what in the world?

BEING WORLD MINDED
Message from the director

GOING THE EXTRA MILE(S)
One professor brings the world to his classroom

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International students share thoughts on America

W&M students reflect on their time abroad

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Different fields unite to tackle global issues

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LINKING UP
Business students offer tech support to school in Cambodia
Welcome to the first issue of World Minded, a Reves Center newsletter designed to showcase international and internationally-focused people and projects at William & Mary.

What does it mean to be world minded? As the stories here show, being world minded means doing research, study, and service overseas; learning about the world from right here on campus; working collaboratively and across disciplines to understand and address global challenges.

And it means thinking broadly about our mission and goals. Today, “international” is much more than study abroad. It’s new ways of studying overseas—by incorporating independent research, service learning, or field work into the experience, and by building explicit links between on-campus projects and overseas study, from students’ freshman through senior years. It’s celebrating and learning from the hundreds of international students, faculty, and scholars on campus every year. It’s recognizing and supporting new ways of teaching and doing scholarship on international, global, and trans-national issues. It’s forging international partnerships and participating in global knowledge networks. Above all, it’s recognizing that these things are no longer in addition to, but rather part of the core teaching, research, and service functions of a university.

Being world minded also means making plans for the future. There’s no doubt we do impressive international work at the College, but it’s time to focus on how to do that work in a more comprehensive and sustainable way. What does it mean to prepare globally competent graduates? To integrate global perspectives into all levels of the College’s work? To engage students, faculty, and staff in global knowledge networks? There’s no better time to ask, or to begin answering, these questions than during this year of strategic planning. Transforming W&M from a university that does great international work to one that’s international and global at its core is both a priority and a challenge. While some of the work has been done for us, by last year’s Presidential Advisory Committee on Internationalization (see www.wm.edu/about/administration/strategicplanning/background/index.php for their report), we have much more to do. Let’s get to it.

World Minded wouldn’t be what it is without Celine Carayon, an international graduate student who works at Reves and who came up with the title for our newsletter: WM...World Minded...brilliant! Special thanks to Celine for inspiring this effort, and to Amy Kuenker, World Minded editor, for bringing it to life. For those of you reading, if our first issue isn’t as brilliant as it could be, help us make the next one better. We welcome your comments.

Reves by the Numbers

Did you know? In a single year, the Reves Center:

- helps 700 W&M students study abroad.
- provides $200,000 in study abroad scholarships.
- supports W&M’s international community of 125 undergraduates, 190 graduate students, and 100 faculty and scholars.
- provides more than $100,000 in grants for faculty and graduate student conference travel, internationally-focused student-faculty research projects, and faculty-mentored international service learning projects.
- contributes $30,000 to support and sponsor internationally-focused public programs, including speakers, events, films, and conferences.
- hosts 200 events in the Reves Room, most internationally-focused in nature.
Well, make that miles. When a research project required that he be in West Africa for a few weeks during the semester, Backer resolved not only to continue teaching the two sections of his “Politics in Africa” course at a distance, but also to use the situation to his advantage. In order to provide his students with further insight into the dynamics of the region, Backer used modern technology to broadcast guest lecturers—from halfway around the world.

“I wanted to include outside speakers to make it a little more tangible, so it wasn’t always just my voice,” says Backer. So, he set about finding a way to integrate into his remote lectures the perspectives, and voices, of experts living and working in Africa.

To make this venture possible, Backer worked with Dave Shantz of William & Mary’s Department of Information Technology, and Maria Elena Pada, Coordinator of the Technology Integration Program (TIP), to orchestrate support for his class and perform several test runs. Once in Africa, he was able to employ Skype software to stream a direct, interactive audio-video feed back to the classroom, at little or no cost — provided he had access to a decent internet connection.

