

What Makes IS Programs Grow? A Survey-Based Assessment

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Abstract

As is commonly the case with interdisciplinary programs, International Studies majors often have an "identity crisis," particularly in institutions dominated by traditional academic departments. Since few IS programs are regular academic departments, the ways in which they are administered vary widely across campuses. At the same time these programs continue to grow across many campuses; indeed in some cases IS programs service as much or more students than many traditional departments. The rapid growth of these programs, and the vast diversity of ways in which they administered, raises the question of what specific factors contribute to program growth? Utilizing a comprehensive database of all IS programs across the country this study will survey program directors to uncover some of the key factors and practices that contribute to program growth. In addition to providing systematic insights into IS is advancing as a field of study, this study can also contribute to a better understanding of how interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programs can flourish within their home institutions. On a more practical level this study can also provide guidance for ascertaining some of the "best practices" in our field of study.

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What Makes IS Programs Grow? A Survey-Based Assessment

As an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary course of study, IS programs face a variety of challenges. From a curricular standpoint, IS programs are most often “enclosure movements” (McCaughey 1985) who rely off of the resources and offerings of other departments. These courses may (or may not) be supplemented with multidisciplinary efforts to encourage synthesis across disciplines. This raises many questions regarding whether we have a core curriculum, and what components this curriculum should have. These issues have been the subjects to numerous debates and empirical analyses (Hobbs, Chernotsky, and Van Tassel 2010; Brown, Pegg, and Shively 2006; Hey 2005). The somewhat amorphous stature of IS is particularly apparent in the ways in which our programs are structured. Administratively, IS programs range from free-floating programs with only a director to fully-realized departments and schools (Blanton 2009).

At the same time there is a general consensus, and some empirical evidence, that IS programs are growing, in terms of the number of institutions that offer them (Ishiyama and Breuning 2004) as well as the size of programs themselves (Blanton 2009). The growth and proliferation of these programs, in combination of variety of ways in which IS programs are administered, presents an interesting empirical puzzle – given the diversity of ways in which our programs are administered and the diversity of environments we face, which factors contribute towards growing and effective program? Put another way, though there are idiosyncratic factors that influence each program, are there any common sets of strategies, structures, and “best practices” that emerge?

Previous studies have provided some insights into these issues. Ishiyama and Breuning (2004), assessed some of the factors that contributed to the formation of IS programs, while their subsequent work has surveyed some of the ways in which IS programs marketed themselves to prospective majors, as well as the subsequent gaps which may emerge between these stated goals and the subsequent course requirements (Breuning and Ishiyama 2007). A recent study by Dolan (2011) providing insights into specifically how to establish IS programs at smaller institutions. Through surveying a sample of program directors, Blanton (2009) assessed the administrative structures of these programs, and provided some preliminary insights into some of the institutional factors that were conducive to program growth. In particular, factors that contributed to growth included research focus of institution as well as the perceived level of support for internationalization and interdisciplinarity (in general) as well as support for the respective IS program. This was not to say, however, that the directors of these programs were satisfied by their levels of support or optimistic about the promise of increased investments in their programs in the future. In all though he found IS to be “growing as a field of study, many programs are simply “muddling through” with limited resources and little chance of implementing major programmatic changes” (Blanton 2009: 239).

This project intends to build on the insights of these studies in two primary ways. Empirically, we will broaden to scope of previous studies by greatly expanding the pool of potential respondents. Specifically, we have constructed a respondent list that includes all IS programs that are offered in every four-year College and University in the US. This study will also represent a substantive progression from previous works. While other empirical studies have

focused largely on more preliminary issues of factors that lead to the founding of IS programs and how our programs are structured and administered, this study will provide increased emphasis on uncovering what practices and institutional characteristics contribute to successful programs. Simply put, we will go beyond assessing the existence and structure of IS programs, toward providing insights into their success.

Our broader goal is thus to provide a better foundation for understanding our programs, particularly the factors that lead to program growth. This can ostensibly serve to (a) trace how IS programs are striving to advance as a field of study (b) provide insights into how interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary programs can flourish w/in their home institutions (c) on a more practical level provide some guidance for program chairs/directors as well as University administrators.

This presentation is basically a “snap shot” of this work, which is still in progress. We are currently compiling the listing of institutions that offer IS programs, drawn from the comprehensive listing of the 1384 four-year nonprofit colleges and universities in the US (xxx). This presentation will focus primarily on the survey instrument, as we will preview our survey strategy as well as some of the key points that we plan to address in this study.

