

Knowledge, Skills, and Preparing for the Future: Best Practices to Educate International Studies Majors for Life after College

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Higher education is at a point of transition. Colleges and universities are considering new ways to attract students through innovative programs that stay true to their educational mission and also prepare students for the current job market. Employers consistently talk about the skills they need in graduates they hire, including critical thinking, strong writing, adaptability, and cultural competency. International studies as a major is perfectly poised to provide students with both the academic grounding they need to better understand the world around them and the skills necessary to make them desirable to employers. Communicating the skills and content that coursework in the major offers, however, is often not a straightforward process. Students have both skills and content knowledge, but two key issues need to be addressed: (1) how can faculty better communicate to students the skills and knowledge we want them to gain from our classes, and (2) how do we enable students to understand and articulate these skills to future employers? This article addresses these questions by examining the contributions of international studies with regard to building skills in the classroom, enhancing cultural competency, promoting language training, developing networking capacity, and preparing students for life after college.

Keywords: career advice, skills building, teaching, advising, international studies

Higher education is at a point of transition. Discussions abound in the current political, economic, and social climate about the “bang for the buck” that students receive through a university education. Colleges and universities are considering new ways to attract students through innovative programs that stay true to the educational mission of higher education and that prepare students for the current job market. Employers consistently talk about the skills they want to see in the graduates they hire, including critical thinking, strong writing, adaptability, and intercultural communication (O’Shaughnessy 2013; Segran 2014). In this twenty-first-century world of university education, international studies as a major, program, or department is perfectly poised to address these issues and provide students with both the academic grounding they need to better understand the world around them and the skills necessary to make them desirable candidates in numerous fields.

While educators and employers recognize the benefits of an interdisciplinary education like that which comes from an international studies major, often our students are unclear on what the major entails, why it is a good choice, and why graduating with a degree in international studies will help them achieve their career goals. As educators, it is our job to help our students understand how to link what they are learning in the classroom to the broader skill set that employers are looking for in their new hires. While international studies programs vary by university, there are some similarities across many of them, including an interdisciplinary approach to global issues; language training; encouragement for students to study or work abroad; opportunities for students to develop intercultural communication skills through classroom activity or extracurricular experiences; and an emphasis on critical thinking and writing skills. These, in and of themselves, are not unique to international studies, but each individual skill becomes more marketable when combined into the complete package through international studies. In this paper, therefore, we provide suggestions for those of us who work within these programs and majors on how we can best help our students identify and articulate these skills from the classroom to the real world.

It is common for undergraduates considering a major in international studies (and their parents) to ask about career opportunities upon graduation. Communicating the skills and content that coursework in the major offers, however, is often not a straightforward process, even for graduating seniors and faculty teaching in the major. This is true for both more knowledge-based skills such as cultural competency or intercultural communication and expertise in a region of the world, as well as more practical skills such as critical analysis, grant writing, research design, and data analysis. Students graduating with a degree in international studies have both skills and content knowledge, but often seem unable to translate this knowledge to their resumes, the workplace, or other post-graduation scenarios. This article aims to assist faculty in developing ways to help our students make these connections in the classroom. In doing so, we must consider two key issues: (1) how can faculty better communicate to students the skills and knowledge we want them to gain from our classes, and (2) how do we enable students to understand and articulate these skills to future employers?

This paper considers these questions and highlights some best practices that can help faculty better assist our students as they prepare for the future. Consistently, employers across a wide range of fields have come out in favor of the knowledge and skills students develop through the kind of critical, global, interdisciplinary programs offered through international studies. Even in fields like business and high tech, where people often assume a degree in STEM or business is more highly valued, CEOs support interdisciplinary education like that received in international studies. In fact, one-third of *Fortune* 500 CEOs have liberal arts degrees (Segran 2014). A 2013 survey of over 300 employers by the American Association of Colleges and Universities found the following:

- 93% of all employers surveyed cited a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems with both short- and long-term approaches as the most important abilities they look for in new hires.
- 95% of employers surveyed say it is important that their new hires possess ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills, and the capacity for continued new learning.
- Collaborative problem-solving skills, internships, and community engagement were also strongly preferred by employers surveyed.

Each of these skills is something we can integrate into our international studies programs by offering our students opportunities to develop the breadth of their knowledge and the depth of their marketable skills, as well as to clearly articulate this knowledge and skills to potential employers. To facilitate these efforts, this paper includes five areas of focus. First, we discuss the question of how to define the field of international studies, not only for students, parents, and employers, but also for ourselves, departments, and programs. Understanding what we are can better help us answer the question on every parent's lips – what kinds of jobs can my daughter or son get with a bachelor's degree in international studies?

The second section turns to another definitional issue—defining the skill of cultural competency, including what it is and how, actually, is it a skill? As identified in the AACU survey of employers, cultural competency and intercultural communication are something that employers are actively looking for in new hires. In our increasingly interconnected world, being comfortable working in different cultures and different contexts, as well as having an understanding regarding the different perspective peoples may have, are important parts of the overall package students can offer. Clearly identifying how this skill is obtained and articulating it to employers is something with which we, as faculty, can assist.

Next, the paper discusses the importance of language training for students of international studies. Language programs at many universities are suffering from low enrollment and cutbacks, but there is perhaps no skill more important for our students than second-language acquisition. Not only does fluency in another language, in and of itself, recommend a student to employers in need of bilingual employees, but the process of learning another language, including the study abroad that can often accompany this study, develops a variety of other valuable skills and abilities.

Turning from academic skills to more practical skills, the fourth section provides an overview of the importance of teaching networking as a skill, along with a list of specific suggestions for assisting students with this often daunting exercise. As faculty we all know the importance of networking, regardless of what field a student is interested in. Helping them gain experience in the art of networking is one of the single best skills we can give them before they graduate.

The final section provides an overview of some options for classroom assignments that seek to incorporate the skills highlighted in this article into the classroom. Many of these classroom techniques are widely known and used by many faculty today, including service learning, community-engaged projects, and capstone classes that incorporate professional skills. One step that is often missing in our classrooms, however, is an explicit discussion with students about the skills they are getting and how to convey these to employers.

Overall, the argument of this article is that we as faculty must assist our students with making the connection between academic content and marketable skills. We hope the ideas and suggestions included here help our students define what they are learning in our interdisciplinary international studies programs in a way that allows them to speak to others, future employers included, about what they have learned and how their education has prepared them for the future.

