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To: Members of Global Studies Task Force
From: Mark Schaub, Executive Director *MS*
Date: 8 February 2005
Copy: Gayle Davis, Provost
Deans
Subject: Global Studies/Globalization Program?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the discussion of a potential Global Studies/Globalization Degree Program. I know that some of you will not be able to make the meeting on March 1, but we will certainly keep you informed.

What Is Global Studies?

Global Studies (GS) is an interdisciplinary major that teaches students to examine societies, cultures, and individuals as part of global processes. The emphasis is both on theories of globalization/global change, and typically includes breadth and depth in geographical or area studies and in foreign languages. Some universities that have Global Studies majors include the University of Minnesota, Hamline University, Miami (OH), Indiana University, University of Tennessee, UC—Santa Barbara, University of Iowa, Portland State University, Asuza-Pacific University, and others. Some institutions call their programs “International Studies” while still others call them “Global and International Studies.”

How Is GS Different From International Relations?

My sense is that GS is about global processes *beyond* nation-states and their governments and examine societal issues that transcend political boundaries on a more sweeping scale (global trade, global warming, global social protest movements, migration, tourism/sex trade, etc.) Global Studies is also about the impact of global processes on the individual and local levels (on labor markets, consumption patterns, gender relations, communications, media use, etc.).

Like the current International Relations program at GVSU, GS would/could be a major part of an interdisciplinary effort to understand the linkages between economic, social, political, cultural, ecological, anthropological, and other processes.

International Relations, along with other internationally-focused programs like International Business, Geography, and Modern Languages & Literatures would likely be thematic and/or regional components of a Global Studies major.

Where Is This Initiative Coming From?

There are no grand or secret plans that a new major program will necessarily result from this discussion. In an era where existing academic programs are desperate to maintain existing levels of support, development of new programs should be done with special care. Those of us who work in the Area Studies programs are also looking at other strategies for development of the programs and our time and effort can fruitfully be allocated to that, too. But I was moved to call this particular discussion because of several developments:

1. Several groups and committees on campus, statements by the NAFSA organization, several articles in the Chronicle of Higher Education, and statements from the American Association of Colleges & Universities, have identified a lack of “global competence” in students as a significant problem for higher education.
2. The number of students minoring in the Area Studies programs (LAS, MES, EAS, and A/AAS) is relatively small—partially due to the fact that none of these are major programs. Building upon these existing programs by creating an umbrella major that provides options for geographical/regional depth is an ideal and cost-effective way to better use and support these existing programs
3. Global Studies programs are “hot,” in that good universities are developing interesting and quality programs of this kind.
4. There has been interest in among several faculty members in such a program.
5. The Provost and the University College Dean have expressed some interest in having faculty explore the idea of a GS Program that expands on the Area Studies programs.

Materials For Your Review

Attached you will find some documents that we may find useful in our first (and continuing) discussion. There are printouts of a handful of websites for GS/IS programs at other universities. There is also some information on potential careers that were prepared for us by Sue Simmerman and Chris Plouff of GVSU’s Career Services Center. Finally, you will find a tentative agenda for our first meeting on Tuesday, 1 March (9:30 to 11:00 a.m. in 142 KC, Allendale Campus).