In fact we added four different courses last year (two to the History courses and two to the Religious Studies offers, doubled our student population (from 6 to 12) and extended our network of support and contacts in the community.

3.3. Student Learning Outcomes
The program does not have official Students Learning Outcomes. The following list is taken from the main MEPS courses taken by our students.

1 Middle East Peace Studies finished AY10-11 with 12 minors (one already graduated). One of the minors is also a Middle East contract major.
a. Students should be able to show their capacity for intellectual and spiritual
growth by becoming familiarized with historical developments of an
immensely important region from a global perspective.

b. Students should be knowledgeable of the principal forces of change and
historical events that have shaped cultural, religious, intellectual, and political
imaginations of the people of the Middle East.

c. Students should be able to make informed analytical arguments by making
sense of the changing nature of the society, its religious outlooks, cultural
norms and political rule, and to better understand the complexities of the
today’s world.

d. Students should be knowledgeable about the principal forces of change and
adaptation that have marked the cultural, intellectual, religious, social,
political and economic development of conflicts and peace in the
contemporary world.

e. Students should be able to make informed analytical arguments by making
sense of the changing nature of political and religious conflicts.

f. Students should be able to show their fullest capacity for intellectual and
spiritual growth by proposing practical solutions for this on-going conflict
based on social justice and peace essential to the Jesuit mission.

g. Students should be able to show proficiency in critical reading and develop
skills in understanding the complexities of history by devolving in research,
writing and presenting written and oral historical argumentations.

3.4. Assessment of Internal and External Factors Affecting the Unit

While the impact of internal factors have been to a certain degree positive, external
factors though unfortunately not always for good reasons have indeed played a very
positive role in our growth. We think these factors will play a positive role in our
near future too. We hope to have a comprehensive plan to use the internal and
external factors for our future development.

Working with the University senior scholars and experienced teachers and newly
hired full-time or part-time faculty and growing interest among our student
population are among the most important internal factors. Yet, we are still lacking an
overall strategic plan for better usage of these undeniably important resources. The
expansion of war and militarism in the world and development of peaceful and non-
vviolent movements across the Middle East and North-Africa are external factors.
They have made our Program even more relevant from the time we started it.
However, it is our assessment that on both fronts we need to have a more long-term plan. Such a planning is partly the responsibility of MEPS but also of the University. In the short-term we need to find a mechanism of coordination with other minors and departments in having a more visible role in highlighting the need of each minor in hiring (part-time or long-term) and more importantly in creating short-term position(s) directly for minors. It would be ideal to create temporary positions serving at least two different minors on rotation basis.

3.5. Assessment of Community-Related Activities:
While we do not have any device for assessment of community-related activities and we are not sure that it is our task to provide such an assessment, MEPS has been one of the most successful University Programs in its outreach. This is not a wishful claim or an inflated self-serving appraisal but a fact that can be shown by the number of our events and its participants on and off campus, and our successes in being noticed by the local community. MEPS activities were reflected in the report produced by the University for acquiring the Carnegie Foundation’ Community Engagement Classification.

3.6. Assessment Results
The program does not have any formal or informal assessment.

4. Summary of Achievements
4.1. Unit as a Whole
At the end of the academic year, twelve students were participating in the minor whom four are from Honors program, one was a graduating senior. Six of our minors have joined last year. One of our new minor students, an honor student, is also our first Middle East contract major (Haley B. Saucier). Our senior, Farah L Benslimane (Political Science) was accepted to Quinnipiac University School of Law.

MEPS faculty, particularly its Program Director, continued advising and facilitating the organization of the third Annual Student Conference (April 4-8, 2011). The Students Coordinating Committee of the Conference, a volunteer group of dedicated students (four of the most active ones are MEPS students), organized one week of activities that included high level scholarly students panels, interactive theater, a peace concert, a service oriented project and a lecture while coordinating with the Women Resources Center, the Monroe Library and HUNS. Their Conference and its diverse activities organized a large number of students from all of our colleges. They mobilized and educated all the participants on one of the most important issues of our time: Peace. Organizing this event in three consecutive years with almost no budget (MEPS paid for printing of their conference flier this year) shows how dedicated this group of students was in promoting a sense of cooperation among themselves, our student body and the University as a whole. The third Annual Conference received the Students Affairs Leadership Awards for Outstanding Student Program. One of the MEPS minor was acknowledged for her leadership skills. One MEPS minor student also got one of the prizes of the Student Peace Conference papers.
MEPS also organized a multi-media presentation by Morgan Bach (a young teacher activist) on her Christmas trip to the Holy Land, “Roots Run Deep Here: Reflection on Non-Violent Resistance in Palestine” (February 9, 2011). Almost 70 people participated in the event including members of the New Orleans community.

The Program Director was successful in fundraising independent of the Office of Institutional Advancement. During the last two years he had raised more than $4000 to be added to the MEPS endowed scholarship and $1000 used for a well attended scholarly forum on Iran (February 2010). On several occasions the Program Director had been able to solicit the support of the local business men of Middle East origin to support our events by donation of food.

4.2. Faculty Achievements/Service:
Our faculty had been active both in scholarship and service. For a list of their achievements see reports of their respective Departments.