Interdisciplinary majors, such as international studies, offer students a great deal and prepare them for opportunities in today's globalized world. But, this success is only possible if the students themselves understand the underlying, interlocking aspects of what they are studying, how it fits in with their own broader goals, as well as employers' needs, and what skills they develop from this global, interdisciplinary curriculum that make them outstanding candidates for whatever future endeavors they wish to pursue.

Explaining the Benefits of International Studies to Prospective Students and Parents

What is an international studies major? Across the United States there are over 400 universities and colleges that offer international studies major or minor programs to undergraduates (Blanton and Breuning 2016, 139). At some institutions, these majors/minors might be called "global studies," "global affairs," or "international affairs." This variation in name can naturally lead to some confusion in terms of what the international studies major entails. The confusion might also stem in part because, while the number of stand-alone international studies departments continues to grow, many international studies majors are still housed within political science departments (Blanton 2009; Knotts and Schiff 2015). This is further complicated by the fact that within political science, there exists a sub-field called international relations, which is easy to mistake for the interdisciplinary international studies major (Ishiyama and Breuning 2004). Yet, the two are not the same and deserve to be distinguished from each other. Without a clear message distinguishing international studies from similar disciplines and majors, prospective students and their parents may struggle to understand what can be gained from majoring in international studies.

International studies is an interdisciplinary major that "first began to appear at colleges and universities in the 1970s" (Knotts and Schiff 2015, 142). That said, some institutions point to earlier iterations. For instance, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, webpage states that the international studies major "was founded in 1936 as the international relations major to help prepare students to work for the Foreign Service" (2015). Depending on the type of institution, international studies programs may also be "structured" or "appear to follow a 'big umbrella' approach to constructing the major, relying heavily on exposing students to the breadth of the field" (Ishiyama and Breuning 2004, 145). It is common across universities for international studies to be structured as an interdisciplinary major, drawing from political science, economics, history, anthropology, sociology, and geography (Knotts and Schiff 2015). The goal of the international studies major is to provide students with "a truly interdisciplinary approach to studying a whole host of global issues" (Hey 2004, 397). However, this approach can also result in a hodgepodge of courses that do not present any kind of structure or rigor, which can lead to two problems. First, the international studies major sometimes gets stuck within a "second class status," as institutions put greater value on more structured and traditional discipline-specific programs (Blanton 2009, 239). Second, those majoring in international studies may themselves have trouble defining the thematic whole of their educational experience and translating that into a marketable package for employers.

In attempting to achieve structure and rigor with international studies majors, there may be a tendency to veer toward one particular discipline or another. For example, by adding research methods to the curriculum to make international studies more methodologically rigorous, the tendency may be to favor the quantitative analysis that is more common in economics or political science. On the other hand, depending on who is teaching the course, students may come away with an understanding only of ethnographic research favored by anthropologists.

Either way, the view and skills of the student become myopic based on discipline rather than the more interdisciplinary approach that is one of the primary benefits of an international studies major. The whole purpose of an international studies program is to promote the interdisciplinary understanding of various global issues. The assumption is that any student interested in international studies is not favoring one discipline over another, but instead approaching the major with the cross-disciplinary appeal that it presents to those interested in studying the world.

Commonalities in the International Studies Curriculum

There is a great variety across international studies programs in terms of structure. Some are simply a concentration within another department, often political science. Others are stand-alone interdisciplinary programs, some of which draw faculty from other departments and some of which have their own faculty. At the other end of the spectrum are international studies departments that have their own faculty, resources, and courses. While structures vary, there are commonalities across the curricula of international studies majors that provide a basis for us to develop a general set of recommendations in terms of preparing our students for life after college. In 2006, Brown, Pegg, and Shively analyzed 140 international studies programs across the country and discovered that they share a number of characteristics in common in terms of curricular design and major requirements. While these characteristics, in and of themselves, are not unique, the combination and interdisciplinary breadth offered through taking these courses as part of an international studies major creates a particular package of skills our graduates can offer.

The first characteristic common to international studies programs is an introductory course or course sequence that draws from multiple disciplines (anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, sociology, etc.). Or, alternatively, if an introductory course that “integrates multiple sub-disciplines simultaneously” is not available, then students might be “introduced to one or more of the sub-disciplines of international studies separately” (Brown, Pegg, and Shively 2006, 272). This allows students a broader perspective to study global issues. For example, instead of being able to say that they are familiar with the issue of social mobilization from an anthropological perspective—which focuses largely on culture, grassroots activism, and dominant narratives and their response—students are exposed to the study of social mobilization both from the bottom up cultural and grassroots perspectives as well as from the top down political and economic perspectives that take into account system structure, international organizations, economic incentives, and global-local dynamics and cross-border mobilization. This provides a broader perspective for students to discuss and demonstrates familiarity with new ideas and thinking through large problems from multiple perspectives—skills that are attractive to employers.

The second characteristic common across different international studies programs is that they require a regional focus (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East) and/or thematic focus (diplomacy, environment, global development, global social justice, human rights, international communication, political economy, peace and conflict, etc.). This addresses the concern that interdisciplinary international studies programs may be too broad and don’t provide students with enough targeted expertise. At the University of San Francisco, students choose both a thematic and a regional track. Studies largely choose thematic tracks based on their general future career interests. For example, “global politics” and societies is a track for those interested in careers in law and diplomacy, “international economics” is for those interested in global finance, and “cultures,

societies and values” attracts students interested in social movements, grassroots advocacy, and marginalized populations. Similarly, focus in a region usually comes with intense culture and language study, skills repeatedly identified by employers as critical in today’s globalized world.

The third common characteristic across international studies programs is the requirement that students take some form of research methods course. The structures of these courses take a variety of shapes. The courses may be interdisciplinary or discipline specific, depending on resources available. At some universities, this is offered as a stand-alone course, whereas at others, methods training comes through introductory or substantive upper-level courses. Regardless of the form, international studies programs generally seem to have jumped on the “methods bandwagon,” recognizing the importance for our students of understanding the basics of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The benefits of learning these through an international studies program, as opposed to a discipline-specific major, is that, once again, students are likely to be exposed to a wider variety of methods due to the disciplinary and methodological variation among the faculty who teach in IS programs. It also may be more likely that interdisciplinary programs, such as international studies, draw on some of the newer technologies that have become so important, such as Geographic Information Systems, because learning these new systems fits better with the course of study in such programs.

