Final Report
Academic Program Review
International Studies Program

Review Process

The Director of the International Studies Program prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. An external review team, composed of two professors from other institutions, reviewed the self-study document, other relevant printed materials, and visited campus to interview faculty, students and University administrators involved in the International Studies Program. They prepared a report that outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the current program and made recommendations for International Studies at Bowling Green State University. The Program Review Committee (PRC) reviewed the self-study and the external team’s report, and discussed the International Studies program with the Dean of Arts and Sciences. The Final Report reflects the PRC’s findings and recommendations.

Self-Study

The International Studies Program, in existence since the 1940s, is an interdisciplinary planned major leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree in the College of Arts & Sciences. The program has a Director who is appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences for a three-year term, and an advisory committee of representatives from participating departments and programs. Directors have historically been from a number of different departments, including Political Science, History, and German-Russian-East Asian Languages. The current Director, having been appointed in 1995, is a faculty member in the Department of Geography.

Mission

The focus of the International Studies Program is on undergraduate education. It seeks to provide students with the opportunity to pursue a flexible, integrated program. It provides a liberal education that allows them to understand and analyze world regions within a global context. Specifically, the program seeks to “develop cultural and technological literacy, to build self-confidence through experiences garnered through internships, cooperative education assignments, and study abroad opportunities, resulting in internationally-aware individuals who will be informed, sensitive and productive citizens.”
Program Description

As an interdisciplinary program, International Studies draws upon other departments and programs across campus. Other than an internship course overseen by the College of Arts & Sciences, the program has no courses of its own. Students, who are advised by the program Director, take courses from a variety of disciplines. These courses are designed to provide integrative work that contributes to an understanding and analysis of global issues and a concentration on one or more areas of the world.

Resources

The program is administered by a part-time Director who receives a two-course reduction in assigned teaching and a summer stipend of one credit hour. The Director serves as advisor to the students. Students are encouraged to seek out faculty members in their specific areas of emphasis as mentors. The Program Advisory Committee is appointed for a three-year term by the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Its members receive no load reduction or financial compensation. The committee advises the Director on program matters.

The program has no facilities of its own and is consequently housed in an office in the Director’s home department. An operating budget of $600 for the academic year is provided; there is no library budget. Support for study abroad and internship/cooperative education is provided by the Center for International Programs and the Office of Cooperative Education. Students in the program are also advised to utilize the resources provided by the Career Services office, the Office of Academic Enhancement, and the Counseling and Career Development Center.

Students

The number of International Studies majors since 1994 ranged from a high of 45 to a low of 35, averaging about 39 students. The program graduates 9-13 students in a given year. The majority of the students are white, from Ohio, and female, with the percentage of females ranging from a low of 63% to a high of 80%.

Overall, students in the program are of high quality. The average ACT score is 23.6, with a trend towards improvement in the ACT scores during the past three years. In addition, a number of International Studies students are enrolled in the Honors Program and a few are National Merit Scholars.

Curriculum

The curriculum consists of 24 credit hours of required core courses, 6 hours of language at the 300-level and 27 hours of electives, totaling the 57 hours required for the major. The required core is designed to provide a conceptual foundation and to build data, analytical and language skills. The language and
elective hours also contribute to the conceptual foundation and skill development while also allowing students to concentrate on a region of interest.

Overall, the curriculum is intended to be diverse, allowing students to pursue interests beyond a single discipline, while also providing a unifying theme. Study in the major provides knowledge of a particular region, knowledge of global interconnections and change, knowledge of the nature of data, and the tools and techniques necessary to help gather, analyze and present information. Advising is critical for helping students achieve a course selection that meets the objectives of the curriculum.

Assessment

Efforts to assess student outcomes suggest that graduating seniors are satisfied with their experiences in the major. Students in the program tend to have relatively high overall GPAs and a number receive honors.

Learning outcomes for the program are articulated and have been revised recently as a result of student assessment experiences over the past two years. The program’s original assessment methods involved examination of transcripts of graduating seniors, an evaluation of the structure of the program, a survey of alumni, and a capstone experience through seminar papers or portfolios.

The self-study reports that assessment activities recently revealed that students were strong in language competency, but only fair with respect to the number of courses taken designed to develop knowledge of concepts for understanding regions. In addition, most students were found to be weak in course work designed to introduce the tools and techniques necessary to gather, analyze and present data and information.

