

A photograph of three people smiling in front of a large world map. On the left is a woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a grey cardigan over a white and grey striped shirt. In the center is a man with a shaved head, wearing a blue button-down shirt and a red tie. On the right is a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a light yellow button-down shirt. The background is a large world map with green landmasses and blue oceans. Labels like 'RUSSIA' and 'EAST AFRICAN' are visible on the map.

The Internationalists

The International Programs Office works to send domestic students abroad and bring international students to Augustana.

The International Programs Office: Cathy Lindamood, Ben Iverson and Donn Grinager.

When it comes to evaluating the significance of studying abroad – learning about the world by seeing it, feeling it, tasting it – the iconic voices of the past say it best.

Take St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo Regius, the Latin-speaking philosopher and theologian largely hailed as one of the most important figures in the development of Western Christianity.

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page,” St. Augustine is to have said.

Take Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, the out-spoken and controversial author of American classics such as *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover,” he is to have said.

At Augustana, where this fall the College reported its largest class of international students (76 students representing 23 countries), and where 175 students recently returned from international study experiences in 19 countries on six continents over the January Interim (J-Term), the words of St. Augustine, Twain and countless other proponents of “a world-wide classroom” have never rung more true.

Nearly 50 percent of Augustana students travel abroad during their four years on campus and, according to a recent survey of freshmen, nearly 80 percent report a desire to study internationally during their college careers.

Augustana’s efforts to send domestic students out into the world, and the work its done to further globalize campus by offering opportunities for international students, are gaining attention in the U.S. and around the globe. *Washington Monthly* recently ranked the College the No. 6 baccalaureate college in the nation for its efforts to, among other things, advance social mobility.

The numbers, and the accolades, are impressive, indeed. But, perhaps more impressive is the work done by Augustana’s International Programs Office (IPO) to guide the College’s global initiatives, including the recruitment of both international students and domestic students interested in studying abroad; collaborate with global studies agencies, including the U.S. State Department; and plan and facilitate the orientation process for international students who choose to study here.

The Augustana Internationalists

Housed inside Augustana’s new Global Education House, the former Ronald McDonald House at the corner of 28th Street and Norton, the IPO is routinely abuzz with activity. The three-person team, made up of Donn Grinager, director of International Programs; Ben Iverson, associate director; and Cathy Lindamood, International Programs coordinator, works throughout the year on two

major fronts: to assist students who are pursuing study abroad opportunities and to recruit, orientate, mentor and provide resources and support to international students at Augustana.

To say the team is busy is, arguably, the understatement of the year. From the 2009-2010 term to the current academic year, the number of international students and the number of countries represented on campus jumped nearly 50 percent. In addition, 25 faculty members have submitted proposals to lead study abroad courses during the 2011-2012 academic year.

“We work really hard to be good advocates for our students. From an international student standpoint, we encourage students who are here from other countries to connect with us – so we can celebrate their successes and so we can provide help and resources when they need it,” said Grinager. “We also act as ‘shadow academic advisors’ by providing background advising on broader questions and issues. In a way, we act as their Sherpas, helping them to see the entire mountain they have to climb. That helps students understand the big picture – what they need to do in order to reach their goals. In some countries, students don’t interact with faculty members. Here, students are encouraged to ask questions and engage with their professors – we help them understand the dynamics of American student-faculty relationships.”

For American students, Grinager says the idea of studying abroad is becoming more mainstream.

“Prospective students are increasingly looking not just for the best campus community, but also for a place that offers them opportunities to explore and experience the world. I think today’s college-bound students understand that now, more than ever, the world is an interconnected place. Even at 18 years old, students can understand that if they have international experience, language skills, intercultural skills and the independence and confidence to operate within the global playing field, they will be poised for leadership and success in the global economy,” he said.

For Grinager, learning about the world through immersion is a decades-long passion. After college, he joined the Peace Corp and served 18 months in Nepal, a small country in south Asia. After receiving his master’s degree in religion, he taught English in Japan before joining Augustana in 1992.

“Someone once said that cultures are hell-bent to reproduce themselves with little regard for other cultures. Cultures tend to blindly teach that our own histories, traditions and values are the best and that others are somehow inferior. Cultures have to believe in that in order to grow and survive. But, when you spend time in another culture, you see that everything you’ve been taught about your own culture comes into question. You see that other cultures are as deep and meaningful as your own and, suddenly, you see and understand your own culture in a much broader context,” he said.

According to Grinager, the growing number of international students on campus helps expose domestic students to other cultures right here at home.

“I’m very proud of the culture and traditions we have here in the Midwest. I think the history, values and traditions of the Northern Great Plains are great pieces of Americana to share with international students. The nice thing about having international students on campus is that they allow domestic students to look beyond their own horizons, even when they’re at home. The conversations that take place in the Huddle, in classrooms and in residence halls allow American students to compare life’s stories and experiences.”

Several of Augustana’s international students are sponsored through the Global Undergradu-

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Director of
International Programs**

ate Exchange Program (UGRAD), an initiative designed by the U.S. State Department that provides scholarships to outstanding undergraduate students from under-represented sectors of East Asia, Eurasia and Central Asia for study, community service, internships and cultural enrichment.