4.3. Staff Achievements/Service:
The program does not have any independent staff. However, Mrs. Sonia Borders, the Administrative Assistant of the History Department helps with the day to day work of MEPS without any stipend. Her support has been invaluable.

4.4. Student Achievements
a. Farah L Benslimane (Political Science) was accepted to Quinnipiac University School of Law.
b. Four students actively worked for Students Peace Conference (April 4-8)
c. Three students presented papers to the Students Peace Conference and one acted as the commentator.
d. Ann Muller (Junior Honors student, Psychology) won one of the Student Conference Peace Prizes.

4.5. Community Engagement Achievements
See 3.5

5. Budget
5.1. 2010-2011 Operating Budget: $1,350.00
5.1.1. Budget discussion
The lack of the budget in 2009-2010 and its limit in 2010-11 has not stopped us from being active. With an operating budget of $1,350.00 we have done our best and have routinely sought support, especially for lectures but also for other activities, from the Biever Lecture Fund, the History Department, the College of Humanities and Natural Sciences, the College of Mass Communication and the Department of Sociology. As mentioned before we have done also our own fundraising.
We have also tried to minimize our expenditures. For example except in one occasion using Biever lecture fund (2009) we have never paid any honorarium to any of our other seven speakers we have invited. We have asked them to pay for their own lodging expenses or have taken our guests to our own houses and only in two cases have we paid for the air fare expenses. Though this approach has helped us to launch the Program, it will not be a sustainable routine. Our programming is well-attended, but financial support for it is currently insufficient. The demands on the Program Director and by default our Administrative Assistant will increase in coming years, and the University Administration should develop a plan and budget to assure the expansion of the program.

2011-2012 Operating Budget:

5.1.2. Budget discussion
Verbally a budget line of $1,350.00 is promised, yet there is no formal recognition of it. Such a promise would only make sense and could be used as a base of discussion and programming if the Administration agrees to a budgetary line in coming years so that the commitment will become clear, formal and transparent. We need an increased operating budget, stipend for Mrs. Border and course release for the Program Director.

6. Planning and Goals for 2011-2012

6.1. Strategic Planning
Middle East Peace Studies does not currently have a formal strategic plan. It cannot have such a plan in isolation. It needs the support of the University and other minors to draw a strategic plan. We hope to play an active role to produce such a plan in coordination with other interdisciplinary minors. MEPS embodies the main objectives and goals of the University “Strategic Plan.” It is one of the “programs that are distinctive in subject matter and that are cross-disciplinary, inter-departmental, and inter-college programs based on subject matter upon which no other University competes.” It could “offer unique programs that transcend traditional college boundaries” and further it could be one of those programs “that are marked by excellence and financial soundness.”

In the meantime the Middle East Peace Studies plan was to keep its momentum with its successes by offering new courses (at least two) and by attracting new students. Expanding the number of our students in the minor to 15 in the next year would be of utmost desirability. Further, we think that planning for expanding our financial resources could take a more aggressive turn in the next academic year. Because of the importance of the Middle East and peace in world politics and in the USA foreign policy, and because of the accelerated developments in the region in the past several months MEPS has potential for growth. Long-term planning needs a more sustainable co-operation of the Administration both in terms of stipend for staff and course release for the Program Director and an overall energetic fundraising strategy by the Office of Institutional Advancement. MEPS has the potential to enhance Loyola’s reputation and serve as a pilot project for promoting other innovative
programs at Loyola University. Certainly the Jesuit tradition of Loyola makes the successes of this program imperative.

6.2. Support of the University Mission

Middle East Peace Studies is clearly in line with the University’s mission and strategic goals. Jesuit education focuses on the formation of “men and women for others.” As such, it is the professed goal of a Jesuit university to graduate “leaders concerned about society and the world in which they live.” ² Given our educational goals and the persistent threat of world conflict, there can be no greater challenge than awakening our students’ commitment to peace. Over the last century, devastating wars and persistent violence have plagued humankind. The threat of total annihilation remains a genuine possibility in this nuclear age in which weapons of devastating destruction spread to new parts of the world. Middle East Peace Studies in the face of war, chaos and heightened militarism, fulfills the Loyola University Jesuit mission by making a practical and meaningful contribution to world peace by offering this unique minor in curriculum.

MEPS has already expanded itself as one of the “distinctive programs and those which demonstrate unique” programs “that are distinctive in subject matter and that are cross-disciplinary, interdepartmental, and inter-college programs based on subject matter upon which no other University competes.”

6.3. Program Goals

See 6.1

6.4. Student Learning Outcomes

See 3.3

6.5. Community Engagement

Expanding the already achieved goal (see 3.5).

6.6. Resources

See 5.

6.7. Assessment Plan

MEPS does not have a formal or an informal assessment plan for the upcoming year. Also see 3.1.

² All quotations are taken from two addresses of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. (the Superior General of the Society of Jesus at the time) delivered at Georgetown University and Georgetown Prep in June 7, 1989. The full text appears as “Themes Of Jesuit Higher Education” and can be accessed at the following link: http://academic.regis.edu/ghodne/Orientation/themes.pdf
7. Appendices
   7.1. Student Data Collection Tools: n/a
   7.2. Other Data Collection Tools: n/a
   7.3. Assessment Reports: n/a
   7.4. Additional Supporting Documentation: n/a