

Memorandum

To: Wendy Wenner, Dean, CoIS
CC: Jim Goode, Peimin Ni, Jacques Mangala
From: Russell Rhoads
Date: 1/13/2006
Re: Area Studies Center, Statement of Mission and Objectives

Area Studies Center: Mission and Objectives

The Area Studies Center (ASC or the Center) is home to four academic minor programs: African-African American Studies, East Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies. The ASC itself finds a home in the larger College of Interdisciplinary Studies, located at Lake Ontario Hall. The mission of the new Center is to serve as:

- a common space for campus and community collaborations and initiatives
- a source of intercultural resources
- a place for student advising and projects
- an exhibit area, and
- a place to house collections of literature and video resources.

Background: 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 Fall 2001, which subsequently passed successfully through faculty governance. During the process of university-wide reorganization, the area studies coordinators again submitted a call for the Center (Fall 2003) to the Provost. The Center was established finally during the physical planning process of Lake Ontario Hall.

The objectives of the Center in detail are:

1. To enhance teaching: The Center encourages intercultural study by supporting the scholarly and instructional development of existing faculty and attracting new faculty in all units across campus. The Center acts as a conduit of intercultural information for faculty and

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for the general GVSU community. The Center will assist in coordinating faculty and campus expertise from a wide range of fields and disciplines in an effort to analyze and teach about change and continuity between domestic and foreign, national and international, traditional and modern, ethnic and mainstream.

2. To assist student learning: The Center provides an intellectual and social space for students to engage in learning, research, community outreach, and advising. The Center helps coordinate activities between the area studies and students, student groups and organizations. The Center provides a place where students can access cultural resources in print as well as communicate with domestic and international groups on-line. It is a space for viewing videos from our respective program libraries. Finally, The Center serves as a meeting place for international students. We have future plans to provide students with satellite TV for receiving a complete array of international programs.

3. To share information: The Center publishes a Newsletter of Area Studies Center events and initiatives, including the activities of the four area studies academic programs. In addition, the Center has exhibit cases for cultural displays, faculty research, and student projects.

4. To coordinate curriculum: The Center coordinates discussion and efforts in designing new curriculum, including area studies courses and study abroad curriculum and sites, which involve the participation of faculty and staff from across campus. We have future plans of help design a Global Studies Program, which includes an academic major.

5. To diversify the campus: The Center assists in programming events that bring speakers to campus who present on diversity and on international issues of interest to the campus community. The Center organizes activities such as a colloquium panel series each semester, visiting scholars, film series, and special performances targeting both campus and community.

6. To support study abroad: The Center works closely with the Padnos International Center and support study abroad programs through area studies curriculum, summer abroad programs led by our faculty, and active participation in International Partnership Development. In addition, the Center provides information students planning Study Abroad programs who wish to consult on topics concerning the target country's culture, political situation, and on opportunities for volunteerism.

7. To connect and link interdisciplinary initiatives:

a) With other programs across campus: The Center fosters collaborations with other campus entities (horizontal linkages), such as existing units committed to intercultural studies. For example, the Center works closely with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the GVSU language programs such as MLL to help facilitate opportunities for students to learn one or more foreign languages, and for students in ESL programs. The following list represents a sample of departments and programs that have collaborated in event planning and have provided faculty support to intercultural events and curriculum over the past year:

1. African-African American Studies: Art, Black Student Union, English, Geography, History, Human Resources, Multicultural Affairs, Sociology.
2. East Asian Studies: Asian Students Association, Communications, English,

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Geography, History, Modern Languages and Literatures, Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology.

3. Latin American Studies: Admissions, Anthropology, Biology, Communications, Computer & Information Systems, International Business, Education, English, Geography, Geology, Health Sciences, History, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Latino Student Union, Management, Multicultural Affairs, Modern Languages and Literatures, Nursing, Padnos International Center, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, and CLAS.
 4. Middle Eastern Studies: Anthropology, Communications, English, Geography, Geology, History, Modern Languages and Literatures, Multicultural Affairs, Padnos International Center, Writing.
- b) With community outreach services: The Center provides a convenient point of contact for members of the west Michigan community interested in obtaining information on domestic and on intercultural matters. The Center also works with the K-12 school system, community services agencies, immigrant populations, and local civil authorities in order to strengthen the university's relationships with regional intercultural communities. The following list represents a sample of outreach between the Middle Eastern Studies program and the community:
- Middle Eastern Studies: Grand Rapids Center for Ecumenism (GRACE)
 - Fountain Street Church
 - Ada Congregational Church
 - Muskegon Intermediate School District
 - Kentwood Schools
 - City High School, GR
 - North Muskegon High School
 - Fire-up Conference, Aquinas College
 - Davenport College, Distance Learning Program, Holland
 - US Attorney's Office, GR
 - Michigan Law Enforcement Association Conference
8. To connect to an international community of academics and research institutions: The Center fosters institutional membership in national and international area studies organizations and academic communities.
 9. To bring research resources to Grand Valley students and faculty: The Center coordinates initiatives for external funding grants related to the teaching and research.
 10. To provide campus leadership: The Center's activities are coordinated by a director chosen from among the area studies program coordinators. The Director serves as a liaison to the campus programs, faculty and the community, coordinates the office and program staff, and works closely with the CoIS Dean.

In sum, the ASC is a lively place where social and intellectual exchange transpires among faculty, students, and guests. It serves as a multipurpose space of social interaction and of resources where the area studies coordinators, faculty and staff meet with representatives of domestic and international groups and with students for advising and project purposes.