

Academic Program Review
International Studies Institute
University of New Mexico
September 30-October 1, 2013

Over the course of two days, the review team composed of Ginette Ishimatsu (University of Denver), Joseph Jupille (University of Colorado Boulder), and Walter Putnam (University of New Mexico) conducted in-depth interviews with administrators, faculty, and students in order to assess the state of the International Studies Institute (ISI). Prior to our visit, the team received a well-crafted self-study that provided invaluable background information about the institute and its place at the University of New Mexico. The care and candor that went into the self-study carried over to the site visit where we found confirmation of the extraordinary growth and success of the institute; we also identified some vulnerabilities for which we believe there are remedies. The outgoing ISI Director, Christine Sauer, and the incoming Director, Eleni Bastéa, as well as the Program Directors for Asian Studies, Lorie Brau, and for European Studies, Steve Bishop, were very helpful in providing answers to all of our questions. The review team was assisted during our visit by Greg Heileman (Associate Provost), Nancy Middlebrook (University Accreditation Director), Bessie Gallegos (Academic Program Review Specialist) as well as by both ISI Directors and the ISI Operations Specialist, Jazmin Knight. This report was co-authored by the three members of the review team.

Background and Summary Report

The International Studies Institute houses three degree-granting programs: International Studies (IS), European Studies (ES), and Asian Studies (AS). The ISI also runs a highly successful lecture series every Fall and administers UNM's summer study abroad program at Schloss Dyck in Germany. The Institute also awards scholarships to students, usually for summer study abroad. All three programs are multi- or inter-disciplinary and draw on a wide range of course offerings in the humanities and social sciences. Students construct degree programs by satisfying distribution requirements in a number of categories. Without full-time faculty of their own, each program must construct degrees by relying on courses offered by affiliated departments. This arrangement is less than ideal since it places the ISI at the mercy of programming decisions of other units, which also receive the credit for hours generated by ISI students. The ISI has managed to hire a Part-Time Instructor who delivered this year for the first time a dedicated capstone course for students returning from study abroad. IS has prospered since its inception in 2009. A sharp drop in student demand has weakened the ES program. Faculty attrition has weakened the AS program. Thus, two of the three constituent programs of the ISI stand in various states of ill health, on their own terms.

For reasons we explain throughout this report, we recommend the elimination of the ES and AS programs and the accommodation of those students under the ISI umbrella. We feel that the ISI has even more potential for growth if it is properly nurtured; this structural change will result in a stronger, more streamlined unit that will serve the students of UNM by delivering a rigorous and flexible course of study. We will not recommend unrealistic financial support for the ISI; it seems obvious, however, that the unit has achieved major

strides with minimal resources. The attribution of small amounts of support in strategic places should result in exponential gains for the students, the program, the college, and the university.

PROGRAMS

Each of the three programs has discernable strengths and weaknesses that are not identical. Their program-level weaknesses exacerbate a certain lack of cohesiveness in the Institute as a whole. This is part and parcel of the inter-/multi-disciplinary exercise. Except in rare instances such as the capstone course, these programs are more "multi-" than "inter-" disciplinary. The essential tension inside the ISI (which can be a productive one) involves the pull between the global/general construction of the IS program and the local/contextual orientation of the area studies programs (ES and AS); this seems to have come about more by happenstance than by design. In their current states, the ES and AS area studies majors involve more "tension" than "productive tension." In addition, there is a sense of tension between the social scientific and humanities orientations that both reside in the bosom of the field of international studies. Thus, the overall weaknesses of the ISI reflect both problems with individual programs and a certain aggregate incoherence in the inclusion of two area studies majors in the IS structure.

IS Program: The International Studies program has strong inter-/multi-disciplinary strengths, drawing on the diverse and committed faculty affiliated with the institute. The program is conceived in such a way as to attract students who are curious about the world and to provide these students with the tools and insights to explore and answer their questions. That the program responds to student needs and demands is evidenced by the remarkable increase in student credit hour production and majors, whose numbers have risen from 9 to 138 in just three years. This growth has come about thanks to unflagging dedication from the Directors (Professors Bastéa and Sauer) and their supporting faculty and staff. But therein lies the vulnerability of the program as well, which risks directorial burnout and/or the inability to sustain the level of activity of the past four years.

