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Contact: Rachel Brichta

[Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia](#)

University of Michigan

Phone: 734-764-0351

E-mail: weisercenter@umich.edu

Directors' Council to administer Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia and the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies in 2009-2010

Professor of Armenian history brings diplomatic expertise to the Directors' Council encouraging greater engagement of U-M students and faculty with the public sector.

ANN ARBOR, MICH., August 18, 2009 –

Mark Tessler, director of the International Institute and vice provost for international affairs, has announced that the Ronald and Eileen Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia will be led by an interim Directors' Council until a permanent director is appointed to replace Michael D. Kennedy, who left for Brown University on July 1. Established in 2008, The Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia (WCEE) works in common association with the Center for European Studies-European Union Center (CES-EUC), Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES), and Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) at the University of Michigan International Institute. It is dedicated to enhancing interdisciplinary knowledge about, and public engagement with, the institutions, cultures, and histories of Europe and Eurasia. The members of the WCEE/WCED Directors' Council are: Dario Gaggio, CES-EUC director and associate professor of history; Gerard Libaridian, Armenian Studies Program director and Alex Manoogian Visiting Professor of Modern Armenian History; Douglas Northrop, CREES director and associate professor of history; and Marysia Ostafin, WCEE program manager.

The newest member of the WCEE Directors' Council, Gerard Libaridian, brings vast knowledge and expertise to the curricular and programmatic activities of WCEE and WCED. A former diplomat and negotiator, Professor Libaridian received his doctorate in history from the University of California at Los Angeles and has taught at U-M since 2000, where he is the current director of the Armenian Studies Program. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, he spent several years as an advisor to the first president of the independent Republic of Armenia, serving in numerous high-level positions including first deputy minister of foreign affairs (1993-94) and secretary of the Security Council (1994-97). Ronald Suny, Charles Tilly Collegiate Professor of Social and Political History and director of the Eisenberg Institute of Historical Studies, says of his colleague, "Professor Libaridian comes to us with extraordinary

experience, both as an educator and a practitioner in the real world of government. I am constantly impressed by how his skills as a diplomat have contributed to his success as an administrator. Working with Michigan faculty and students may not be as difficult as resolving the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, but the skill set he developed over those years will certainly help him navigate through whatever lies ahead.” Professor Libaridian’s expertise makes him an ideal advocate of WCED’s mission to understand the transition to democracy across Europe and Eurasia.

The newest of the three centers that comprise WCEE, WCED combines academics with practical applications to promote scholarship on the conditions and policies facilitating the transformation to vital civil societies and educating new generations of practitioners who can apply their learning and experience to encourage these processes. Now entering its second year of operation, WCED has offered fellowship support to more than a dozen students and organized lectures and other programs addressing emerging democracies in Europe, Eurasia, and beyond.

The Ronald and Eileen Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia (WCEE) supports faculty and student research, teaching, collaboration, and public engagement in studying the institutions, cultures, and histories of these regions. WCEE is housed in the University of Michigan International Institute with the Center for European Studies-European Union Center (CES-EUC), the Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES), and the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED). Named in honor of Ronald and Eileen Weiser and inspired by their time in Slovakia during Ambassador Weiser's service as U.S. ambassador from 2001-04, WCEE began operations in September 2008.

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