UNIVERSITY

Partnership Across the Hemispheres

Institute aims to bolster study of Asian region

I U has joined forces with the highly regarded Australian National University to provide new opportunities for students and faculty at both universities to expand and deepen their study of issues related to Asian countries and Asia as a whole.

Working to combine the institutions' strengths in the Asian region, the Pan Asia Institute will facilitate new academic programming: extended faculty visits, exchanges, and collaborations; and expanded overseas-study and credit-transfer opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

The institute has a co-director, staff, and an office at both institutions. IU's office is on the Bloomington campus.

One example of the academic programming is language training. The first class got under way on Jan. 25 at IUB.

Four IUB students, located in a high-tech classroom at Ballantine Hall, began an Indonesian language course taught by Amiril Widodo, a faculty member at ANU. The class meets four times per week.

In addition to the students' long-distance video link to their professor, they spend time with a local tutor — Sylia Widigdo, a Fulbright Scholar from Indonesia who is studying in Bloomington.

Until now, classes in Indonesian were not widely available to IU students.

In a separate endeavor, the institute made it possible for four IU graduate students to travel in February to ANU for participation in its renowned Asia Pacific Week.

As the institute expands its offerings further, its aim is to be a hub for the teaching and research of a range of issues related to Asia.

IU and ANU bring complementary strengths in Asian studies to the efforts of the institute.

IU's programs in Central Eurasian studies have a long tradition of academic excellence. ANU has one of the world's leading programs on Southeast Asia — including Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

Both IU and ANU have done significant work in East Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. For IU, this work has come from faculty on the Bloomington, IUPUI, and a number of other campuses.

"The goal is to bring these [strengths] together and make the sum greater than the parts," says Heidi A. Ross, IU's co-director of the Pan Asia Institute. Ross is also professor and director of IU's East Asian Studies Center.

Ross's staff in Bloomington includes associate director Melissa Bildinger and doctoral student Yimin Wang.

The institute is the result of a three-year partnership signed in September between IU and the ANU.

"This is the direction in which we should be moving," says Patrick O'Meara, M.D. '86, Ph.D '79, IU vice president for international affairs. "Rather than duplicating resources at these two great institutions, we now have the ability to combine extensive mutual holdings and faculty interests in exciting and creative new ways."

Leading the Pan Asia Institute's efforts at ANU is Ross's co-director, Kent Anderson, professor and dean of the Faculty of Asian Studies at ANU.

The Australian National University — located in Canberra, Australia's capital — is ranked No. 1 in Australia and No. 17 worldwide in the 2009 listing published by Times Higher Education.

One of the challenges of the arrangement, Ross says, is the vast difference in time and seasons between institutions in different hemispheres.

"We cannot talk to each other about summer, winter, spring, or fall," Ross says with a laugh. "We've trained ourselves to talk in months."