We discuss in detail below the importance of foreign language skills and the positive ways language study is more easily incorporated in international studies programs. Foreign language requirements are the fourth commonality across international studies programs. While students in any major can, of course, study foreign languages, the ease with which this study integrates into international studies curricula through regional foci and the greater likelihood of IS majors studying abroad (the fifth commonality among International Studies programs) only enhances this extremely important skill. Moreover, if foreign language study is built into the requirements of the international studies major, as it is with many programs, this ensures that students take more language beyond general university requirements, provided the resources are available.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, study abroad is another commonality among international studies programs. For some it is required, for some just recommended, and the variety of study abroad programs, ranging from the traditional semester or year abroad, to one-, two-, and three-week intensive immersions, has grown significantly. Study abroad, of course, builds a large number of skills that are beneficial for students, including intercultural or cross-cultural communication skills, independent thinking, critical analysis, adaptability, flexibility, and foreign language. Moreover, with the increases in the number of study abroad programs that now offer internship opportunities, as well as opportunities for community engagement and independent research, students are also able to hone more traditional skills that are attractive to employers.

The final commonality among the 140 international studies programs examined by [Brown, Pegg, and Shively \(2006\)](#) is that there is some kind of capstone course. The structure of these courses also varies from institution to institution, but a common thread among them is that they allow students to reflect on the wide variety of experiences had in the international studies major and synthesize them in a way that creates a cohesive whole. Some capstones, for example, require a research paper drawing on the interdisciplinary themes and methods students have studied. Some are more professionally oriented, specifically working with students to document how the variety of knowledge and skills they have gained as an interdisciplinary studies major are marketable assets to future employers.

As mentioned above, these characteristics are not unique to international studies programs. Many discipline-specific majors have intro courses, research methods, and capstones. What makes international studies programs unique—and

what is ultimately of benefit to our students—is the approach taken to these courses in international studies, and the additional benefits of increased expertise in language and experience in the world through study abroad that make the entire package of international studies valuable. All of the above requirements enhance a student’s knowledge in international studies while simultaneously developing skills in research, writing, speaking, critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, and intercultural competency (Breuning and Ishiyama 2007). The question then is, how does this combination of knowledge and skills translate into a job or career? After all, this is what prospective students and their parents want to know before declaring a major.

Translating the Curriculum into Jobs

International studies programs commonly respond to the question of “what kind of job can I get?” the way that Colorado State University does. On the CSU webpage it states that

Graduates in international studies apply their education in a wide variety of careers, including those in international business, non-profit organizations, public policy, artistic production, mass media, engineering, law, city planning, environmental sustainability and clean energy, information systems, journalism, publishing, education, sales and marketing, management and administration, government, communications, museums, entertainment, foreign service, and many others areas in need of intelligent, well-rounded and broadly world-educated people. (2015)

Anyone reading this statement on Colorado State’s international studies webpage may feel encouraged by the number and variety of career possibilities. However, marketing the international studies major as a catchall for everything may not be enough to convince prospective students and their parents.

Breuning and Ishiyama’s (2007) study found that among primarily undergraduate institutions in the Midwest of the United States, most “did not provide any explicit statement regarding the justification for the existence of the major” (2007, 125). Furthermore, “the benefits of knowledge, career preparation, foreign language, or study abroad” were advertised more than skills building (2007, 128). While the promotion of foreign language and study abroad may highlight the benefits of declaring the international studies major, prospective students and their parents want to know *specifically* what one can do with this degree after graduation (Breuning and Ishiyama 2007, 129). A survey of international studies webpages, where students’ “initial impression are formed,” may demonstrate “an inaccurate impression about the content and structure of that program” (2007, 129). This is because a webpage description of the curriculum may not always be sufficient to effectively communicate the rationale behind the requirements for the international studies major and how this curriculum allows students to develop the skills necessary to get a job. Newcomers to the international studies major may require a more comprehensive and thorough explanation similar to what we provide in this article.

A cursory view of more than several dozen international studies webpages at institutions across the United States suggests some of the following job/career prospects for graduates:

- Communications/journalism (foreign news agencies, travel industry/magazines)
- Educational institutions (foreign language instruction, study abroad programs)
- Foreign policy bureaucracy (Central Intelligence Agency, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Drug Enforcement Agency,

Environmental Protection Agency, US Agency for International Development, US Foreign Service, United Nations)

- Global health (World Health Organization, Doctors Without Borders)
- International business (foreign corporations, foreign financial institutions, international consulting firms, international marketing and trade firms)
- Non-profit/service corps (AmeriCorps, Amnesty International, Care International, Direct Relief International, Greenpeace, Oxfam International, Peace Corps)
- Graduate or professional school (area studies, business, global health, international studies, law, public administration, public policy)

Of course, one may wonder how and why an undergraduate choosing to major in international studies, as opposed to studying in a more traditional discipline, is going to be better prepared and advantaged in securing employment in the above list of jobs/careers. Perhaps the greatest benefit to an interdisciplinary major like international studies is that it provides the student with multiple job/career options. A student who is able to make connections across several disciplines is not pigeonholed into a single career path. An economics major might find herself on a path toward a career in business, finance, or accounting, for example. A political science major may find himself on the path to careers in law, politics, or journalism, whereas an international studies major may have the option to choose from any one of those career paths and more. Granted, a motivated and bright student may be able to transfer skills acquired in one discipline to fit the needs of a career based on another. An economics major may also study language. An anthropology major may take a course on business or finance. Yet the decision to enroll in elective courses outside one's major may be up to the individual student and not a programmatic requirement toward preparation for a variety of career paths. A student with a solid foundation in several disciplines, who is also well versed in foreign language(s) and intercultural communication, along with the ability to apply all the knowledge and skills acquired in those courses to any region or problem in the world, is going to be a desirable candidate for employment. The international studies curriculum designed around the six characteristics mentioned above delivers in that respect.

The key here is that we need to do a better job of not just emphasizing the wide variety of options an international studies major might have due to the breadth of the major, but also teach our students how to identify and explain the specific skills that the major gives them that makes them eligible for these jobs. We need to help our students see how taking an introductory course that examines global issues from an interdisciplinary perspective is a better indicator of creative thinking, flexibility, and adaptability than examining an issue through a single lens. We need to help our students articulate their cultural competency by showing them how to highlight specific examples from their courses, internships, or study abroad experiences that demonstrate the ability to work in a variety of contexts with a variety of peoples and accomplish goals. We need to help our students understand that they have a multimethod toolkit—including conducting surveys, depicting simple descriptive statistical data, running GIS models, and effectively using social media—that makes an attractive package to employers who need employees that can multitask on a wide range of projects.