AS Program: The Asian Studies program has encountered significant obstacles due to the loss of faculty and to the severe burdens of the major on the Program Director and remaining faculty. With the resignation or departure of affiliated faculty across campus, AS has become the project of a small handful of faculty. It is important to note that the number of majors has hovered around 30 for the past three years despite the absence of a full range of faculty and course offerings, leading to even more work by the core faculty still in place. AS Program Director Professor Lorie Brau has been heroic in the face of dwindling support and significant demands on her time and energy, including single-handedly supervising the large number of required AS theses. The addition of new faculty in Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic will provide language and culture courses, but these junior faculty will in no way be expected to take on significant program responsibilities until they receive tenure. The combination of an expanded faculty and a strong cohort of students interested in pursuing Asian topics will likely lead to the creation of a Japanese or Asian languages and cultures major. Once that happens, the AS major should be discontinued and students directed toward their specific language and culture programs.

ES Program: The European Studies program has historically provided an academic focus for students interested in European topics, whether in the humanities or social sciences. Given shifts in institutional priorities and a growing interest among students in the study of other areas of the world, ES has seen a decline in numbers of majors from 17 in Spring 2010 to only 5 in Spring 2013. Many of these majors have moved into the newly formed IS program where they have taken advantage of a broader thematic or geographic curriculum. The current Program Director, Steve Bishop, single-handedly holds the program afloat and has not been able to find a replacement to run a program in decline. It is the opinion of the evaluators that the program should be discontinued and remaining students directed toward the IS program.

Recommendations:

After listening carefully to the main stakeholders in the area studies majors, we recommend that the European Studies and Asian Studies majors be terminated and their strengths merged with the International Studies major. Students interested in European and Asian Studies would still be able to find a home in International Studies which allows for area and thematic concentrations as well as a cohort experience. Asian Studies should remain in place until either a Japanese major or Asian languages and cultures major is created, given the current student numbers and continuing interest in some kind of Asia-focused major.

CURRICULUM

All three programs under the ISI umbrella operate multi-/inter-disciplinary curricula, whether as a matter of principle or of convenience. With varying degrees of flexibility, all three programs require a student to construct a program of study from a menu of options. This supposes a high level of planning and advising in order for students to tailor an individual curriculum that will allow them to achieve their academic goals. The biggest curricular weakness of the ISI resides in the fact that it does not control the course offerings required to run it because there are no dedicated faculty in any of the three programs under the ISI banner. The different programs cross-list or “borrow” courses from other departments, the curricular offerings of which reflect their own staffing and priorities, rather than the priorities of the ISI and its programs. The absence of available or interested faculty in a given area also means that there will be no offerings in that area; conversely, a concentration of available or interested faculty in a given area leads to the erroneous impression that certain degrees have natural curricula. In fact, there is no intrinsic reason why ES and to a lesser extent AS should lean more heavily toward the humanities, nor why IS should appear to be more focused on the social sciences, except that faculty in those areas happen to be clustered in those degree-granting programs. All three programs, but especially ES and AS, have often been approached as second majors or minors for students, complementary to their principal focus. We believe that with the continued success and strength of the IS major students will begin to consider this program as a primary major around which to conduct their studies.

IS Curriculum: The IS curriculum appeals to students because of its wide range of options and because of its capstone course. The curriculum provides students with a platform on which they are able to build a coherent course of study if they seek and receive proper

advising. The IS program was considered by some campus administrators as being excessively open-ended and difficult to navigate, though students expressed appreciation for the flexibility of the program. Perhaps a larger deficiency is the absence of an introductory course. Students take a rich array of courses and benefit from exciting capstone experiences. At the same time, they lack even a basic orientation to the field of international studies and to the many issues, approaches and regions that it encompasses. The curriculum has up to now also been more oriented toward social sciences than humanities, although we anticipate that some re-balancing will occur as former ES and AS students move into IS. Students who successfully complete the IS degree should have adequate training to go on to graduate school or to compete for positions in the expanding global job market.