Internships/Co-ops/Study Abroad

A number of International Studies students participate in study abroad programs, internships and cooperative education assignments. In addition to providing students with practical experience, these activities are useful as capstone experiences and student assessment. Students obtain internships through the Cooperative Education Office, through their own initiative and, occasionally, through a specific department in which the student has taken courses.

In the past three years, there was an increase in the number of students engaged in these experiences and an increase in the range of options available for internships and co-ops. Eleven students had internships and cooperative education assignments in the last three years.

Demand for Graduates

Given the diverse interests of students majoring in International Studies, employment demand is dependent on the student’s specific course of study and unique competencies. The self-study reports that lack of resources has prevented
the program from collecting information on placement. An attempt was made to gather data on alumni in the Spring of 1998, but was largely unsuccessful. Additional attempts will be made to track graduates in the future. Despite the lack of data, the self-study identifies two significant categories of International Studies majors with respect to career aspirations: those interested in pursuing a military career and those focused on international religious and humanitarian work.

Planning

The self-study reports the following planning initiatives and goals:

• The Director intends to continue to advise students in selecting their courses consistent with the program objectives developed during the 1995-96 academic year. He will also attempt to overcome students’ tendencies to shy away from areas in which they feel weak.
• The Director, with assistance from the Program Advisory Committee, intends to work with other departments to increase the number of core courses in regional areas. Efforts will be made to develop courses for regions such as the Middle East, Southern and Southeast Asia, East Central Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union.
• Assessment efforts will be continued with the goal of instituting a capstone experience for all the majors in the form of internship and senior projects offered through other units/programs. The intent is to require the capstone experience of all majors once the means of providing such an experience is determined.
• One goal of the program is to increase the number of internship opportunities and obtain better information on possible job opportunities, which have been too general and lacking substance. The self-study suggests that students must be encouraged to take the initiative in finding internships and jobs, and that the Director should work with other departments and alumni to share information and opportunities.
• Another goal of the program is to develop a core group of faculty who will insure the continuity of the program’s direction and curriculum. While the advisory committee can constitute the core group, efforts will be made to extend discussion to departments represented on the advisory committee, and to gain cooperation with faculty involved in related programs such as Asian Studies, Canadian Studies, Africana Studies, and International Business.
• Finally, the Director intends to take advantage of considerable student interest in the program and increase the number of students in it, while enhancing the program and preserving its interdisciplinary nature.

External Review Team’s Report

The external review team found the self-study lacked information about faculty teaching and research interests in International Studies, updates on current listing of courses, program goals and a strategic plan. The reviewers did believe, however, that they had sufficient information to represent the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for International Studies at BGSU.
Strengths Noted by the External Reviewers

- **Enrollment.** Enrollment has been steady despite limited student recruitment.
- **Quality of students.** The program seems to enroll strong students, as suggested by interactions with students as well as supporting data.
- **Advising.** The Director is perceived by students and faculty as a good advisor in that he seems to take a personal interest in each student and helps them select courses that reflect their individual career goals.
- **Improvements in rigor.** The Director is making efforts to establish analytical requirements in the major, thereby increasing the rigor and coherence of the program. Students are mixed in their reaction to this requirement.
- **Interest.** Faculty, students and administrators that the team met with seem to have a genuine interest in the program and seem willing to cooperate and support the program.

The number and diversity of International activities across the BGSU campus are impressive but lack coordination.

Weaknesses Noted by the External Reviewers

- **Institutional Support.** The external review team concluded that the potential of the program is limited by financial and logistical support for the program in the College of Arts & Sciences. Major resource limitations were identified in the areas of the Director, faculty incentives to participate, staff support, budget and physical space.
- **Program Linkages.** The external review team stated that the program’s placement in the College of Arts & Sciences limits effective linkages with international programs in other offices. Further, the Program Advisory Committee, which doesn’t represent the full range of international interests across the University, doesn’t play a strong role in program development or advocacy; therefore, that role is left entirely to the program Director. Furthermore, the Director serves for a limited term, resulting in a lack of continuity: the program emphasis changes with each new director.
- **Curriculum.** The external review team described the curriculum as dated, lacking focus and without a clear purpose or continuity. They noted, furthermore, that the program has not followed national trends with respect to restructuring along thematic lines. The program, as currently designed, is difficult to distinguish from other majors; many students are, in fact, dual majors. They further expressed concern about the lack of a capstone course and the difficulty of identifying and obtaining internships as part of the program.
- **Environment for Long-Term Planning.** Given that the Director position is part-time and for a three-year term, the external review team found the program structure and content to be highly dependent on the views of one individual. The lack of a permanent home for the program, along with turnover in directors, has a strong negative impact on the continuity of the program.
- **Student Identity/Integration within the University.** The lack of a physical space and capstone course for the program results in students feeling they lack an academic “home.” Whereas the flexibility of the program may be a strength, it
can also result in students making *ad hoc* course selections, leaving them ill-prepared for careers.