We can achieve this through a variety of ways. First, we can reframe our websites to provide specific examples of the careers international studies majors have, and *how* the major equips students for those careers, rather than just provide a laundry list of possibilities. For example, rather than simply listing “Non-profit/service corps (AmeriCorps, Amnesty International, Care International, Direct Relief

International, Greenpeace, Oxfam International, Peace Corps),” we can provide examples of linking the major to the job as follows:

Many international studies majors develop careers in the non-profit sector focused on community engagement and advocacy. IS majors develop skills in adaptability, cultural competency, critical thinking, multi-methods including the effective use of social media, and a variety of writing skills that make them particularly attractive to non-profits. IS alumni are currently working with organizations such as Amnesty International and the Peace Corps.

While longer, the additional detail of this paragraph is clearer for prospective students, as well as employers, in terms of connecting the major to the individual position.

We can also refine our program learning outcomes to target specific skills acquisition. We can insert in syllabi specific provisions connecting the dots between what students study and the skills they are gaining. We can explain to students when we give them new assignments why we are giving them the assignments we are giving them, and what it is they should be gaining from the assignment. We can ask our students through essays or reflections to consider for themselves how what they are doing in the classroom equates to real-world skills employers might be looking for. And, perhaps most helpfully, we can create programming for our international studies students specifically geared around not only skills-building, but skills-articulating. We can help our students develop that 30-second “elevator pitch” that not only says what they know, but what they know how to do. All of these efforts will help our students see not only the benefits of an international studies major but how to make others see those benefits as well.

One thing is clear, though: the non-traditional and interdisciplinary international studies major is here to stay. Moving forward, chairs and program directors will be tasked with designing, offering, and assessing the learning outcomes of a rigorous interdisciplinary curriculum. But more importantly, all those involved in international studies (directors/chairs, faculty, staff advisers, students, and alumni) need to effectively communicate and convince prospective students, as well as their parents, that majoring in international studies develops knowledge and skills that will lead to gainful employment and a fulfilling career.

Cultural Competency

One of the skills frequently mentioned by international studies programs—whether directly or indirectly—is “cultural competency” (sometimes also referred to as intercultural communication). Like “international studies” itself, however, cultural competency is one of those terms whose meaning is open to significant interpretation, and how you translate this into a marketable skill remains a key question. This is, however, an important question to answer, as attaining cultural competency *is* one of the key benefits of an international studies education. Today, where almost no field of employment is untouched by the globalized world, understanding and possessing the skill of cultural competency—and being able to clearly articulate this skill—is essential. As stated by Schmitz: “Learning diverse cultural heritage is rewarding, inspiring and empowering. Without cultural intelligence, teamwork in the increasingly global and diverse workplace is impossible . . . From an organizational standpoint, exploiting cultural diversity is a key to unlimited innovation and growth” (2007, 54).

While there remain many traditional skills that are essential for students to master in order to succeed after graduation, such as effective writing and analytical thinking, there are also new capabilities that are increasingly in demand by employers in different fields. Cultural competency is one of those skills. As noted in the quote above, as well as the American Association of Colleges and Universities

survey in which 95 percent of employers surveyed say it is important that their new hires possess intercultural skills, this skill is perceived as valuable not only for promoting teamwork, but also for innovation and interacting on a global level (AACU 2013). Employers in every sector face realities of globalization that bring people from different cultures together as coworkers and clients. In global business, employees need to be able to develop and deploy staff around the world (Caligiuri and Tarique 2012). Greater cultural competence in the health professions allows for better patient/client care. Those in education are required not only to teach about diversity, but to successfully teach to a diverse student body. Culturally competent marketing employees are able to communicate effectively to different audiences. As these few examples make clear, cultural competence makes graduates more employable on the job market in many fields.

Definitions

Different disciplines approach the concept of cultural competency from different points of view, but there are commonalities in the meaning and skills they identify. Schmitz, discussing the field of communications, defines cultural competency as “the propensity to reconcile dilemmas based on understanding, respect and empathy for people of different national, cultural, social, religious and ethnic origins and the acceptance of one’s own cultural involvement” (2007, 53). This approach focuses on how one interacts with others along with an awareness of one’s own culture. In the medical field, Jenks’s definition is “a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations” (2011, 210). This understanding is focused on the work environment and promoting efficiencies and effectiveness. Bennett, from psychology, offers a skills-based definition that also has a normative implication of “appropriateness.” Cultural competency is “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (Bennett 2011, 3). Bennett associates cognitive skills with cultural awareness, and general and specific cultural knowledge. Effective skills are exhibited in emotional growth and self-reflection, and include curiosity, cognitive flexibility, and open-mindedness. Behavioral skills include relationship building, listening and problem solving, experiencing empathy, and information gathering.

More generally, Caligiuri and Tarique (2012, 613) list the following as key components of cultural competency that are applied to global business leaders who travel and work overseas: 1) reduced ethnocentrism, or not evaluating other’s behavior using one’s own standards, making an effort to modify one’s own behavior to suit host cultural values; 2) cultural adaptation/flexibility, or the capacity to substitute activities enjoyed in one’s home country with distinct activities in the host country; and 3) tolerance of ambiguity, or the ability to manage ambiguous, new, different, and unpredictable situations.

International studies as a discipline is well suited to cultivating many of these skills related to cultural competency. As with the term “international studies” itself, different universities, departments, and programs may define “cultural competency” slightly differently. Regardless of the differences at the margins, or across different fields and programs, there are core elements to the skill of cultural competency that should be emphasized to students. These include open-mindedness, flexibility, emotional and behavioral stability, and empathy, self-awareness, tolerance, and excellent communication skills—whether written or oral. Moreover, whichever definition an international studies major decides to adopt, clarification of the meaning of cultural competency is crucial to help our

students break this down into a marketable set of skills that will be valuable to employers across any number of fields.

Cultivating Cultural Competency

While the discipline of international studies has the potential to cultivate cultural competency, some faculty are more actively invested in this endeavor than other faculty. It is important to appreciate the complexity of the concept of cultural competence and recognize that no single class is likely to develop this full range of skills. Instructors must think about which aspects fit well with their course content and their beliefs about what is most important to cultivate in students. Cognitive skills are often the most comfortable, and passing on new knowledge about different cultures is central to what educators do. Instructors need to balance, however, between providing “knowledge” through teaching about different attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviors, and the simplification of culture into a stereotype (Jenks 2011). Effective skills are often developed through self-reflective exercises, emphasizing that knowing one’s own cultural bias is important for knowing others. Behavioral skills are most often learned through practice and life experience, so courses that are service-learning-based can cultivate these types of behavioral cultural competencies. Caligiuri and Tarique note that contact (with other cultures) or experiential development experiences are effective in bringing about cognitive and behavioral changes to develop dynamic cross-cultural competencies (2012, 619).