AS Curriculum: The AS curriculum is based on specific distribution requirements in set categories and on the completion of a thesis. This scheme makes sense only if the specified courses are available for students to construct a rich, coherent course of study leading to deep knowledge in a concentration. But the AS curriculum suffers from numerous and important weaknesses. First, unlike ES, which allows students to draw courses relatively freely from across Fine Arts, History, Literature/Philosophy and Social Science categories (one class in each) and then even more freely from a set of elective courses, AS requirements are highly constraining: two courses each in history, philosophy/religious studies, and social science/literature. This programmatic rigidity has proven especially problematic in the face of faculty attrition (and, correspondingly, the availability of courses across these areas). The program has survived by allowing substitution of courses for those that cannot be offered due to the lack of faculty in certain areas (history, philosophy, most of the social sciences, etc.). As a result, however, the coherence of the curriculum has suffered. Second, the AS thesis requirement is highly problematic. Quite simply, many students are not qualified to write a serious piece of research. Their very wide range of experiences, interests, and talents (especially writing skills) forms a sometimes-insuperable barrier. AS faculty appear to have worked “above and beyond the call of duty” in trying to help students succeed in writing theses, but there is only so much that can be done when, for example, a student in need of basic remediation is attempting to write a sustained piece of scholarship. Moreover, the Program Director Lorie Brau directs all of the theses, a situation that is clearly unsustainable. These problems will become moot if our recommendation to abolish the AS degree is followed. In the short term, though, the senior thesis requirement should be reconsidered, either making it optional—and that only for the highest-achieving students—or eliminating it altogether due to the excessive burden placed on the Program Director.

ES Curriculum: The ES curriculum is based on distribution requirements largely centered on languages and humanities disciplines. In a similar mold to the AS major and minor, there is a wide array of courses (though in the case of ES, over 300!) from which students may choose to fulfill major requirements. Given the amorphous nature of the degree structure, any focus and concentration will only occur as a result of faculty advising; this fact makes the ES degree, like its AS counterpart, dependent on intensive one-on-one advising and the availability of consistent course offerings. Both of these conditions have become increasingly difficult to meet. The main (only?) place for ES majors to create some sense of community as a cohort would be the INTS 410 seminar required of all majors. While these weaknesses could be remedied by means of added resources and an overhaul of the curriculum, it seems better to abolish the ES major and minor and to direct current and

future students to the IS program where they should be able to find a satisfactory academic home.

Other areas: The ISI seems the logical umbrella structure for other area programs. When Russian Studies was abolished in 2013, the students who wanted an area studies concentration rather than a more traditional Russian language, literature, and culture degree found pathways within the ISI structure. If, as we recommend, the IS major incorporates the AS and ES programs over the coming years, we assume that similar accommodations will take place. A remaining challenge (and opportunity?) for the ISI will be its relationship to other fledgling area studies programs around campus: Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese, most notably. The addition of new faculty in these areas will allow for more courses to be taught, course that should appeal to IS students. As majors and minors are created in these areas, they will need to be developed in concert with the ISI so that students will have a clearly delineated option between a multi-disciplinary international studies approach and a traditional language, literature, and culture degree. These are not contradictory enterprises, but they will require thought and coordination in order to mesh successfully. Finally, the relationship between the ISI and Africana Studies only came up incidentally in our visit. We would encourage the stakeholders in these two programs to explore ways of cooperating rather than duplicating or, worse, negating their individual efforts.

Recommendations: The IS major already has a strong structure, so our recommendations are modest. First, we recommend the addition of a gateway course for the IS major, which would enhance the major in a number of ways. For one, it would introduce students to international studies as an academic area, helping majors to understand what questions are asked in the field, what skills and knowledge they are likely to gain as majors, and how to think about cross-cultural experiences in preparation for study abroad. In addition, the course would allow for an entry-level cohort experience, something that is lacking under the current program. Moreover, the course would complement the capstone course, which requires critical analysis of and reflection on the study abroad or domestic intercultural experience.

