

# **Proposal for Establishing the Intercultural Studies Center (ISC) at Grand Valley State University**

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## **I. Introduction**

Intercultural study is a way of approaching knowledge essential to understanding the modern world: a world of globalization and increased border-crossing by individuals, products, ideas, and media. Few people, places, and phenomena have gone unaffected by the challenges this movement represents yet many deep-seated political, economic, racial, ethnic, gender, and class relationships remain resistant to change. The proposed Intercultural Studies Center, combining expertise from a wide range of fields and disciplines, can help support the current programs in their efforts to analyze and teach about change and continuity between domestic and foreign, national and international, traditional and modern, ethnic and mainstream. The Center will provide research, teaching and spatial foci for the new College of University-wide Interdisciplinary Initiatives (CUII).

## **II. Background**

The CUII now offers GVSU a resource for pooling, promoting, and providing initiatives devoted to examining and teaching about the commingling of cultures. This new development creates a supportive institutional environment for establishing the Intercultural Studies Center. Efforts to establish a Center date to a 1996 proposal from the International Affairs Advisory Committee. Momentum gained with the findings of the Second Task Force on the Internationalization of the University (23 February 2001), resulting in a "Proposal for Establishing the Intercultural Studies Center (ISC) at Grand Valley State University." The area studies coordinators submitted the proposal in the Fall 2001, which subsequently passed successfully through faculty governance and, we believe, helped motivate the concept of the CUII. During the process of university-wide reorganization, the area studies coordinators again submitted a call for a Center (Fall 2003) to the Provost. Recently, with the planning of the "Academic Building 2005," the coordinators submitted a revised proposal and a floor plan to the Provost,

James Moyer, Ray VandenBerg and to Hall Larson (Faculty Facilities Planning Ad Hoc Committee).

### **III. Objectives**

The Intercultural Studies Center (ISC) will house the current African American, East Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern studies programs, collaborate with existing units committed to intercultural studies, and promote additional interdisciplinary studies programming at the university. For example, Globalization Studies, currently a Sociology department initiative, could be housed in the ISC, and involve the participation of faculty and staff from across campus. The Dean of the CUII would oversee the ISC, the area studies programs, and other future interdisciplinary programs. An ISC director would be chosen from among the program coordinators and would serve on a rotating basis. The Director would serve as a liaison to the campus programs, faculty and the community, coordinate the office and program staff, serve on the IE Advisory and CUII personnel committees, administer the budget, and work closely with the CUII dean and interdisciplinary programs and policies. The ISC would work closely with the OIE, the Padnos Center, and with Study Abroad as well. The objectives of the ISC are:

1. To encourage intercultural study by supporting the scholarly and instructional development of existing faculty and attracting new faculty in all units.
2. To provide an intellectual and social space for students to engage in learning, research, community outreach, and advising.
3. To develop intercultural education on campus by using the area studies programs and future programs (e.g., globalization) to generate and support courses, seminars, visiting scholars, guest speakers, the International Studies Roundtables and Conversations, and special events, such as film series and performances, in all units.
4. To strengthen the university's relationships with intercultural communities in the region and with institutions in Grand Valley's service area and abroad.

### **IV. Personnel**

The area studies coordinators have identified teaching and personnel concerns that need to be addressed for the effective and efficient functioning of the ISC and of their programs:

1. The dean should have authority and budget to leverage the hiring of new faculty, and joint-appointment ISC faculty who would offer classes in an area studies program as well as in their home units.
2. The dean should have a substantial role in the evaluation and performance reviews of all faculty associated with the ISC programs, so that they receive adequate recognition and reward for contributions made outside their home units.

3. Department faculty should be allowed—indeed encouraged—to teach in the existing ISC programs and such contributions should be recognized as a part of their regular teaching loads.

## V. Resources

1. There should be adequate operational and programming budgets for each of the programs, in addition to the financial support offered by other campus offices and programs.
2. The ISC programs should be provided with fulltime secretarial staff, enabling coordinators to carry out their duties more effectively.
3. The ISC programs should be provided with sufficient common office space for the ISC director, program coordinators, visiting scholars, and future joint-appointed faculty. In addition, the ISC will be set up as a resource center with advising space, a conference room, a library and video space, and an exhibit area. This "Center" would become a focus point for intercultural activities at GVSU, giving the programs greater visibility and accessibility. Such a location would foster interaction among the area studies programs contributing to a new synergy. Such a center would also provide a convenient point of contact for members of the west Michigan community interested in obtaining information on intercultural matters.
4. The ISC programs need sufficient office space for **growth**, including the addition of new programs and of faculty hired into the ISC programs.
5. The ISC should be fitted with the technological resources to promote research and collaboration at local, regional and global levels. The Center will provide a place where students can access cultural resources in print as well as communicate with domestic and international groups on-line. The Center's offices should be equipped with computer hardware and other supportive technologies, such as satellite TV for receiving a complete array of international programs.

In sum, the ISC will be a lively place where social and intellectual exchange transpires among faculty, students, and guests. It will be a multipurpose space where the dean, director, and program coordinators meet in conference and where coordinators meet with representatives of domestic and international groups, faculty, students and staff for advising and planning purposes.

The ISC will also serve as a meeting place for international students, and house cultural displays, faculty research exhibits, and student projects. It will become a space for viewing videos from our respective program libraries.

Finally, it will provide a place where students can access cultural resources in print as well as communicate with domestic and international groups on-line.

### **Summary**

It is our consensus that establishing the ISC and academic, interdisciplinary programs in the new CUII would represent a positive development for Grand Valley and culminate many years of advocacy for such a Center. With a dean to represent their varying interests, it can be expected that the ISC programs and area studies will begin to receive the attention and support which has thus far eluded them. We believe that implementation of these recommendations will allow the area studies programs to function more efficiently, enabling them to make greater contributions to intercultural and interdisciplinary education at Grand Valley. We must act fast and decisively, however, if we wish to have the necessary space and resources for the identity and future growth of these essential programs.

### **Annual Recommended Budget (Expenditure and Estimated Cost)**

Compensation for Director, one course release and \$4,000 (2/1)  
Coordinator compensation, one course release and \$2,000 (2/2)  
Office Supplies, \$5,000  
Travel Budget, \$5,000  
Printing, Mail, Postage, \$3,000  
Telephone/Service \$5,000  
Copying/Miniprint \$3,000  
Conferences \$20,000  
C-3 Staff Support \$12,000  
**Total, \$65,000**