Training in cultural competence takes many different forms, including lectures, workshops, group discussion sessions and activities, language training, online resources, study abroad, internships, and immersion programs. Some institutions include both work-related and non-work-related activities (i.e., social events, etc.) in their training programs. Some instructional practices that can help cultivate cultural competence include facilitating learning before, during, and after intercultural experiences; providing deep intercultural experiences (such a language immersion); and cultivating curiosity and cognitive flexibility. Students should be encouraged to suspend their assumptions and value judgments, practice cultural humility, enhance their perception skills, and ask questions (Bennett 2011). There is no magic formula or approach, but curricula that keep these principles in mind can be effective in cultivating cultural competence and the value of this skill for international studies majors.

Measurement

As instructors think about designing their classes to incorporate elements of cultural competency, it is important to consider how to assess whether students have developed these skills or abilities. There are at least ten different inventories available that purport to assess levels of cultural competence (Matsumoto and Hwang 2013). These inventories focus on a variety of goals for intervention, allowing instructors to design effective training programs and assess their efficacy. Among the three methods that Matsumoto and Hwang’s research have found to be most effective in assuring cultural competency (the Cultural Intelligence Scale, the Multicultural Personality Inventory, and the Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale), they include measures of open-mindedness, flexibility, emotional and behavioral stability, and empathy (2013, 868). These are all skills we can help our students recognize. One of the easiest ways to do this is to have students think of specific examples when they engaged these characteristics in their own experience. For international studies majors, this can be relatively easy to do, particularly if they have studied abroad. Once they have identified examples, students

can be taught to work through the scenarios, pulling out specific “sub-skills” that tie to cultural competency.

For example, in a recent talk by an environmental activist on working in the non-profit world at the University of San Francisco, the speaker described arranging a lunch for a visiting delegation from Nigeria. She was given no parameters regarding what to order, but having been a student in an African Studies regional minor, she knew about the large Islamic population in Nigeria and, therefore, researched dietary restrictions that might be present for the visitors. She arranged a lunch with a variety of foods, taking potential restrictions into account, without singling out any of the visitors or embarrassing her employer. While the story itself makes for a good anecdote in an interview, for a resume, cover letter, or elevator “pitch,” the essence of this story can be boiled down to the student demonstrating flexibility, creative thinking, and empathy, in addition to the ability to work independently and solve problems. Our students have these stories and these skills; we just need to help draw them out.

Language Training for International Studies Majors

Perhaps other than study abroad, language learning is one of the characteristics most commonly associated with international studies programs. The two are natural partners, and as described above, it has been found that study of a foreign language is one of the commonalities found across international studies programs, regardless of their structure (Brown, Pegg, and Shively 2006). Student interest as well as institutional support for foreign language study, however, seems to be declining. We argue that one of the best things we can do for our students is to encourage and promote language study as a key skill that will help students develop the career they want after college.

The Paradox of Declining Language Enrollments

Language enrollments have declined 6.7 percent since 2009 at colleges and universities nationwide in the United States (MLA 2015). Although American Sign Language, Chinese, Korean, and Portuguese have shown increases, these increases have come at the expense of other languages because overall enrollments are dropping. What is going on? It is tempting to attribute this to trends such as the great STEM migration, weakened employment prospects, and concerns about rising tuition and indebtedness, all contributing to an increasingly vocationalist orientation among students. However, as intuitively appealing as these explanations might be, it does not add up. Employers keep saying they *want* people “with the ability to speak and communicate in more than one language” (AOL Jobs 2009). The more closely we examine this tension, the more perplexing the decline in language enrollments becomes. Students are looking primarily for skills that will make them more employable, and employers are looking for employees with language skills, so why are language enrollments declining?

While as professionals committed to international studies we instinctively deplore what we perceive as the shortsightedness of students who do not seem to recognize the value of language skills, we fail to recognize something that students see all too clearly. Most language study does *not* lead to a proficiency level that impresses employers. Many employers cite a need for workers who are bilingual (Padilla 2002), not for workers who have studied another language for a year or two. Most students readily cite anecdotes about friends who studied “two years of Spanish but can’t even order lunch,” revealing an additional reason to avoid language study. Students often want to study a language so they can communicate and function in everyday situations (Alalou 2001). However, language curricula frequently de-emphasize everyday situations and make language classes harder

than they need to be because “language courses have not traditionally been seen as a source of significant intellectual content” (Alalou 2001, 453). In order to compensate for the perception that language classes are “just” skills, curricula often focus on decontextualized grammar or literary language, even while students are still struggling with expressing basic ideas. This, coupled with the perception that students are unlikely to achieve significant oral proficiency anyway, make avoiding language study a pragmatically reasonable choice.

Recent examples from the experience of the authors here reflect this. For example, in a recent discussion, Kathie Carpenter was struck by a student’s own analysis of his decision to major in French. The student confessed that it had been difficult to overcome “the stigma.” His word choice is illuminating. Most of us have no idea what language study *means* to undergraduates, and the social and symbolic value of a language can change rapidly. For example, US-raised teenagers might no longer view French as a language of sophistication and diplomacy, but instead see it as a “sissy” language, and many male students make their language study choices accordingly (Bernstein 2003). Similarly, Japanese no longer signifies technical expertise; for today’s students, it is associated with pursuits such as manga and cosplay, and some avoid it for this reason.

Our continued promotion of language study to enhance job prospects reveals an ambivalence that undermines the credibility of our messaging. For those of us who have committed our professional lives to global and intercultural education, language study is important because it embodies values that we cherish, a subtext that doesn’t always align well with the focus on jobs that we feel increasingly pressured to promote because we think it is what students want. Rather than continuing to repeat our tired refrain that students should study a language because it will “make them competitive in the global workplace,” we need to take a step back and think about ways to address this issue in a more coherent way.