Second, we suggest that the two IS capstone courses be merged so as to provide a second cohort experience for majors. Currently, the capstone separates those students who have gone abroad from those who have had a domestic intercultural experience. We recommend merging these two constituencies in order to provide both groups with the chance to interact with one another and to discover commonalities and differences in cross-cultural interactions, whether international or domestic. The recent hiring of the part-time instructor, Ian Stewart, is a welcome improvement to the program. His wide area of expertise seems well suited to guide students through an integrative experience that involves writing, oral communication, collaboration, and critical reflection. Dr. Stewart's unusual training in both anthropology and history, as well as his long experience as an international journalist, sets the tone.

Third, the huge number of course choices should perhaps be whittled down; at the very least, certain courses that fulfill major requirements should be highlighted each year. The new online advising sheets, which provide recommendations for courses, will surely become a valuable advising aid in this respect. Recommending several classes each year can help students to figure out the best courses to take. Channeling a significant percentage of IS

majors into selected courses would also contribute to the formation of a cohort experience that is lacking in the current helter-skelter menu of options.

PERSONNEL

Directors: The current Director and Co-Director must be commended for their extraordinary dedication to growing the program and meeting the needs of such a large student population. They have accomplished this task with very limited support. Even with released time and a small SAC, they cannot be expected to sustain this level of engagement without damage to their own research agendas, not to mention their personal well-being. We hope that changes in the way that University College and Arts & Sciences run advising services will take some of the burden off these two individuals, at least for the early stages of a student's program of study. A more streamlined program with fewer options and more channeling of students into specific courses should make the one-on-one advising somewhat easier. These remedies will not make the job of ISI Director easy, but at least they should render it more manageable. As recommended elsewhere, the ISI program directors' SACs should remain within the unit once those programs cease to exist and those small amounts of money should be redirected to the ISI Director in acknowledgment of the huge advising job associated with the position. Another solution would be to retain the AS and ES Directors as advisors with a small SAC. Neither solution is ideal, but either would be better than the current situation, which is untenable.

Faculty: All three programs under the ISI banner rely on non-program faculty for the delivery of instruction. Since ISI does not have its own faculty or buy-out funding to draft faculty from around campus, the program depends on the good will of affiliated departments. This comes in the shape of allowing courses from the home department's regular slate or topics courses in somewhat related areas of interest to count toward the ISI majors. The energetic and persuasive determination of the Director and Co-Director of ISI has made this formula work up to now; the surge of majors in the program is a testimony to their success. It is to the great credit of all of the people involved that they have refused to sacrifice quality in order to manage their workloads. They have, instead, undertaken a huge amount of work at the expense of research agendas and personal time. In the case of ES, a course required of majors (INTS 410) is often cross-listed with another being offered by a faculty member in his/her home department; this course counts for the ES seminar in the absence of a better option, one that would be more in tune with the program's aims and philosophy. Again, the very ability to identify such a course depends on the persuasive talents of the ES Director to convince faculty to offer and cross-list such a course. Close contacts with faculty have made these arrangements work, but this *ad hoc* solution is not feasible over the long-term: not only does it impinge on the other responsibilities of the Directors, but it may not be possible in the future for departments to "lend" faculty. The lack of dedicated faculty severely hampers the growth and sustainability of the program which needs to run on institutional support and not on the good will of borrowed faculty. One of the most promising developments in ISI has been the success of the IS Director and Co-Director in advocating for a part-time Lecturer to teach the capstone course this semester. They identified and hired a very competent scholar currently paid as a Part-time Instructor; the syllabus he prepared and the tenor of our conversation with him convinced us that he is a real boon to the program. At the very least, it seems imperative to create a

more permanent Lecturer position within the ISI in order to deliver regular capstone courses and to expand the offerings to include a gateway course.

