

Interdisciplinary and General Studies Annual Report, 2004-2005

The IGS Faculty is a complex one, with many small programs and units as well as several larger ones, and with faculty members from many different disciplines. The College has a long tradition of supporting interdisciplinary teaching, learning, and scholarship and IGS faculty members provide innovative leadership in interdisciplinary studies. Many of the most exciting areas of human learning and discovery are interdisciplinary; many disciplines are themselves becoming more interdisciplinary; and it is often in interdisciplinary endeavors that students and faculty are the most creative and active learners and scholars.

A number of chairs and directors have written individual reports, and I will try to avoid merely repeating what they express in more detail. Here are some highlights of this year:

Africa and the Americas, American Conversations, American Racial and Multicultural Studies, and American Studies

This was a busy year for those involved in various aspects of American study. Both ARMS and American Studies underwent program reviews, compiling extensive self-studies and bringing in outside reviewers. American Conversations completed its fifth year with continued growth in student interest, and better than ever student retention. American Studies continues to show high demand for its courses, and in addition to students enrolled in scheduled courses, taught 5 independent studies and supervised 3 internships. Jim Farrell was awarded the MAASA's Elizabeth Kolmer award for teaching and mentoring. These four programs between them provide students with a learning community, two interdisciplinary majors and two interdisciplinary concentrations, all of which continue to attract students and provide insight into the American experience as well as an introduction to Africa.

Asian Studies

Asian Studies carried out an extensive self-study and brought in an impressive team of outside reviewers for their program review. Under the leadership of Phyllis Larson, and with the commitment of her colleagues in several disciplines, Asian Studies continues to prosper. Asian Studies wrote a successful grant to the Japan Study Foundation for taiko drums, which have already been put into service on campus. Together with Carleton College, St. Olaf applied for a Fulbright scholar from Japan. The grant was awarded, but we are still waiting to hear which scholar will be able to come. The Asian Studies Department provides an excellent model for a successful interdisciplinary department, with its combination of appointments to the Asian Studies Department itself, joint appointments with other departments, and faculty with appointments in other departments teaching Asian Studies courses, as well as Asian courses offered under other department labels. Asian Studies majors have been active in many ways, including applying for Fulbright grants. One Asian Studies major was awarded a Fulbright to Japan for next year.

Environmental Studies

The big news in Environmental Studies is the successful completion of its first year as a department. Last year, Environmental Studies and the Biology Department jointly hired a Biogeoscientist, and we look forward to having John Schade join the Department in the fall of 2005. Future tasks will include assisting the new Department to gain greater visibility and cohesiveness, and addressing issues of joint appointments. Environmental Studies courses continue to have strong appeal to students, and the department will no doubt be heavily involved in the upcoming Sustainability theme in 2005-2006. In addition, Environmental Studies will begin a program review in 2005-2006.

Hispanic Studies

This was a challenging year for Hispanic Studies, with several key faculty on sabbatical and others heavily involved in administrative duties. Nevertheless, Hispanic Studies, with an allocation of only .17 FTE every other year, manages to provide both a major and a small concentration. Requirements for these will need to be adjusted in tandem with changes in the Spanish curriculum, which have recently been put into place. Under the able leadership of Gwen Barnes-Karol, the Hispanic Studies faculty revised their capstone course to facilitate teaching by faculty with a wider variety of disciplinary expertise. Due to Bush administration policy, the possibility of offering the Cuba interim has unfortunately disappeared.

Integrative Studies

Now in its fifth year of graduating students with individual majors, the CIS has grown rapidly from 3 to 15 majors. In addition to those students who end up completing an individual major, the CIS faculty and staff had contact with as many as 100 students who contemplated the possibility of carrying out an individual major. Patterns of student interest that emerge fall into four categories, health studies, media studies, environmental policy, and peace and justice issues--which suggest areas of the curriculum in need of attention. The CIS continues to work on best practices in creating web portfolios, and has pursued grant funding to explore the use of web portfolios for majors outside of CIS and for general education outcomes. This year, President Thomforde participated in CIS, teaching one of the thematic colloquia courses in the spring semester. A recent issue of the National Wildlife Federation's "Campus Ecology E-news" features St. Olaf College and its "Campus Ecology" course. The newsletter also mentions Elise Braaten's individualized major, "Wild and Precious Life: Educating for an Ethic of Sustainability," completed through the CIS