In the discussion that follows, three examples are provided of institutions that responded to concerns about language enrollments with campus-wide conversations that led to a revisioning of language study that is very relevant for those pursuing international studies. The examples illustrate both the range of institutional structures within which language study is offered, as well as a range of solutions to the common challenge of declining enrollments. Together they can provide international studies educators with a toolkit of ideas and strategies to draw upon, depending on their own institutional cultures, resources, and goals.

Stanford University’s Language Center

A 1995 curriculum review recommended an enhanced language requirement as part of an overall internationalization of undergraduate education at Stanford (Bernhardt 2006). However, many faculty resisted the proposed language requirement because language study as it was then configured was not providing the level of proficiency the review had called for. The solution was a radical restructuring of language instruction. An umbrella Language Center was created to assume responsibility for all language instruction, and for ensuring that the required one year really would result in demonstrable proficiency skills. Centralization of instruction enabled pedagogical approaches, proficiency outcomes, and assessment to be consistent across all languages.

The restructuring is generally considered to be highly successful, as measured by the fact that enrollment beyond the required first year increased by 20 percent, and by the fact that ambitious proficiency goals were attained, in turn encouraging administration to maintain a high level of support for the program. Morale and remuneration for language instructors have risen, and the Language Center continues to receive sufficient resources to offer a large number of less commonly

taught languages, and to provide professional development opportunities to entice teachers, formerly used to considerable autonomy, to accept a higher degree of centralization.

Indiana State: "Not Your Parents' Language Requirement"

In 1999, Indiana State University also implemented a new one-year language requirement that also was opposed by faculty who argued that it posed an unfair obstacle to graduation for low-income students with "limited experience among diverse populations" (Calvin and Rider 2004, 12). Although Indiana State's language instruction is centralized within a single department, the curricular response was quite different from Stanford's. Language classes are recognized as opportunities to teach cultural critical thinking, and so language study was integrated into the university's general education multicultural requirement.

In contrast to the "no English" rule that characterizes most beginning language classes, students research cultural topics, keep learning journals, and make oral presentations in English. Instruction was also standardized across different languages, with common proficiency goals and a common exam format. While intentional use of English did negatively impact students' rate of acquisition, overall the program has been judged a success. Student response has been very favorable, faculty resistance to the new language requirement was overcome, and the restructuring has enabled Indiana State to maintain viable language programs in 11 languages, including ones that are losing enrollments nationwide, such as Greek, Arabic, and Japanese.

University of Oregon: "The Language Council"

Despite the fact that the University of Oregon has a long-standing two-year BA language requirement, language enrollments dropped 20 percent from 2013 to 2014, demonstrating that requiring language study does not automatically confer immunity from declining enrollment. Language instruction is highly decentralized at Oregon, it is offered across eight separate programs, and there is no alignment of curricula across these units, so pedagogical approaches and outcomes vary widely. Furthermore, funding is tied to student enrollment trends, introducing competition and making a unified solution across all languages unrealistic. Instead, the Oregon response has been to seek cohesion at a higher administrative level, by incorporating language programs as well as Admissions and Advising into a university-wide Language Council convened in 2015 by the Office of International Affairs (OIA). OIA is seen as invested in language study but not involved in the competition for student enrollment, giving it credibility that individual language departments might not have.

Among valuable ideas that emerged, the discussions revealed the mismatch between faculty assumptions about why students might not study a language, and why students themselves choose not to study a language. For example, while most 100-level classes fulfill general education requirements, 100-level language classes do not, despite the fact that they are arguably more rigorous in at least one sense because they are five credits, while most introductory classes are just four. Although the higher number of contact hours reflects the assumption that language study requires daily practice, student representatives to the Language Council pointed out that it also makes language classes more expensive, time consuming, and difficult to schedule around, in addition to having a disproportionate impact on students' GPAs.

Most faculty had never seriously considered these factors, but departments are now reassessing the credit hours associated with different levels of language study,

as well as the place of language courses within the general education requirements. The value of a campus-wide conversation as a prelude to implementing solutions has also highlighted the extent to which the highly decentralized campus community has been unaware of innovations taking shape within individual units. For example, an initiative within the Spanish program to teach content courses in Spanish is now being considered as a model by several social science departments, who were not previously aware of the languages-across-the-curriculum approach to developing professional-level proficiency.

Making Language Study Matter

Obviously, there is no single solution to the problem of declining language enrollment, but these three approaches all illustrate the importance of a campus-wide conversation to craft a shared, innovative vision of language instruction within the academy. International studies faculty are ideally positioned to broker such conversations, by drawing upon our expertise in intercultural communication and our interdisciplinary perspective, which is already attuned to the concerns of a wide range of academic disciplines. In a time of declining enrollment, language programs need us as much as we need them, and proactively initiating this conversation also provides an opportunity to highlight our own priorities.

While each of the models described above were responses to the particular institutional context in which they were developed, each can also be mined for specific ideas and strategies that other institutions can draw upon and modify according to their own local conditions. For example, all programs must face the fact that one or two years of language study generally do not result in the fluency needed for employment purposes, but responses can vary from raising proficiency outcomes for one year of study, as Stanford did, to highlighting the many other benefits of language study, as Indiana State did. Alternatively, focusing on the removal of barriers to enrollment in first-year classes, as Oregon did, can lead more students to continue language study at higher levels, allowing them to develop the professional-level proficiency skills that employers are seeking, while bolstering language programs against the nationwide decline in enrollment.

In the meantime, while we engage in these ongoing campus-wide discussions, as well as face the current economic reality in which increases in institutional support for language programs are not necessarily likely, international studies programs can take it upon themselves to work with their own students to stress the importance of language acquisition. We can encourage our students to continue to study language beyond the regular university requirement, whether through study abroad or through college classes. We can also encourage the development of, and participation in, activities and events that promote language outside the classroom. In many places there are numerous university and cultural events that celebrate language and culture that students can be encouraged to attend, or even with which they can volunteer. Students looking for internships and volunteer opportunities can be encouraged to work with non-English-speaking populations. In universities where there is flexibility in course development and faculty with language expertise willing to take on the task, substantive courses taught in a foreign language can be extremely beneficial. For example, a seminar on the current Syrian conflict and refugee crisis could be offered in Arabic. A seminar on peace and conflict resolution or transitional justice in the Americas could be offered in Spanish. While this obviously limits enrollment (which may or may not be feasible, depending on the institution), where this is possible, these types of courses can be an excellent way to help students get excited about language outside the context of a traditional language class.