Staff: In 2012, the ISI obtained a 1.00 FTE position for an Operations Specialist shared with other programs and departments housed on the fourth floor of the Humanities Building. These programs hired Jazmin Knight who is tasked with running the office, helping with financial data and planning, ensuring compliance with university policies and procedures, and working with other campus entities in scheduling classes and events. The ISI also hires a Graduate Assistant although we did not get a chance to ascertain his/her specific role. In the current context, this seems like a satisfactory arrangement.

FACILITIES

The ISI has two offices on the fourth floor of the Humanities Building alongside other "studies" programs and departments. One office is occupied by the Operations Specialist and the other is shared by the incoming ISI Director, the Graduate Assistant, and the Part-Time Instructor teaching the capstone course. While we did not visit the shared office, it does sound like an awkward arrangement, especially during the semester when the Instructor is teaching and needs to hold office hours. The ISI does not control any classrooms or meeting rooms. Students meeting with the review team noted that there was nowhere for them to go with questions about the program, except to the overextended director. They lamented the lack of a help desk or a focal space within which to engage the ISI. They noted further that the Institute's location (such as it is) remains obscure, lacking even signage in the Humanities building. Students spontaneously reinforced a point made in the self-study report: that there is no "there," no shared space within which they might interact, learn, be advised, have questions answered, or just form community. For such a wonderfully people-powered enterprise, the lack of adequate facilities represents an obvious weakness.

STUDENTS

ISI places students at the center of everything it does. The IS program's rapid growth indicates that it has broad appeal to UNM's student body. The institute has gained a reputation as a place for global learning, thus capturing some of the emphasis on internationalization that is "in the air" at UNM and elsewhere. Many of the students are attracted by the study abroad options that are a central feature of the ISI programs. The precise nature of the role the ISI plays in UNM's study abroad initiatives remains to be determined, but it should have a place at the table in those pursuits. We also find noteworthy the strong academic success of ISI majors in terms of GPA, time to degree, and broad academic interests. The ISI confronts a few tough challenges in terms of its student population, however. First, particularly with respect to the Asian Studies program's thesis requirement, some students simply are not prepared to do the work required for the degree. Second, current levels of support are barely adequate to the advisement needs of the students, and attain this level only through the generous and tireless work of the ISI's Director and Assistant Director. Third, students engaged in international studies need to spend time abroad; that feature of the program is beyond the means of some UNM students, even with available financial aid. The spectacular growth of the ISI has thus placed financial and personal burdens on the program's faculty and students. This is an unsustainable situation: faculty will quite simply burn out even at current enrollment levels. If the program

continues to grow, we fear that this limitation may be the undoing of the ISI's programs, forcing untenable corner-cutting.

CONCLUSION

We find the ISI at a promising but challenging crossroads: how to consolidate and sustain the rapid growth of the past four years? The elimination of the ES and AS degrees should allow students and faculty to focus more clearly on the ISI program as the location for international interests to be pursued. The addition of a regular Lecturer to the ISI will provide more stable footing to be able to offer not only a regular capstone course but also a gateway course for majors and minors. There is clear student appetite for a program like IS at the University of New Mexico. The most pressing challenge to the ISI will be how to absorb and sustain its growth with only modest increases in institutional support. Long-term success cannot be achieved solely by the unlimited and uncompensated work of even the most competent and dedicated Directors. The administration might want to explore ways to spread the workload to more people, possibly by keeping the current area Program Directors as advisors; they would presumably retain their small SACs under that arrangement. If these positions vanish, the SACs attached to them should remain within the unit and be redistributed to the Directors in recognition of their huge workloads. The university might also consider some sort of summer compensation for the Directors who work year-round but are only paid for nine months. With UNM's prioritization of internationalization, with broad-based discussion of inter- and multi-disciplinarity, with recent hires in critical languages in FLL, and with hope of area hires in affiliated departments around campus, there seems to be the framework for broader, deeper support of the ISI's mission at the University of New Mexico.