International and Off-Campus Studies

This is the first year that International and Off-Campus Studies has been an official part of the IGS faculty, and we are all working towards a good understanding of what that means and how it should function. It has been a busy year, with many changes to manage. The office has had a number of significant changes in staffing, beginning with

the retirement of Director Pat Quade. Susan Bauer served as acting Director while Pat was away leading Term in the Middle East, and Eric Lund assumed responsibility as Director in February upon his return from leading a January interim program abroad. In addition, Jane Weis has retired as office manager, and Karen Engler has reduced her hours on return from maternity leave. Pat Van Wylen has been hired to fill the position as Visiting Scholar Coordinator. A total of 828 students studied off-campus in 2004-2005. Of these, 231 went on semester or year-long programs, and 597 studied at international sites during January interim. Of the 690 graduating seniors, nearly 71% had studied on an international off-campus program at least once, and another 27% had studied on a domestic off-campus program. Faculty from across campus are involved in IOS in a variety of ways, serving on IDOCS, acting as program advisers (52), serving as field supervisors for term programs, leading interim programs (30 plus 3 mentees) and serving as hosts to visiting international scholars. Bruce and Carol Benson led Global Semester, Bruce and Barbara Nordstrom-Loeb led Term in Asia, and Pat and Kathy Quade led Term in the Middle East. Recruiting for Field supervised programs ran into some difficulties this year, leading to cancellation of Term in Asia for 2005-2006. There will still be three faculty led programs, with Wendy and Rich Allen leading Global, Mac and Jackie Gimse leading Middle East, and Anne Walter and Mike Swift leading Australia in 2005-2006. This is the last year of the Hewlett grant supporting multicultural immersion interim programs. The International and Off-Campus Studies office will be gearing up for a comprehensive program review, to be carried out during 2005-2006.

Kloeck-Jenson Endowment for Peace and Justice

This has been a very productive year for the Kloeck-Jenson Endowment for Peace and Justice. Erik Cleven, the first Kloeck-Jenson visiting professor, returned in January to teach for a second time a very successful course on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. Fortunately, Cleven is able to return this coming January to repeat the course for a third time. Under the able leadership of Kris Thalhammer, the endowment provided scholarships for students to carry out peace and justice related internships, supported field trips, and provided faculty development funding. The endowment also sponsored speakers and events, and was able to acquire new films for the Rolvaag Library collection.

Linguistic Studies

In 2004-2005 Linguistic Studies maintained a small but active presence on campus. Six seniors graduated with Linguistic Studies concentrations. One of them was awarded a Fulbright grant to Chile, and another was awarded a French government teaching grant. The list of approved courses for the concentration was modified this year, with the addition of two new Computer Science courses, two new courses in Asian Studies, and rearrangement of the Spanish courses as a result of changes in the Spanish major. Linguistic Studies continues to provide students with a means of combining relevant courses from a variety of departments into a coherent concentration. Those students who

wish to go beyond the concentration are able to use the CIS to create individual majors on linguistics topics.

Media Studies

Media Studies has grown in its four years of existence from graduating four concentrators to eleven. Already 24 students in the class of 2006 have declared a Media Studies concentration, more than doubling the number from this year. In addition to those students completing a concentration, or even a major through CIS, the three courses offered with Media Studies FTE have proven enormously popular with students, leading to heavy enrollment pressure. Director of Media Studies Bill Sonnega has been working on a modest restructuring of the program and course offerings. These will be proposed to appropriate College committees in the upcoming year, and we hope will help cope with student demand for Media Studies courses.

Middle Eastern Studies

The Middle Eastern Studies program sponsored two successful events this year, and graduated two concentrators. The successful revival of Term in the Middle East may well allow more students to complete the concentration in future years. However, the program is greatly hampered by the limited number of courses offered on campus relating to the Middle East. Pat and Kathy Quade successfully led the 2004-2005 Term in the Middle East, and Mac and Jackie Gimse will be setting off in August with a new group of TIME students.

Nordic Studies

The Nordic Studies Program works closely with the Norwegian Department to sponsor many guests and activities. Three students graduated with a concentration in Nordic Studies. This year a Nordic Studies concentrator was awarded a Fulbright grant to study at the University of Tromsø, the Norwegian Polar Institute, and the University of Svalbard next year.