The lack of foreign language skills among Americans has long been the subject of puzzlement, ridicule, and sadness both at home and abroad. As international studies faculty, one of the best things we can do for our students is to encourage them to hone their language skills beyond basic university requirements. As with all the other skills described in this article, this may require us to think outside the box on how we can do this, particularly in this era of limited resources and limited time. But there are things we can do, and in the end, it will make our students stand out when they graduate.

Networking for Post-Graduation Success: It Doesn't Have to Make Students Feel "Dirty"

Another skill that international studies programs would be wise to highlight and help our students understand is networking. Finding ways to convey to students the importance of this skill, however, can be difficult, as networking is often seen as a daunting and unfavorable task. It is also something that does not necessarily come up in the context of the classroom. A recent study found that networking makes people feel physically dirty—as in, they want to wash or sanitize their hands after hobnobbing (Casciaro, Gino, and Kouchaki 2014). This is probably how many of our undergraduates approach professional networking situations; such circumstances may be experienced as disingenuous and contrived to those that value authenticity. One of the suggestions the study makes is that networking should be approached as a two-way street: what the student, or job candidate, can bring to the table in addition to what they may gain from the interaction.

With the advent of social media and other opportunities for informal interaction, networking has truly become an art. Undergraduates, and especially those coming straight from high school, often fail to recognize the importance of their many interactions for ensuring their success beyond the college campus. All too frequently, students request reference letters from faculty with whom they have only interacted in the classroom and fail to develop professional relationships when they have the opportunity. With that in mind, the following points might be useful for us to share with our students in the classroom:

- Target an area of interest. Employers want to hire someone who is passionate about their career, not someone who is willing to take any job. Having one or two areas of interest creates important parameters, allowing others to help students in the process as well as offering greater focus. Becoming involved in an area will enable a student to create a resume that reflects their passion.
- Identify jobs and careers. What are the various positions that are available in a given area of interest? What jobs is a student willing to do to work in their area of interest? The list can always shift or broaden if need be, but defining a realistic job goal is an important step in networking for career success.
- Search everywhere. Students should make every effort to attend any event, presentation, or meeting related to their field of interest. On-campus student organizations and undergraduate conferences may also have good information about events. Being present enables a personal connection to be established beyond what an emailed resume can offer. Every encounter should be approached with professionalism and preparedness—students must do their research before showing up, having goals for each event (for example, to meet someone who may know of a job, offer a job, or serve as a reference).
- Speak with everyone. Taking a broad approach to networking—including friends, classmates, professors, and alumni—enables a student to spread

the word about what they are looking for in a job search. Developing a one-minute “elevator speech” that summarizes skills, interests, and something memorable about them will enable a student to communicate quickly with potential contacts. Important contacts may come from connections that are not traditionally professional. While these individuals might not employ recent graduates directly, they may know someone that does or have useful tips for searching. This is why students should err on the side of caution in terms of how they present themselves on social media.

- **Take and keep notes.** Students should attend every meeting prepared to learn something and prepared to keep track of that information. Names, associations, and webpages are easy to forget, and keeping notes insures against this. Not only does coming to a meeting prepared signal an organized job candidate, it increases the student’s ability to use information in a useful way.
- **Follow up.** Students should formalize any connections with follow-up emails or (as appropriate) written thank-you notes. Attaching a resume and writing sample will enable contacts to pass around a student’s information to others with relative ease. This is a great time for students to remind new contacts of their skills and qualifications, as well as solidifying the relationship. Students should nurture each relationship for the long term.

Networking is not easy for most people, but it is an absolutely essential skill. We are always telling our students that “who you know” can be half the battle in finding a job, particularly in fields with smaller communities where everyone comes to know each other. However, because it is a daunting task, many students graduate from college without really knowing what networking is and how to do it. Just as everything else discussed in this article, networking is a skill that we can help teach our students so they succeed upon graduation. Creating opportunities for them to network, both in a “mock” environment and with real people who work in the fields our students are interested in, can be tremendously helpful for their confidence and their ability to articulate all the other skills they possess. After all, what good is our students being able to articulate the skills they have gained as international studies majors if they are too shy to speak with anyone?

How Do We Help Our Students Build Skills in the Classroom?

Each of the above suggestions is presented to assist faculty in better identifying and elucidating concepts and skills that are a key part of international studies so our students are able to understand and convey the special sets of skills they develop. In addition to the suggestions above, one of the most direct ways we can help students connect the academic material with the skills that will benefit them in the future is to directly incorporate activities and projects in the classroom that create this nexus. There are many ways for this to occur, and what follows are just a few examples of projects that we have successfully incorporated into our classes.

The Grant Application and the Advocacy Plan

Many students who major in international studies have dreams of a global career that makes a positive impact on the world. For many of them, working with non-profits of one kind or another is the goal after graduation. One way to provide them with a good set of skills that makes them marketable to employers, while at the same time facilitating the understanding of the relationship between academic knowledge and concrete skills, is to integrate “real world” projects into classes that require students to think about this relationship.

One example of such a project is to have students choose a non-profit organization in their area of interest—whether it be human rights, the environment, education, development, or any other field—and have them write an advocacy plan for the organization of their choice. This can be done as an abstract project or in conjunction with service learning or community-engaged classes where the students are working with organizations on actual areas of need. It is also possible to develop internship opportunities that specifically give students the opportunity to draft an advocacy plan as part of the internship. For example, at the University of San Francisco, through a year-long global service learning seminar, students go to either India or Bolivia and do an internship with the Foundation for Sustainable Development. For most of them, their first project in-country is to write a proposal or plan for the project they wish to complete while there.

In a related project, students could be charged with writing a grant application for an organization or a project that focuses on their area of academic interest. Having students following the guidelines for an actual grant exposes them to numerous “real world” skills that are tangible for future employers. Learning to identify problems and create a plan of action for funding that is narrow enough to be achievable, coming up with a budget, and outlining step-by-step tasks to completion teaches students how to take the theories, methods, and ideas they discuss in class and turn them into concrete projects.

Both advocacy plans and grant applications require students to utilize a number of skills, including cultural competency and language skills, research skills, methods skills, writing—in particular efficient, concise, evidence-based writing—and written and oral presentation skills. These kinds of assignments also provide students with a concrete project that can be uploaded to an ePortfolio or presented to a potential employer as a sample of the kinds of skills the student has and the work they are able to do. Unlike a traditional research paper, this kind of research and writing project allows students to more clearly and concretely connect the skills developed out of international studies majors and demonstrate mastery in a way valuable to both the academic experience and future career prospects. Further, when these skills are gained through the classroom setting, there is time for reflection on the assignments—whether they come purely through coursework or through an internship or service learning—and this reflection can further solidify for the students how the academic context they are learning and the skills they are gaining are part of the same package.