Armed with only a laptop and webcam, Backer broadcasted a total of four live sessions back to his students from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana. Thanks to his many contacts in the region, he was able to recruit speakers who were authorities on the specific issues to be discussed in each class. Once connected to his students over Skype, Backer would introduce the subject and provide context before turning things over to his guest. The speakers ranged from a human rights lawyer discussing the history of military intervention in Nigerian politics, to an NGO research officer discussing public opinion about democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa, to the Chief of Press and Public Affairs of the Special Court for Sierra Leone talking about accountability for international crimes during the country’s brutal civil war. At the end of each of the talks, students had ample opportunity to ask questions and engage with the speakers.

Though this experiment did provide “concrete links” to “historical and contemporary political issues on the ground” as intended, Backer is the first to admit that not everything ran smoothly. “We had some difficulties with sound quality– the fidelity isn’t always perfect.” Then there was the time difference he had to account for: Nigeria is five hours ahead of Eastern Standard time, Ghana and Sierra Leone are four hours ahead. And of course there was always the unforeseen circumstance, such as the grounding of a helicopter service that was supposed to take Backer across Fourah Bay to the city in time to set up his next session. “I was making myself the guinea pig,” says Backer. “I realize [this method] may not be for everybody.”

Still, his students, and the speakers themselves, enjoyed this novel teaching method and the diversity of views it permitted. “It was really an interesting and engaging way of bringing a new dimension to what we were reading,” says Grace Heusner ’10. “During these satellite classes, I was very aware of how real the issues in class are.” David Theurer ’10 agrees that having the guest speakers “rooted the theories we were learning about” in reality. “Everyone was just in awe of the fact that our Professor was in Africa talking to us via webcam.”

Though certainly not the first application of Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) on campus, Backer’s use of such technology was the “most extensive and widest ranging” of which Dave Shantz is aware. And since Backer left a webcam with each of his guest speakers, his students may be able to look forward to another such experience in the future. “Things are really changing in terms of what you can pull off,” he remarks. “Especially for Africa, technology is making a huge difference— you can do a lot more than you ever have been able to do in the past.”
A student’s account of her summer immersion in Mexican culture

Vantage Points: A Taste of Morelia

by Amanda Scott ’10

I first heard about the Morelia program when I remarked on a Día de los Muertos poster I saw hanging in my professor’s office. It reminded me of something from my childhood in California where Mexican cultural influences are very strong, but I did not immediately connect it with a William & Mary study abroad program. My professor sighed, and said she wished she could be in Mexico right now. Six months later I found myself with seven other students in Morelia, Michoacán.

Nostalgic cultural posters aside, I chose the Morelia program for many reasons. Just a month long, it fit perfectly into my summer schedule and offered me a far more interesting way to take summer classes. The logistics of the program also appealed to me – I really wanted to immerse myself in the language and culture, and the Morelia program placed me with a Mexican family and in a Mexican school where I took my classes. I got seven credits by doing research and taking conversation and literature courses, but the cultural immersion was by far the most worthwhile part of the summer.

One of the unique aspects of the Morelia program was the research component, which also fills the Hispanic Studies practicum requirement. We started developing our projects before we arrived, and then while in Morelia we did on-site research, interviews, and photography. My project was two-fold: I conducted research first in California and then in Mexico, trying to trace the transmission and evolution of Mexican culture as it flows from Mexico to Hispanic populations inside the United States. Though research in name, this was probably one of the most fun projects I have ever done – I spent my “research” hours watching films, playing games, taking pictures, visiting markets, and talking with locals.

Despite how much we enjoyed the research, we still wanted to take some breaks and visit other cities outside historic Morelia. We took day and weekend trips to the fishing village of Pátzcuaro and the island city of Janitzio, saw the mummies and “street of kisses” in Guanajuato, climbed the pyramids (called yacatas) of the ancient Tarascans, and rode horses to the lost village of San Juan Parangaricutiro next to the volcano Paricutín. And of course, wherever we went we ate lots of tacos, paletas, and enchiladas.