Russian Language and Area Studies

This was a year of transition for the RLAS department, as Bob Nichols stepped down as chair in anticipation of retirement, leaving Marc Robison in charge. The Department assisted the History Department in the hiring of a Russian Historian, as well as hiring a replacement for Marc for his upcoming sabbatical. Bryn Geffert assisted by teaching the "Russian World" course, and Political Science offered a new course, "Russian Politics." Both Christopher Brooks and Marc Robinson have been awarded Global Partners travel grants. Marc led another Russian orphanage trip, with 18 people, some funded by a Lilly grant. The Department continues to offer two majors, Russian Language and Russian Area Studies, this year graduating 6 language and 4 area studies majors. The department is working to develop a richer array of contacts with Novgorod University, and will continue to pursue grant opportunities as these arise.

Writing Program

The Director of Writing continues to oversee three general areas, First-Year Writing (including English 107, English 110, and GE 111), WRI courses, and Writing in the Major. Challenges in staffing for GE 111 arose during both semesters of 2004-2005, demonstrating the need for flexibility and creativity, since significant variables complicate accurate enrollment prediction and thus staffing needs in GE 111. The addition of Francisco Carrasco in the ASC Language Skills Specialist position, with an appointment including teaching two writing courses, will offer increased staffing predictability. This summer, the Director of Writing offered a workshop to faculty interested in teaching GE 111 and WRI courses. Thirteen faculty from ten departments took part in the full three-day workshop with an additional eleven faculty from nine departments taking place in day two of the workshop. Director of Writing Diane LeBlanc completed her MFA at Hamline University this year, and was awarded the second annual Bechtel Prize for her essay "Weaving Voices: Writing as a Working Class Daughter, Literary Critic, and Poet." Diane continues her work with the Committee on the First-Year Experience.

Women's Studies

Women's Studies continues to attract one of the largest groups of concentrators among the ID programs. Women's Studies, like several other ID programs, struggles with enrollment pressures, as well as with turnover in faculty able to teach and provide leadership in the program. Managing access to the introductory course at an appropriate time in a student's career, as well as access to other courses serving the program continues to be problematic. Perhaps the program review carried out this year will provide some insight into ways to address these issues.

The St. Olaf Libraries

The College Librarian reports to the Assistant Provost and to the IGS associate dean for personnel and some curricular issues as chair of the Library faculty. Bryn Geffert has served admirably as College Librarian, and his annual report is listed separately on the Dean's web page.

Challenges facing the IGS Faculty and the Associate Dean

- Though most of the programs are thriving at their current level, several could benefit from some sustained attention.
- Assisting ID programs in working with other departments that provide courses that support ID majors and concentrations. Working on joint appointments, joint hiring, or at least being involved in hiring decisions with implications for GE programs.

- The IGS dean has special responsibilities for Writing, Oral Communication, and Ethics, the three GE components not specifically affiliated with an academic discipline. Each presents its own challenges.
- General Education work will no doubt continue as the task forces and CEPC bring forward items for faculty action.
- The need for adequate space for IGS chairs, directors, and programs must be addressed. Space issues are particularly urgent now with many IGS programs housed in buildings that are scheduled for removal as the science building proceeds.
- As with space, so too with staff support. Most IGS programs are supported by the generosity of the neighborhood Academic Administrative Assistants, but overall, we have too many faculty doing their own support work for IGS departments and programs. A modest amount of AAA support for some IGS programs is now in place. More could still be done in this area.
- The IGS programs are supported by modest operating budgets, which do not fully meet the needs of some programs.
- Enrollment pressures in some ID programs and courses continue and need to be addressed
- More aggressive seeking of grant funding to support IGS programs

In sum, this has been a challenging and exciting year, rich with learning opportunities for me. It has been a busy year as well, as I have taken over the task of Fulbright Program Adviser after serving on the faculty committee for a number of years. Several IGS departments were involved in hiring decisions, and no less than four program reviews (ARMS, American Studies, Asian Studies, Womens Studies) were carried out this year. I have greatly enjoyed getting to know better and work with leaders of the IGS programs and departments, and colleagues Jim May, Arnie Ostebee, Mary Cisar, Lynn Steen, and my fellow Associate Deans. I look forward to the next year of service to the College, and hope that I can continue to grow in my role as Associate Dean for IGS and to serve the Faculty and the College to the best of my ability.