

Assessment Activities for the International Studies Major

The International Studies Major has 460 declared students this academic year, making it one of the College's largest undergraduate majors. The Major provides students with a tableau of courses on global political, social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues within which students combine a broad liberal arts education with a specialization in one of four options: global security, global environment, global political economy and policy, and global cultures. One of the Major's strengths is that it allows students to integrate comprehensive knowledge and specialized training.

In our mission to educate globally competent students, the Major's primary learning outcomes are to foster critical and analytical thinking; writing skills; evaluation of information for problem-solving; knowledge of research and methods used in the social sciences and humanities; foreign language skills; cross-cultural competence through study abroad, internship, or other internationally focused opportunities; and engagement in global/international issues and involvement in ethical action.

To assess whether we achieve these goals, we have conducted over 18 months a series of focus groups with diverse students, some new to the major, some in the middle, others ready to graduate. Based on these interviews and based on anecdotal information collected over recent years, the Major's executive committee completed a revision of the curriculum this fall. This curriculum, effective fall 2009, provides our students with better access to courses, particularly our introductory. All options now have consistent requirements. We added a course that can be taught by visiting dignitaries to facilitate students' professional socialization. We now have a directed study course for students who want to work one-on-one with a professor. We have discovered great student demand for a human rights option or certificate, and we are evaluating our ability to fulfill this demand. Additionally to meet expressed student need for advising and career services, we have hired a peer advisor, and our academic advisor offers a number of professionally oriented workshops for Majors.