

Strategic Initiative Proposal

International Center for Cross-Cultural Communication

Departments of Foreign Languages and Cultures

Comparative Literature Program

How do we create a **unique profile and mission** for Smith's initiative for an international center, **distinctive** from similar projects at other colleges (the *Rohatyn Center for International Affairs* at Middlebury College, and the *Center for Global Initiatives* at Mount Holyoke College)? In response to last spring's initial proposal for a Center for International Studies, a working group of the language and literature faculty at Smith met to voice our support for the concept and to add our expertise. We fully agree with the original proposal's assessment that a Center for International Studies is a timely project for Smith College, especially given its long history of supporting study abroad, strong departments of foreign languages and literature, area studies and international studies. However, the strategic planning that the College has initiated inspires us to put forward a bolder plan than was possible last year, given the recent budget restrictions. Thus, the following suggestions outline our vision for an **International Center for Cross-Cultural Communication**. We propose that the center should not simply focus on the social sciences but build on Smith's pioneering strengths and traditions in international studies, language and cultural studies, study abroad, and the American Studies Diploma Program. We envision that such a Center would serve four basic functions:

→ The Center should function as a **link** and a **bond** between the Smith campus curriculum and its co-curriculum and 1) faculty that focus on international and intercultural issues; 2) our JYA and consortial programs; 3) students studying abroad on approved independent programs; and 4) the Five-College Critical Languages Program by:

1) bringing together in one locale the Office for International Study with the Office for Associate Dean of International Students and Scholars, the American Studies Diploma program, visiting international scholars, and the Center for Foreign Languages and Cultures;

2) sponsoring trans-continental courses that bring together students on campus with students studying on our JYA and consortial programs through web and video conferencing and Moodle [following the model, for example, of FRN 250, in which Smith students in collaboration with students partners at a French university build the content of their cross-cultural course, and the experiences of the German Studies Department video conferencing between Smith College and the University of Hamburg];

3) facilitating continued faculty mentoring and interaction with students studying Abroad;

4) providing faculty support for students undertaking an internship and/or doing community service while abroad;

5) sponsoring an annual symposium for students returning from study abroad where they could present the work they did in internships, community service or other projects (as organized this year in the pilot program *Smith Elects the World*);

6) establishing better links with international alumnae, including graduates of our JYA programs.

→ The Center should facilitate **cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary and cross-national** approaches to learning, teaching and research, **connecting disciplines and cultures** across the three divisions by:

- 1) encouraging team-taught courses that cross disciplines;
- 2) organizing a series of lectures or an annual or biannual conference around a topical international issue;
- 3) supporting the integration of the continued study of a foreign language and culture in courses focusing on an international or cross-cultural issue, for example, by encouraging multi-lingual faculty to offer a discussion section of an existing class in the target language when appropriate either through team-teaching or cross-departmental cooperation.

→ The Center should **promote thoughtful self-reflection about US culture** and hegemony, assuring that the international focus central to its mission is in fact bifocal and multidirectional by:

- 1) integrating the American Studies Diploma program in the mission of the Center;
- 2) building on the international exchange agreements now in place and engaging our exchange students more fully as ambassadors and spokespersons for their home country's culture and as speakers who offer a "cross-cultural" perspective on the US;
- 3) sponsoring sessions in which Smith students abroad report back to campus "international" views on America (through video conferencing);
- 4) accessing foreign television and the press (with a bank of televisions featuring news and cultural programming from around the world and the daily international press);
- 5) organizing a film series coupling films that present cultural perspectives differing from the American view;
- 6) facilitating interpreting services for visiting international scholars so that our lecture programming could broaden audiences and widen perspectives.

→ The Center should function as a **crossroads** on campus where students, faculty, international visitors, and those offices serving international study and students can meet with purpose or by chance to discuss current international events, read international news, inform themselves about international issues, events, and exchange views of differing cultural perspectives. As such, it should feature an inviting space, an international salon of sorts, where people will want to congregate and linger.

A **creatively renovated Wright Hall**, which is centrally placed on campus, could be both the **symbolic and real connection between the sciences and arts**. This space would make a particularly important statement for Smith, with our commitment to preparing our students to live and work in a society continually transformed by globalism. It has entrances opening both to the upper campus, with the humanities and social sciences, and a lower door that opens toward the

sciences, as well as a direct connection to the library. Several components vital for making the Center a vibrant institute for all three divisions are already in place:

- 1) lecture hall for conferences, featured lectures, and large courses;
- 2) CFLAC (multi-lingual communication, webcams for conferencing, international film collection);
- 3) two electronic classrooms with internet access to international news outlets;
- 4) faculty offices opening onto large halls that function as a kind of indoor thoroughfare where faculty and students can congregate.

Existing space could easily be transformed to incorporate the following necessary components:

- 1) a video-conferencing room [for example, W232 could be easily retrofitted];
- 2) space on the ground floor for the Office for International Studies, the Office of the Associate Dean for International Students and Scholars, the Center's faculty director, program coordinator, and administrative assistant, a small library with current periodicals and newspapers, and a common space /espresso bar, resembling a central plaza;
- 3) classrooms adapted specifically for language teaching and other Center-related activities.
- 4) Bringing together several offices (OIS, the Office of the Associate Dean for International Students, CFLAC, the AMS Diploma Program) would serve the sustainability initiative by sharing resources (staff, copy machines, printers, fax machines, student help).

→ We believe that a plan for the exact **administrative structure of the ICCCC** would be best discussed at a later moment in the strategic planning process, when all interested partners come together to refine the proposal. However, we all agree that it is important that a **member of the faculty should lead the ICCCC**, assisted by a program director and an administrative assistant.

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