

Interdisciplinary and General Studies Annual Report, 2003-2004

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 many faculty members provide innovative leadership in interdisciplinary studies. Unfortunately, available resources do not always match the needs of ID programs, majors, and concentrations. I hope the College will continue to realize the value of interdisciplinary learning for students, as well as interdisciplinary teaching and research for faculty. I hope, too, that the resources appropriate to fulfill these aspirations can in the future accompany this realization. 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

These four programs 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. American Studies and American Conversations co-hosted the successful visit of Eric Foner to campus. American Studies developed a successful new course in Campus Ecology, which will become part of the Environmental Studies curriculum. American Conversations was granted its own permanent FTE, which should make it easier to recruit faculty to the program in the future. The reception of the new student group, Karibu, demonstrates enthusiasm for things specifically African among students.

Asian Studies

Under the leadership of Phyllis Larson, and with the commitment of her colleagues in several disciplines, Asian Studies continues to prosper. Through the Freeman grant, a new joint hire was made with Political Science, and Asian Studies has been strengthened by the arrival this fall of Katherine Tegtmeyer Pak. The department carried out a successful tenure-track search for a position in Japanese Language and Asian Studies with Rika Ito moving from a term appointment to a tenure track. The Asian Studies Department provides an excellent model for a successful interdisciplinary department.

Environmental Studies

The big news in Environmental Studies is the successful completion of the process of becoming a department. At the June meeting of the Board of Regents this was approved, and we now have a Department of Environmental Studies. This 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. Shortages of humanities and public policy offerings in Environmental Studies will also need to be addressed.

Hispanic Studies

Hispanic Studies, with an allocation of only .17 FTE every other year, manages to provide both a major and a small concentration. These will need to be adjusted in tandem with proposed changes in the Spanish curriculum, which will take place next year.

Integrative Studies

Now in its fourth year of graduating students with individual majors, the CIS has grown rapidly from 3 to 14 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 from these discussions 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 in 2004-2005 will pursue grant funding to explore the use of web portfolios for majors outside of CIS and for general education outcomes.

Kloeck-Jenson Endowment for Peace and Justice

This has been a very productive year for the Kloeck-Jenson Endowment for Peace and Justice. The endowment was a prominent sponsor of the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, including hosting the director of a prize-winning documentary film on children in a Palestinian refugee camp. Erik Cleven, the first Kloeck-Jenson visiting professor, taught a very successful course on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. Fortunately, Cleven is able to return this coming January to repeat the course. The endowment provided scholarships for students to carry out peace and justice related internships and travel money for a faculty member. The endowment also sponsored speakers, events, and concerts, and was able to acquire new films for the Rolvaag Library collection.

Linguistic Studies

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. Currently there are 22 courses approved for inclusion in the linguistic studies concentration. The recently established Computer Science major will doubtless add several more courses to this list.

Media Studies

In the course of only three years, Media Studies has grown from graduating four concentrators to ten. 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. This coming year attention will be paid to finding ways to cope with student demand for Media Studies courses.

Middle Eastern Studies

Offerings in Middle Eastern Studies expanded this year with the addition of courses on Islam in the Religion Department and an independent study in the Arabic language. Program Director Eric Lund attended several conferences related to Middle Eastern Studies, and hosted a Fulbright scholar from Morocco. The Term in the Middle East was revived this year and is set to go in August, led by Patrick Quade.

Nordic Studies

The Nordic Studies Program works closely with the Norwegian Department to sponsor many guests and activities. Nordic Studies has attracted some outside interest, including Mark Carolla of the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, who volunteered to speak to students on the Historical Geography of Finland and Estonia and Uses of Multi-Sensor Airborne Imagery. This year a Nordic Studies concentrator was awarded a Fulbright grant to study molecular biology and neuroscience in Oslo next year.

Russian Studies

Based on the external review carried out last year, the department has changed its name from Russian and Central European Studies (RCES) to Russian Language and Area Studies (RLAS), and is working toward creating a stronger identity and curriculum. The Department continues to offer two majors, Russian Language and Russian Area Studies. One Russian major (graduate of 2003) was awarded a Fulbright grant. The department is working to develop a richer array of contacts with Novgorod University. The grant application to the DOE was again refused, and the Department will need to look for other opportunities for grant funding.

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. The average number of students in GE 111 was 17 in the fall and 19 in the spring. During the 2003-2004 academic year, 210 courses carried WRI credit. Plans are being developed to offer a campus-wide WRI workshop in the summer of 2006. The Director of Writing has participated actively on the First-Year Experience committee. While looking at the bigger picture of WRI, it is clear that the issue of writing in the major needs to be revisited.

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 next year's program review will provide some insight into ways to address these issues.

Overview

Altogether this year 98 students graduated with concentrations in ten different IGS departments and programs, and 100 students graduated with majors in eight different IGS departments and programs. IGS departments and programs with significant numbers of majors and concentrators include American Studies, with 13 majors, Asian Studies, with 27 majors and 23 concentrators, Environmental Studies with 14 majors and 12 concentrators, Integrative Studies, which graduated 14 majors, Media Studies with 10 concentrators, RLAS, with 11 majors, and Women's Studies, which graduated 10 majors and 22 concentrators.

Some successes this year:

- Creating the Environmental Studies Department
- Assigning permanent FTE to American Conversations
- Getting the Kloeck-Jenson Endowment off to a good start
- Successful use of AAA support for those ID programs that are primarily housed in Holland Hall

Some areas for improvement:

- Need for greater resources, both budgetary and FTE
- Finding solutions to enrollment pressures
- Solving some critical space issues for departments and programs
- More aggressive seeking of grant funding to support IGS programs

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 Associate Dean

- The associate dean for IGS is responsible for very many different things. It might be possible for some of the smaller programs to be consolidated or the faculty reorganized in such a way to make them more manageable.

- 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 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 overall is an area in need of attention. The IGS Associate Dean has been working with the GE task force as well as serving ex-officio on the GE Committee, and this work will no doubt continue this year.
- The need for adequate space for IGS chairs, directors, and programs must be addressed.
- 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 was obtained last year. 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.

In sum, this has been a challenging and exciting year, rich with learning opportunities for me. 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.