I had a lot of fun in the Morelia program, but for me it was more than just an exciting way to spend my summer. When you visit a foreign country as a tourist, you can only get a very limited understanding of the country and its people. The experience of living with a family and immersing yourself in a country puts a little of that culture inside you, and leaves you with something you will never forget or lose. Studying in Mexico did enable me to further improve my Spanish and get ahead on my credits, but more significantly, it gave me a better idea of what direction I want to go in my life.
Between the election and the economic crisis, this is a dynamic moment for anyone living in the United States—but perhaps even more so for those who hail from another country! We asked four W&M international students to provide us with their perspectives on how being here at this time has influenced their perceptions of and their experiences in America:

“\textquotebox{I didn’t think that the USA would suffer from this big economic crisis when I was in Korea. But nowadays, I think my perception towards the USA has slightly changed—from undoubtedly the most strong, influential country to a country that can be vulnerable. In this situation, I think the election is really important to the U.S. and also to other countries. It is interesting to be in the U.S. during the election period.}”

\textit{Bo Ram Jeong, Junior}
\textit{English & Government}
\textit{Yonsei University, South Korea}

“I’m most fascinated to see that both this presidential election and the economic crisis are new experiences for the United States. It’s literally a once in a lifetime opportunity to be in the country to see these situations unfold. I know I can’t vote but I got so excited, I’ve been volunteering for the Obama campaign here in Williamsburg!”

\textit{Grace Turner, PhD Program}
\textit{Historical Archaeology}
\textit{Barbados}

“The economic crisis has not influenced my experience here, but the election has been interesting to watch. I notice that people on campus are involved in campaigning. I’m watching TV and the campaigning is different, it’s a new perspective. In France there are no ads on TV and there is no discussion of candidates’ private lives like there is in America.”

\textit{Alexis Cintrat-Passeone, Junior}
\textit{Government/IR}
\textit{Lille University, France}

“I think being in the U.S. right now has been a very good experience for me in terms of learning more about how the country functions politically. I am very impressed at the number of students and young people so interested in politics. Also, being in the thick of things in terms of the economy has been stressful, even though I am not American. It’s pretty interesting to see how the world tends to follow America’s trends, whether good or bad. Being here at this very important time has definitely been the icing on the cake for my exchange semester!”

\textit{Snigdha Kumar, Junior}
\textit{Economics}
\textit{National University of Singapore}
\textit{India}
What do the Han River in China, gold mines in Ecuador, and swallows in the Shenandoah Valley have in common? All are current subjects of faculty research at William & Mary, but the thread that ties them together lends a very distinct silver to the Green and Gold—as in the color of mercury. All three projects focus on mercury contamination, an increasingly prevalent problem across the globe. And they form the core of a faculty-led Global Inquiry Group at W&M titled “Mercury: A Hazard without Borders.”

Global Inquiry Groups, or “GIGs” as they’re better known on campus, are collaborative faculty projects devoted to issues of international significance. Launched in fall 2006 by the Reves and Charles Centers, this venture aims to bring scholars together from across disciplines, departments, and schools, encouraging them to explore new research and teaching interests. The Mercury GIG includes faculty from Biology, History, Film Studies, Sociology, and Art. Members meet on a biweekly basis, discussing their shared interest and exploring the potential for collaborative projects and curricular initiatives. “Our ideas collided,” recalls Sharon Zuber, the GIG’s co-director, thinking back to early meetings, “and like a chemical reaction, generated new ideas and energy.”

Powered by their own momentum, the mercury team has developed a wide range of projects that span disciplinary, as well as geographical borders. Recent endeavors range from a student research and service-learning project on mercury and mining in Ecuador, to an eco-toxicology course developed and taught simultaneously last spring at both VIMS and in China, to a sculptural art exchange with Japan, featuring student work created in response to issues of mercury poisoning in the Japanese community of Minamata. The GIG’s efforts continue with a series of courses to be taught next semester, and will culminate in an international symposium, to be held at William & Mary in Spring 2010, highlighting their interdisciplinary approaches to the mercury problem.