Similarly, following the suggestions made in the language acquisition and networking sections above, these types of course projects can assist students with these skills. For example, students could be charged with creating an advocacy plan or writing a grant for a country in which their language of study is spoken. This could involve doing research for grants available in that country, which are likely written in the foreign language, and requiring that certain parts of the proposal, such as the executive summary or the budget, are written in both English and the foreign language. Regarding networking, part of the assignment could be for students to set up an informational interview with an advocacy group in their interest area and go in and talk to them about the realities of creating an advocacy plan or writing a grant application. This allows students to not only develop their networks, but also gain valuable insight into what kinds of careers they might be interested in. Samples of advocacy plan and grant writing assignments are included in Online Appendices I and II.

Service Learning and Community Engagement

Service learning or community-engaged courses are becoming more and more common as components of a university education. These types of courses lend

themselves very well to the development of marketable skills that students can translate to their resumes and highlight for potential employers after graduation. Even in these types of courses, however, the connection between the academic component and the skills students are developing isn't always clearly spelled out and can make it difficult for students to "connect the dots" when they try to articulate their experience.

One way we as professors can assist students with this is to create reflections as part of the service learning that specifically task students with thinking about how to make this connection. As reflection is a key component of rigorous service learning work, this provides an excellent opportunity for students to reflect on how they can tie their academic knowledge together with their skills and present this as a cohesive whole to employers. Doing this kind of reflection in the context of a service learning or community-engaged course can be particularly effective because students are able to get immediate feedback not only from professors, but from the community partners with which they are working. As much as we, as faculty, might hate to admit it, often messages such as this sink in more readily with our students if they come from someone outside the university.

This form of reflection can be especially helpful with those harder-to-capture skills such as cultural competency, flexibility, or open-mindedness. As discussed above, there is not a uniform definition of cultural competency that is consistent across disciplines, or even within disciplines. What is important about this skill is not a set definition, but rather that students recognize the underlying sensitivity of cultural differences and develop the tools to work within different cultural contexts. Having students reflect on what this means to them and how they would handle situations in which cultural differences come to the fore can be an extremely useful exercise.

For example, in the service learning course mentioned above, one significant part of the seminar is preparing students for their summer internships in India and Bolivia, so every week they write a reflection essay at the beginning of class. One of the themes of these essays is this issue of cultural competency. At the beginning of the semester, students had a great deal of anxiety around this issue, expressing concern that they would, in some way, commit a blunder during their internships by offending the communities in which they were working. By thinking through these issues in their reflection essays and through class discussion afterward, students have become more comfortable with their role in the community organizations with which they will work and have recognized the skills they already possess to help them in a variety of different situations.

In turn, when the students return from their summer abroad, we again have a series of reflections to consider how their actual experiences reflected their expectations. Doing this also gives them the opportunity to really see how they have grown in terms of intercultural communication, adaptability, language competence, critical thinking, and so forth, and tie these skills not only to their experiences, but also to course content. While this type of course lends itself very well to this kind of exercise, it does not have to be a global internship course to achieve this objective. Any course could lend itself to a service learning or community-engaged project that gets students out of the classroom and thinking about real-world application. For example, in a class on global health, a survey project can teach students how to communicate on sensitive topics, conduct interviews, and collate data. In a public policy class, students could attend city council meetings and do content analysis of the meeting minutes to assess the time allotted to different issues and speakers. This would teach data skills as well as familiarize the students with the policy process and effective oral communication strategies.

Professionalization Seminars and Workshops

One of the most direct ways to work with students and help them understand how to articulate the set of skills they develop by virtue of being an international studies major is to have special classes that focus on professionalization. In many departments, this is accomplished through a capstone or senior seminar course. Such a course asks students to reflect and synthesize the diverse array of academic study students have completed over the course of their major, with specific units focused on translating this academic knowledge into marketable skills—including how to write a resume, conduct mock interviews, and conduct actual interviews with practitioners.

An alternative to offering a special class is to present a series of workshops on issues related to skills and professionalization that can assist students in making these connections. The international studies department at the University of San Francisco offers a variety of these kinds of workshops designed to help students identify the connections between their academic work and their future professional careers. These include a session for first-year students on “Developing Your Expertise,” which provides guidance on how best to utilize the major and their college experience to develop an extensive set of skills as well as academic knowledge. We also offer workshops on using LinkedIn for networking, resume building, dealing with vicarious traumatization in the human rights and humanitarian fields (a skill in and of itself), reflection on study abroad experiences, and a variety of career presentations with professionals from the community.

While the university as a whole, and more specifically the career office, also offers some of these types of presentations, we feel it is important to offer them through our department to target those specific skills that international studies majors are likely to develop due to the interdisciplinary and global scope of the major. We also have both pre- and post-study abroad workshops that prepare students for going and offer the opportunity for reflection upon return, in the vein described above, to get them immediately thinking about how their experiences translate into skills.

Conclusion

Times are tough for both our institutions and our students. The value of a college education has come under increased scrutiny by government officials, accrediting organizations, university administrators, and students and their parents. As faculty, it can often be difficult to figure out how we can best promote our departments, programs, and majors and increase understanding about the value of an international studies education. This article focuses on a small component of this and hopes to provide faculty with some guidance as to how to promote the best international studies has to offer and assist our students, their parents, and employers with seeing the value of such an education for future careers.

There are many ways to combine content with a more explicit articulation of how this content translates to marketable skills. While there is no single definition of international studies—and different departments and programs have different emphases and curricula—there are characteristics that all international studies majors seem to possess, including an interdisciplinary curriculum, an emphasis on language training and study abroad, methodological training, cultural competency, and an international emphasis which works well for any employer in today’s globalized economy.

While in no way seeking to diminish the value of a college education for its own sake, we recognize that the world of higher education has changed and we believe that international studies as an interdisciplinary field and a major for our students is well poised to be at the cutting edge of this new world. One of our jobs as

faculty in international studies is to help students make the connections between the substantive knowledge they are gaining through our programs and the sets of skills that develop from this knowledge. Sometimes this comes naturally through course content, as in the case of language skills, cultural competency, and research and writing skills. Sometimes this requires extra programming on our parts, as in the case of networking, to show our students how a degree in international studies will help them succeed. We hope this article helps faculty develop their own tools to assist their students in doing the same.

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