“[The program] requires students to spend time in their home country applying what they’ve learned here to their home culture. In some ways, the College is meeting its civic duty by helping the U.S. with its diplomatic efforts to make the world a better, friendlier place,” said Iverson. “When we give international students a positive experience here, they’ll take that experience home with them.”

Like Grinager, Iverson, too, has a deep-rooted passion for the power of international study. A 2004 graduate of Augustana, he studied in Spain as a student and worked as an international coordinator at the University of Nordland (previously Bodø College) in Bodø, Norway after graduation. He joined Augustana’s Admission staff in 2005 and moved to the IPO

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INTERNATIONALISTS: Continued

in 2009.

“Traveling abroad puts a human face to the things we read about in textbooks. You can read about the economic problems in Mexico and you can learn about it from a distance. But, if you actually go there and meet a family who’s struggling, you understand the complexity of the issue at a much deeper level. The nightly news showcases the issues in black and white. Studying abroad humanizes the issues we deal with every day,” Iverson said.

“It’s so powerful to visit with students after a study abroad experience or to talk with international students after their time here is finished and to see how far they’ve come personally – how much they’ve matured and grown. They can travel alone. They can live independently. They’re equipped with these powerful experiences that will shape their perspectives. It’s so rewarding.”

Lindamood agrees.

A native of New Jersey and former director of academics at the Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall Secondary School in Waltham, Mass., Lindamood spent a year living in France and led multiple study abroad initiatives before coming to Augustana a year ago.

“Studying abroad helps develop an understanding and appreciation for cultural norms and how they impact the world around us. Our understanding of the world is shaped by the cultural norms in which we were raised. Spending time in other cultures helps students develop independence and a sense of self. If they can navigate the waters of a different culture, they seem to grow exponentially [as people].”

Integrating the International Experience

Grinager says the growth in international programs at Augustana is a direct result of engaged and passionate faculty members.

“My sense is that the most important growth that’s occurred is faculty members’ acceptance of and encouragement for integrating the international experience with students’ broader education. Ultimately, it means tying study abroad experiences to a student’s discipline, as well as to the learning that takes place in the liberal arts. Faculty members have the most experience with students over the course of their four years and they have embraced the College’s global education philosophy.”

Dr. David O’Hara, assistant professor of philosophy, is one example.

For the past five years, O’Hara has taught a course in Greece that focuses on the question, “What do we owe the past.” At its core, the course seeks to explore what we have gained from the past and what obligations from the past we need to maintain. It focuses on the



The January 2011 J-Term class “Tropical Ecology of Guatemala and Belize and Spanish Immersion” took students to Guatemala.

Golden Age of classical Greece and on the Parthenon in particular but, as he says, by being immersed in the country, the knowledge and perspective students take away from the experience is immeasurable.

“Imagine the difference, if you can, between reading Acts 17 (about Paul’s visit to Athens) in a classroom and reading it on the Areopagus, while sitting in the same place Paul sat,” he says. “When students read this in the classroom, I can talk to them about the context, and it is fascinating. But when I read Paul’s words, ‘God does not dwell in houses built by human hands,’ in Athens, my students glance down to their left and see the Temple of Hephaestus. Their eyes slowly pan across the ancient city to the temples of the Acropolis, looming above them to their right.”

“Will they ever forget that?” he asks.

According to O’Hara, studying abroad is proof that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

“I consider Greece to be one of my favorite classrooms because, while we are there, every waking moment is class-time. I may intend to teach my students about the Parthenon, but while we are on the Acropolis, they are also learning about urban planning; international trade; Mediterranean climate and ecology; architecture; the Greek economy and its place in the European Union; the Greek language; and a thousand other things. They are learning more than words – they are learning with all five senses. Some students will notice what birds are indigenous to Greece; others will think about the implications of a common currency for the E.U.; others will remark on the different emissions and vehicular regulations in our respective countries; others will notice that the ambulances are smaller because the streets are narrower, and will reflect on what that implies for emergency medicine in very old cities; and so on. All this is

on top of the lessons I have planned about classical history, literature, philosophy, and politics.”

Dr. Reynold Nesiba, associate professor of economics, agrees with O’Hara’s arguments about the power of studying abroad. Nesiba recently returned from leading a J-Term course in Australia entitled, “Australia in the Global Economy.”

“[In Australia] my students were able to visit with individuals and professors who see the benefits of a broader social welfare state. It is essential for students to take the ideas they learn in the classroom and attempt to apply and/or test them in the world. In economics, it is difficult – perhaps impossible – to understand the causes and consequences of economic globalization without travel. By seeing what other countries do, students can imagine other ways of organizing our own society.”

While studying internationally no doubt increases the number of professional opportunities for students, O’Hara argues that time spent abroad also allows students to know and understand people of all cultures on a much broader level.

“It’s easy to play armchair economist at home, passing judgment on faceless, distant nations for their faults. [Yet,] when you go to live in a Guatemalan home for two weeks, eating their food and brushing your teeth next to their children; or when you walk the streets of an Indian city and talk with a shopkeeper; or when you spend a half hour chatting with two Greek brothers who run a small hotel in Nauplion, those nations will never be faceless again.”

“Of course, [these experiences] will make [our students] more competitive. They’ll be more informed investors, more informed citizens, more informed soldiers. And, even if they don’t travel again ... time abroad will prepare them to know and understand the people they meet right here at home.”