**Recommendations of the External Reviewers**

1. *Create a Center for International Studies and Programs.* The center would be a University-wide structure that would report at the vice-presidential level. This would enable diffuse international activities across campus to consolidate and enhance the visibility of the programs. Such a center would also allow for coordination of internships, placement activities and study abroad programs, and would foster communication and collaborative scholarship among units and offices that have international program responsibilities. The center could also sponsor outreach programs, colloquia and special events. The assignment of physical space to the center would also provide a “home” for students and faculty.

2. *Hire a new tenured Director at the Associate or Professor level.* The Director should be hired from outside BGSU and be provided with appropriate clerical support and operating budget. The external review team further recommended that the center would require a full-time, permanent faculty from one of the disciplines in the College of Arts & Sciences. Responsibilities of the Director would be to:
   - engage in activities on behalf of the center,
   - direct the International Studies major program, and
   - teach a capstone course in the program.

3. *Restructure the current International Studies major program.* Specifically, the external review team recommended that:
   - Several thematic tracks or concentrations should be identified, such as global change and sustainable development, the global economy, or social justice. The tracks should be designed to take advantage of existing University faculty expertise and could have a regional emphasis or application.
   - Consideration should be given to adopting a five-year BA/MA integrated degree program. This program could take advantage of opportunities in teacher certification and distance education.

The external review team also recommended that undertaking their three recommendations as a unit would help BGSU take advantage of the opportunity to build a credible and regionally recognized International Studies Program.

**Program Review Committee Findings**

The International Studies Program provides students a venue to engage in an interdisciplinary program and discover international opportunities at BGSU. The program appears to attract strong students on a consistent basis with relatively little recruiting. Furthermore, the program appears to be viewed positively by faculty who share an interest in it and are prepared to support it.

The current Director appears to be well-respected by students and faculty
alike, and does a good job of advising students, an activity that is critical to student success given the customized nature of the program. The PRC is impressed with the Director’s apparent knowledge of the students and efforts to design a program for each student. Also commendable are his attempts to change the curriculum. However, this is a part-time position with little additional compensation. Consequently, the Director cannot devote the time and energy necessary to commit to the program.

The PRC shares the view of the external review team with respect to a number of concerns with the program as it currently exists. First and foremost, the lack of a full-time Director and sufficient resources has resulted in a lack of ownership of the program by an individual, office or department. If the program is to make a significant contribution to the mission of BGSU, then it warrants the resources necessary to achieve excellence; otherwise, the program should be closed and the students reassigned to and cared for by other similar programs on campus. In short, if the College of Arts and Sciences wants to retain the major, additional resources are necessary to administer and provide continuity for the program. One significant resource is a full-time Director who has the energy, vision and leadership skills necessary to advance the program and take advantage of the opportunities available in international studies. This Director must be provided a sufficient operating budget to facilitate recruiting and placement of students, as well as the development of a network on internship and cooperative education opportunities that can be relied upon on a regular basis.

The PRC also shares the concerns of the external review team regarding the curriculum. Given the indications that the curriculum is outdated and doesn’t sufficiently utilize faculty resources on campus, the PRC believes the curriculum needs to be critically reviewed if the program remains. Revisions to the curriculum need to be considered that address: the students’ need to develop their analytical abilities, the large number of options with respect to course selection, the creation of a capstone course and perhaps an introductory course to provide an appropriate foundation and unifying experience. Further, the PRC believes that, given the objectives of the program, the number of students engaged in internships, cooperative education assignments and study abroad programs is too small. The PRC suggests that consideration be given to requiring students to participate in the study abroad program and at least one internship or cooperative education experience. These requirements could be features of the program that give it distinctiveness at the University.

While the PRC is in support of the International Studies Program, it is apparent that there are serious concerns about the quality of the existing program. Further the PRC questions whether there is sufficient administrative support of the program to provide the substantial resources that we believe will be necessary to deliver a quality program. We also question the wisdom of allocating significant College and University resources to such a weak program when there are other programs of higher quality that would benefit from additional resources. These other programs may provide better opportunities and more effectively utilize the resources that would be required to rebuild the International Studies Program, particularly when there are other programs on campus that may meet the needs of
students who have international interests. Among these are the area studies programs, which are currently a significant component of the International Studies curriculum.

