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Going Global the Santa Barbara Way

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The University of California at Santa Barbara houses one of the country's oldest global studies programs - it stretches all the way back to the 20th century. And it is one of the most innovative.

Founded in 1995, the global and international studies program at UC-Santa Barbara became the incubator of academic and research units that relate to the world's

rapidly changing global society. In 1999, it launched one of the country's first global studies BA degree programs. To the surprise of the small group of faculty who were on volunteer loan from other departments in the social sciences and humanities, the global studies major quickly gained popularity. Within a few years the number of majors had peaked to over 800, making it one of the largest on campus. When the global majors were polled, they gave it the campus's highest satisfactory rating.

Graduate programs soon followed. In 2003 a PhD emphasis in global studies was established. Coordinated by the global and international studies program, it was supported by six departments - anthropology, political science, sociology, history, religious studies, and English. Doctoral students in those departments take interdisciplinary seminars in global studies and receive what amounts to a graduate - level minor. On graduation their diplomas state that they have a PhD in sociology (or one of the other five participating disciplines) with an emphasis in global studies. The departments of economics and geography may soon join the consortium.

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In 2006 a new MA in global and international studies was launched. The two-year program provides an academic background for students preparing for leadership in international agencies, especially international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Funds to help create the program and a new research and programmatic center were provided by Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinko's international chain of copy centers. The Orfalea Center supports the new MA program and provides an intellectual focus for global and international activities throughout the campus. Four new endowed chairs in global studies will be added to the campus in 2008, to be placed in several departments, including the global and international studies program.

At the heart of the UC-Santa Barbara programs are several features:

1) *a commitment to creating global citizens*. This means providing information and intellectual resources that will allow students to critically examine the complex forces that are shaping the contemporary world.

2) *a focus on global civil society*. Though the program examines organizations and trends, it emphasizes the agency of individuals and groups in affecting social change and helping to determine the course of global social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental forces.

3) *an approach that is interdisciplinary*. The undergraduate curriculum is balanced between courses in the social sciences and the humanities. One of the two introductory courses examines the history and culture of globalization; the other focuses on socioeconomic patterns and processes.

4) *an emphasis on real-world experience*. Undergraduates in the global studies major are expected to study abroad at some point in their career; many combine their international experience with required language training. MA students have a six-month internship abroad built into their academic program. Guest lecturers from government, business, journalism, and social service agencies address classes and give seminars.

The aim of these programs and activities is to create an approach to global studies that interacts with a wide range of disciplines and fields. The hope is that the students in the program will gain a critical awareness of the complex features of the contemporary world and be able to become more effective global citizens in the world's emerging cosmopolitan society.

Tags

higher education

global studies



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