

Annual Assessment Report

International Studies

February 2013

I. Executive Summary

The major in international studies introduces students to contemporary international systems, the complex political, economic, environmental and cultural factors that affect relations among nation-states and peoples globally. Students majoring in international studies acquire knowledge of particular global and international issues and paradigms, as well as the ability to work effectively, innovatively, and creatively, in at least two geo-political and cultural areas of the world. Familiarity with a language other than one's native tongue and a balanced cultural knowledge are important components of this major. The major is designed to prepare Wells students to assume professional roles in our complex global environment.

In the past few years the curriculum has undergone some changes both in terms of the number of the required courses, now 13 (33-34 credit hours) and the focus. The revised curriculum is also more flexible in terms of the choice of courses with a fewer required course at 100 and 200 levels.

However, both in the old and the new revised curriculum, we focus our assessment on the following items: senior experience which includes: seminar, which is offered in the spring semester, public presentation of the senior thesis, and the comprehensive exam. All these requirements are fulfilled in the spring semester. The elimination of the modern languages as a major and an important requirement led us to rethink the language requirement differently. In the new program the focus is on broadly defined culture. There is only one graduating senior in the major in this Spring.

In the next few years, we will carefully look at how the new geo-political and cultural focus will be interpreted by students in the choice of their courses. However, International Studies 151 (Introduction to International Studies) is still the main requirement taught every year in the fall semester. It has always a relatively large enrollment. It is also a requirement in the Political Science major. Study abroad and internships are also other important requirements in the major. Political Science 210 (United Nations Simulation) was added as a new requirement.

II. Summary of Annual Assessment Review and Planning Discussion

In the old curriculum as well as in the new one, the senior experience is central in the major. International Studies 402 (Senior Seminar) is offered to prepare the student to write her/his senior thesis. It is the most important course support in the spring semester. In the old program, we have to make sure that the seniors have completed a methodology course before the spring

semester. The student has a choice between Econ 314, Hist 375, Soc 394 and WGS 310. We also encouraged students to take a methodology course in social science during the study abroad. In the past this has been beneficial to students in their thesis writing exercises. In the new curriculum, there is no research methodology course. However, students must take 3 courses from the global system category. Many students have written their theses on subjects or topics related to either their study abroad or internship experiences. We do not know how the situation will be when the new program starts to be operational. We encourage students to write their theses on empirically based topics in the global and international areas. Almost 90 percent of students have done so.

Students in the major are encouraged to participate in International Studies Colloquium Series, which Lumumba-Kasongo instituted about 10 years so ago. However, with the austerity program, it has been difficult to invite any noted scholars to make their research presentations on campus. Thus, student's internships are publicly presented within these series.

III. Plans for Coming Year

In the next coming years, our focus will be on the implementation of the new curriculum and the course offering that should cover 6 regions as articulated in the new curriculum. One item that ought to be carefully looked at is the comprehensive exam. Although some questions in the composition of this exam are drawn from the courses that students took from the junior and senior years in the major, this oral exam is essentially based on the senior thesis. We will assess further the quality of this exam in relationship to the body of knowledge that is provided and the organization of the required courses. We intend also to prepare graduating senior earlier in their thesis writing starting in the fall semester. We might require each student to submit the draft abstract of her/his thesis in the fall as well as the selection of members of her/his thesis committee. T. Lumumba-Kasongo has done this often but on ad hoc basis because of other responsibilities.

We intend also to organize senior theses presentations better and before the exam period. The current practice interferes with many end-of-the semester activities.

IV. Updated Assessment Plan

As the new international studies curriculum has obviously not been implemented yet, we do not have any data on, and/or, about it to assess how it will be viewed or work at large. We intend to pay attention to how the objectives of the major are supported by the courses we offer.

V. Summary of Data Used

Within the way international studies has been organized since its foundation, the interpretation made in this report is based on how Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo has conceived and organized

the major in the past many years, despite considerable efforts to involve, in a systematic manner, other faculty members who are offering courses in the major. It is strongly hoped and expected that with the new curriculum, more faculty members will be willing to participate more toward the major development.