If the program is to remain, the PRC believes that in addition to a full-time Director and a revised curriculum, the program requires a physical space, support staff and an active Program Advisory Committee that takes some responsibility for the program. The space to house the program is vital to students’ ability to identify with the program and to create visibility for the program while support staff is necessary to administer the program and assist the Director. In addition, since the International Studies Program has no courses of its own, its curriculum is reliant on the course offerings of other departments. As pointed out in the self-study, many area studies courses are no longer offered due to retirement and shifts in departments’ scholarly emphasis. Given the current strategy of encouraging departments and/or disciplines to develop areas of focus as a means of achieving excellence with limited resources, the PRC is concerned that the breadth of courses available for the International Studies curriculum may decrease even further. Therefore, it is important that when consideration is given to the resource implications of potentially rebuilding the International Studies program, faculty lines in departments that contribute to the program be considered. Finally, the PRC is unclear as to how the International Studies program fits into the overall strategic plan of the University. Before considerable resources are allocated to the program, we believe this needs to be articulated. This is particularly important given the potential resource impact on the strategic plan and faculty resource allocation on a number of departments that either currently contribute to the interdisciplinary International Studies curriculum or have the potential to do so in the future.

**Program Review Committee Recommendations**

1) The PRC believes that the International Studies Program is not viable. We would recommend suspension of admission to this program, but we understand that action would have ramifications well beyond the program itself. Consequently, we defer to the judgment of the Dean regarding suspension or continuation of the International Studies Program.

2) Given the lack of quality and resources in the International Studies Program, the PRC recommends that the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (either personally or by delegation to an individual or committee) develop a process that will result in the improvement of program quality. The process should address
   a) the job responsibilities of the Director and the contractual obligation necessary to cover those responsibilities;
   b) physical space, operating budget and support staff;
   c) the coherence of the curriculum in International Studies, including
      i) course sequence,
      ii) introductory course with INTS acronym,
      iii) capstone course with INTS acronym, and
iv) emphasizing or requiring study abroad, cooperative education, or internships;
d) faculty resource allocation across departments that may contribute to the program, the scholarly focus of these departments, and the development of a formalized process for faculty assignment to the Advisory Committee;
e) assessment of student learning outcomes must be an ongoing activity coordinated with other changes in the program and reported on annually to the Student Achievement Assessment Committee;
f) any other conditions necessary to improve the quality of the program.

3) It is possible that in the course of addressing recommendation two, above, it will be determined that the resources necessary to insure the continuing excellence of the International Studies Program are too great, particularly in light of other needs in the College of Arts & Sciences. If this should occur, the PRC recommends that the Dean of Arts & Sciences develop a plan (either personally or by delegation) for phasing out the program. This plan should pay particular attention to the potential impact on study abroad, area studies and other programs related to International Studies.

Decisions regarding recommendations two and three, above should be reached prior to registration for Fall, 2000 classes.

4) Assuming the International Studies Program is to be continued, the PRC recommends that the Dean of Arts & Sciences charge a committee with the task of evaluating the long-term vigor of the International Studies Program as it relates to the other international programs in the College. We recommend that the Dean of A&S personally chair this committee. Specifically, the committee should:

a) seek input from President Ribeau regarding the role of International Studies in the overall mission of BGSU. This is necessary because we believe building a premier program in international studies is a substantial financial and academic undertaking. The committee must make sure its recommendations are consistent with the overall strategic plan of the university.

b) examine the relationship between the area studies programs in Arts and Sciences (including Asian Studies, Africana Studies and Canadian Studies) and the International Studies Program. Serious consideration should be given to the feasibility and resource implications of restructuring all the programs under the single umbrella of International Studies. Specifically, the PRC recommends that the committee consider a model whereby students would major in International Studies and select one or more areas of concentration thereby allowing the development of expertise in a particular area. Also of concern is the impact of restructuring of international and area studies programs on the language departments.

c) give serious consideration to the external review team’s recommendation to create a Center for International Studies and Programs. While the definition
of a center at BGSU typically has implications with respect to research, perhaps another type of joint structure is feasible.

d) delay consideration of an integrated B.A.-M.A. program (as recommended by the external reviewers) until and unless the items in recommendations 2, 4a, 4b, and 4c, above, are addressed satisfactorily.

The committee’s report should be produced no later than the end of Fall term, 2000, and shared freely with all programs affected by or interested in the outcome.

The International Studies Program should report annually to the Dean of Arts & Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.