As varied as their initiatives are, what these GIG members all share, and impress upon their students through their work and their teaching, is a concern with mercury contamination and a commitment to collaborative scholarship. “With their emphasis on thinking across disciplines and cultures,” says Zuber, “the GIGs get faculty across campus and continents talking.”

Learn more about the Mercury GIG at mercury.wm.edu.
Ask Williamsburg tourists and locals alike to describe William & Mary, and you will find they all agree on one thing: the College is a hotbed of American history and culture. So it comes as no surprise that the school of choice for three American presidents, Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, and The Daily Show host Jon Stewart served as the perfect summer environment for forty Japanese students to get a “crash course” in American culture.

These students are part of the annual Cross-Cultural Collaboration (“CCC”) program between W&M and its sister institution in Tokyo, Keio University. The CCC aims to foster global friendship and understanding by way of an interactive course exploring American identity. The program emphasizes experiential learning through conversation, exploratory field-trips, engaging speakers, and partnerships with W&M students. Graduate “dialogue instructors” facilitate small-group discussions, while undergraduate peer assistants collaborate with Keio students on cross-cultural research projects. The program also affords full English language immersion, as Keio students pledge to speak only English during their two weeks at W&M.

The Cross-Cultural Collaboration, which is sponsored by the American Studies department and administered by the Reves Center for International Studies, was created in 1990 by W&M Professor Tomoko Hamada, W&M graduate student Gretchen Schoel, and Dean Saito of Keio University. Although similar English language immersion programs exist, CCC is unique in its focus on learning through action, achieved through site visits and discussion, and its use of undergraduate and graduate students to help Keio participants to “intellectually synthesize” their observations and experiences.

“I thought that this program was special in many ways,” said Keio University Professor and 2008 Program Director Toshiyuki Ohwada. “Having a chance to communicate with American students was a very valuable experience for our students, considering that it is still unusual for an ordinary Japanese student to have a friend abroad.”

W&M and visiting Keio students live on or near campus and participate in a number of local field-trips together. This summer, their activities included visiting Colonial Williamsburg, learning contra dancing, experiencing local church services of various denominations, and attending a Norfolk Tides baseball game. The participants, along with W&M instructional staff and Program Co-Directors Libby Neidenbach and Zach Hilpert, also visited the Hampton University Museum to see African-American artwork related to their study of race in American society.

“Through the lectures on American history and culture, some students started to think about Japanese society as well, which might be the best possible fruit we could have since this program focuses on the ‘collaboration’ of the two cultures,” Dr. Ohwada said.

“True to CCC’s mission, student participants from both W&M and Keio begin to view their cultures, identities, and even academic interests differently as a direct result of the program and the global friendship it promotes. ‘You come in touch with a different culture which you can never experience in your country,’” said former CCC participant Saori Takahashi. “‘This experience helped me think about what I am. I think it’s like a mirror which illustrates yourself.’

Takahashi enjoyed her cross-cultural experience at W&M so much so that she decided to return to the College for a year to study Political Science and American Studies. “I had an awesome time with all of the participants during the CCC program, but for me, two weeks at William & Mary was too short,” Takahashi said. “[I came back because] the concept of community, and the reinterpretation of American history became my academic focus after the program. Also, the people I met here were so nice, and I became a fan of this community.”

Visiting Keio students are not the only participants changed by the CCC experience. W&M peer assistant Daniel Wolfe ’10 is furthering his own cross-cultural education this fall in Japan, where his new friends cannot wait to return the favor.
Giving to the Reves Center

The Reves Center for International Studies aims to develop, enrich, and promote the international dimensions of learning, teaching, research, and civic engagement at the College of William & Mary. Your kindness and generosity enable us to further this mission by supporting and developing internationally-focused programs for the campus and community. To give support or learn more, please contact Lisa Starbuck by phone, at 757-221-2428, or email, lastar@wm.edu. Thank you!