



Barbara H. Padnos International Center

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To: Gayle Davis, Provost
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From: Mark Schaub, Executive Director of PIC
Russ Rhoads, Latin American Studies
Ron Stephens, African/African-American Studies
Jim Goode, Middle East Studies
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Date: 1 November 2004
Subject: Plans for Area Studies programs at GVSU

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us on Wednesday, 10 November, from 8-9 am in the Zumberge Board Room. We look forward to discussing with you the direction of Area Studies in general, and the direction of each GVSU AS program in particular.

Tentative Agenda

1. Current State of Area Studies @ GVSU
2. Visions for future of Area Studies @ GVSU
 - a. Majors in each area vs. Generic Global Studies major with emphases in one or more region
 - b. An Area Studies *Center*, located in one place/suite in new building
 - c. Faculty to teach in AS programs (joint appointments?)
 - d. What about "certificates?"
 - e. Timeline for developing AS programs
3. A concern: HR 3077 (currently in US Senate) would create oversight committee on international area studies programs nationwide. What about a forum to discuss this with Pete Hoekstra, author of the bill?

Role of Area Studies programs in GVSU's Mission

Area Studies programs are academic programs that fit very well with GVSU's mission, particularly in helping to shape GVSU graduates as global citizens. But the Area Studies programs have an important role in this mission outside of the actual classrooms: they offer extensive internationally focused educational opportunities for all students, faculty, staff, and West Michigan citizens.

Current State of Areas Studies Programs

There are not great numbers of GVSU students graduating with a minor in MES, LAS, A/AAS, or EAS. Not only are AS courses occasionally cancelled because of under-enrollment, there are not many faculty available to teach the courses. GVSU's curriculum requires a major for students and therefore minors are a less-valuable commodity for students. Great numbers of students were not anticipated when these programs were created (a primary goal was internationalization of the university), and there have not been great numbers—due to a number of reasons.

In terms of programming and international education activity for the GVSU and West Michigan communities, the AS programs are highly visible and effective—especially considering the budgets they function with. Countless lectures, workshops, conferences, and colloquia happen each academic year because of the AS programs. Without their leadership in these areas, there would be substantially less international education programming at GVSU.

Vision for Future

The individual budget requests submitted by the Area Studies Coordinators reflect the direction and objectives of each program. Each one seeks to increase its profile both at GVSU (through attraction of more students and with additional on-campus programming and activity) and nationally (through increased participation in national AS meetings and organizations).

The Area Studies coordinators have agreed to make an effort at better coordinating the programming—and occasionally organizing international colloquia and conferences. We also agreed to attempt more collaboration with Career Services and other units in order to better present the many career opportunities reflected in Area Studies.

In coordination with the Padnos International Center, new partnerships are being sought in Turkey (MES) and Nicaragua and South America (LAS). Continued emphasis on strengthening existing partners at ECNU/China (EAS) and University of Cape Coast/Ghana (A/AAS) is a mutual goal.

Since each program works with a different group of constituent faculty across several disciplines, the development plans for each AS program is slightly different.

Middle East Studies: the primary goal is continued emphasis on a strong and broad MES minor, with more faculty with MES expertise in different disciplines. A great value is placed on continued programming to educate the entire community on MES issues.

African/African-American Studies: Interest in development of an AAA major; interest in adding an assistant or associate coordinator; interest in addressing the issue of domestic concerns (African-American Studies) and how they fit with the more international focus of African Studies.

East Asian Studies: A primary goal is the establishment of a Chinese Studies major.

Latin American Studies: Development of LAS minor, potential interest in LAS major and/or Global Studies major

What Next?

It needs to be determined what is meant by “certificates” related to Area Studies. What would they look like? Is this a worthwhile objective?

There must be a concerted effort at making additional tenure-track hires for Area Studies faculty over the next several years—if there is to be inertia in realizing whatever objectives are set forth.

There should perhaps be a task force/committee to investigate the desirability of a generic Global Studies major. International Relations, International Business, Modern Languages, and other relevant programs would need to be invited to the discussion.