

**ExA CASE STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL AND
FOREIGN
AREA NEEDS:
Changes in the Middle East Studies Association Membership from 1990 to 2002**

Anne H. Betteridge, University of Arizona

In 1990 the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) joined with other National Council of Area Studies Associations (NCASA) to produce *Prospects for Faculty in Area Studies*, a study of the associations, their memberships, and prospects for the future of faculty in their fields. The study predicted that senior area studies faculty members were likely to retire in large numbers during the 1990s and that their positions would not necessarily be replaced. This was a particular concern for Middle East studies, given the relatively large percentage of MESA member senior faculty members concentrated in the higher academic ranks. Also worrisome for Middle East studies were the fields of economics, sociology, and language-related subjects—all on a list of potentially endangered Middle East studies fields.

MESA's recent analysis of 2001 and 2002 membership shows that the 1991 NCASA study's concerns were justified. A large number of senior faculty members in Middle East studies have retired recently; there is no certainty that their positions will be replaced. Smaller percentages of faculty and student MESA members now specialize in economics, sociology, and language than did so in 1990. The subjects were at that time singled out as in need of special attention and support to assure the continued existence of qualified faculty members and other professionals well versed in those fields. The need to replace faculty positions and to address critical needs in certain areas has become more

pressing over the past decade; these are concerns that universities, especially state universities, with straitened budgets are unlikely to address.