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## CONNOLLY: A worldly education

The new global studies major will be useful given today's globalized world

by John Connolly | Jan 22 2014 | 01/22/14 8:45pm



Last Friday, the University held a meeting to discuss [a draft proposal for a nascent global studies major](#). The proposed major aims to idea of the major is essentially to “bring together knowledge from across disciplines,” and to help students prepare for a “world where cultures, ideas, histories, vulnerabilities, environments, and human needs are increasingly interconnected,” according to the draft proposal. Students would be required to take classes on global culture, global history and global thought, in addition to classes on “global diagnostics,” or assessing “complex global phenomena.”

This proposed major should be enthusiastically supported in all corners of the University, and the University should do its best to implement the program as quickly as possible. I argue this because of the new major's interdisciplinary nature, its focus on globalization and the opportunities it affords for travel and exposure to different cultures.

The University has increasingly tended toward interdisciplinary degree programs. The Political and Social Thought (PST) major, and the Political Philosophy, Politics and Law (PPL) major, to name two, pull together scholars from history, politics, economics, anthropology and many other departments. This affords students a more well-rounded education, in my opinion, than a traditional major program. It also demonstrates an awareness that the world's problems are not confined to one discipline, and must be approached from a variety of angles. For instance, those who address Africa's AIDS problem must possess knowledge of medicine and biology, but also global health trends, the economics of health and the history and culture of Africa. Facing the AIDS epidemic from the standpoint of a single discipline is insufficient; this problem, like most of the world's entrenched problems, requires an interdisciplinary approach. Increasing the offerings of interdisciplinary programs at the University helps to prepare students to meet worldwide issues in a more effective manner.

The program also recognizes that problems and opportunities often transcend national boundaries. Globalization, for better or for worse, has been a relentless force. Technology has increased the connections and



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relationships between countries and the people living within them. Engaged 21st-century citizens must be prepared to confront a world outside their own countries. The most important issues of the 21st century are not confined to a single country, and increased global awareness will help those who seek to solve problems of energy security, population explosion, food and water supply and many others on a transnational scale. The proposed global studies program, with its emphasis on the world as a interconnected place, has the potential to prepare students to become true citizens of the globe.

Perhaps most importantly, the global studies major has the potential to impact all students at the University, not just those in the major program. All effective 21st-century citizens will need some sort of global awareness, not just those who plan careers abroad. An architect, for example, might find himself working with foreign design companies. Nurses will, I am sure, find themselves dealing with a higher percentage of foreign patients, as borders break down and global migration increases. Even if students outside of the major are restricted from taking the major's core seminar courses, they still could use other facets of its curriculum as a guide towards enrolling in a variety of global history, culture and economics classes. And as the program expands, it might increase its course offerings at the University, or offer additional, supplementary learning experiences both on Grounds and abroad of which eager students might take advantage.

Those who care deeply about the educational offerings of this University should enthusiastically support the proposed global studies major. It has the means to graduate more multifaceted citizens, is innovative in its interdisciplinary approach, and has the potential to increase educational opportunities for all students on Grounds. The University will surely need to fine-tune some of the minute details of the program, but the proposed framework represents a potential academic boon.

*John Connolly is an Opinion columnist for The Cavalier Daily. His columns run Thursdays.*

Published January 22, 2014 in [Opinion](#)



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