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The sweeping changes taking place worldwide are forcing universities to examine whether they are preparing their undergraduate students adequately to cope in this newly globalizing, technologically interconnected world. At Indiana University Bloomington, students have long been able to gain an in-depth knowledge of other societies, histories, and cultures around the world through certificate, minor, and degree programs offered by its well-known area and language studies centers. These multidisciplinary programs cut across arts, humanities, and the social sciences, but their concentrations are by specific world regions (Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, India, Latin America, the Middle East, Russia and Eastern Europe, and Western Europe).

Over the past few years, however, IUB has been seeking ways to build on these area strengths while responding to newer demands for knowledge that cuts across geographic regions and national perspectives to explore themes and issues that have global relevance.

In the fall of 1999, a new international studies minor was introduced, designed, and administered by IUB's Center for the Study of Global Change. Students taking the minor in conjunction with a traditional academic discipline are exposed to globally focused, comparative perspectives, including more applied knowledge and training through courses in IUB's professional schools. The success of the minor thus far is indicative of the broader intellectual experience that many students seek at IUB.

In the fall of 2003, the College of Arts and Sciences will launch a new international concentration, the international studies major, that will provide even greater opportunities for undergraduates to pursue an integrated program of study that explores global interdependence through both regional as well as thematic concentrations. In its proposal to the Indiana Higher Education Commission, the college stated: “The purpose . . . is to provide an intellectual foundation that will enable students to communicate, collaborate, and work across national, cultural, and socio-economic boundaries.” The new major will also bring about greater integration of the international strengths that already exist in different domains at the university and greater thematic coherence to IUB's interdisciplinary international curricula.

In planning for the new major, the college was impressed by the number of students enrolled in area and international studies as majors, minors, and certificate holders, as well as by the significant increases each year of those opting for study abroad experiences. Taken together, these numbers show huge interest and high motivation, as well as a striving for excellence among IUB students, says Daniel Knudsen (Geography), newly appointed director of the International Studies major and co-chair, with Jeffrey Wasserstrom (East Asian Studies Center and History), of the steering committee that worked on the

Faculty Comments on the New Major

This new major is one of the most exciting new initiatives in the college. It will draw upon almost all the humanities and social science departments and all the area studies centers. It will be rigorous preparation for careers in the international arena. Kumble Subbaswamy, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

We must encourage students to become critically engaged in the global community. Jeffrey Wasserstrom (History), Director, East Asian Studies Center

It should provide an interdisciplinary, diverse education fostering critical thinking. Rosemary Lloyd, Professor (French and Italian)

It is clear that a liberal arts foundation is a practical education that equips students with the skills needed to succeed. The major addresses a real need, centered on a flexible approach to world affairs. Michael McGerr (History), Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

It will take the initiative of students to create a rich intellectual experience thus far merely tapped into with the international studies minor. Patrick O Meara (SPEA and Political Science), Dean, Office of International Programs
New International Studies Major

What Students Are Saying

I hope to learn more about foreign cultures from this program in classes that . . . I would not normally have the opportunity to take. (business student)

I hope to double major and use knowledge gained from international studies to become more informed of various cultures, languages, civilizations, etc. Also, I want to study abroad for at least one semester. (premed student double majoring in biology)

I want to feel comfortable and able to communicate with people of different origins and nationalities. (pre-law student)

My goal is to be an opera singer . . . [and] I would therefore like to be very educated about the cultures and histories of the countries in which I live or work . . . [and to] understand the historical/geographical significance of the music that I perform. (music student)

For further information on the international studies major, contact Daniel Knudsen, director, or Rima Memman, academic advisor, in Woodburn Hall 330, IU Bloomington; e-mail: intl@indiana.edu.

See also:

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