Research Strategy

As was the case with Blanton (2009), we will conduct the initial survey using surveymonkey.com, an online survey provider. This is helpful in that it enables to better maintain contact with respondents and to keep track of their response rate. We may also possibly conduct more indepth follow-up surveys with a subsample of respondents.

Survey Instrument

The instrument will tap into several characteristics of the respective institutions in which the programs reside, as well as several germane aspects of their structure and curriculum. Finally, we will get into issues related to program size and program growth. The goal is to provide a relatively succinct survey that provides insights into program characteristics and practices.

Proposed questions for survey:

I. Institutional Characteristics

This section will seek to provide insights into some characteristics of the particular institution that may be related to interest in international issues and affairs, including its location as well as some impressions of the student body. ,

What is the approximate size of your institution?

- a. less than 1,000 students
- b. 1,000-2,999 students
- c. 3,000-9,999 students
- d. 10,000-19,999 students
- e. over 20,000 students

Which of the following describes your institution? (check all that apply)

- a. it is within 20 miles of a major urban area (area with a population over 750,000)
- b. it is a public institution
- c. it is a private institution
- d. it has a religious affiliation
- e. it is a Doctoral Research 1 institution (along the lines of the 2000 Carnegie classifications)

How would you rate the interest among your student body in international issues?

- a. Very high
- b. Somewhat high
- c. Moderate
- d. Somewhat limited
- e. Very limited

What proportion of students participates in study abroad programs?
(ask for percentage?)

To your knowledge, what proportion of students has travelled abroad, either through a study abroad program or some other form of international travel and/or living experience?
(ask for percentage?)

Judging from your interaction with students, how prevalent are international students on your campus?

Are there any active and visible student organizations devoted specifically to international issues and affairs?

II. Institutional priorities

This section will examine the overall institutional priorities paid to internationalization and interdisciplinarity, both of which are germane to IS programs.

Does the institution place a high priority on cultivating knowledge of international issues among the students?

- a. Very high priority
- b. Moderately high priority
- c. Neither high nor low priority
- d. Moderately low priority
- e. Very low priority

Within the past five years, has there been in change in the relative priority placed on cultivating knowledge of international issues? Of so, has that change been favorable?

- a. Support has strengthened substantially
- b. Support has strengthened somewhat
- c. Support has remained fairly consistent
- d. Support has declined somewhat

- e. Support has declined substantially

Does the institution require one or more courses aimed at cultivating global awareness or knowledge of international issues in its undergraduate core curriculum?

- a. 2 or more internationally focused courses are required
- b. 1 internationally focused course is required
- c. No internationally focused course is required

Has this requirement been instituted in the past five years?

(yes, no)

Has this requirement been strengthened or enhanced in the past five years?

(yes, no)

Does the institution require all students to acquire competence in a second language as part of the requirements for the Bachelor degree?

(yes, no)

(if yes, what is the requirement? Expressed in semester credit hours?)

(has this requirement changed in the past five years?)

Does your institution place a high priority on study abroad?

Does your institution have a branch campus abroad?

Does the institution place a high priority on developing interdisciplinary programs and perspectives among the students?

- f. Very high priority
- g. Moderately high priority
- h. Neither high nor low priority
- i. Moderately low priority
- j. Very low priority

Within the past five years, has there been in change in the relative priority placed on interdisciplinarity? If so, has that change been favorable?

- f. Support has strengthened substantially
- g. Support has strengthened somewhat
- h. Support has remained fairly consistent
- i. Support has declined somewhat
- j. Support has declined substantially

Are there any interdisciplinary departments, schools or colleges at your institution?

Does your institution have undergraduate majors in any of the following? (Check all that apply)

- women's or gender studies
- African-American studies
- Latino studies

- area studies programs
- environmental studies
- peace studies
- others (please specify)

III. Program size and features

[Basic background questions – repeat from ISP piece, plus also religious affiliation and something on connections to missionary activity.]

How long has the international studies program been in existence?
(# years)

What is the size of the program in terms of the number of students enrolled?
(# students)

To the best of your knowledge, where does the program's size rank in comparison to other Bachelor degree programs on campus?

- a. Largest major
- a. One of the largest 3-5 majors
- b. About average
- c. Smaller than most majors
- d. Smallest major

Please rank the international studies program's size in terms of number of students enrolled relative to the following majors:

Major	Rate each of the following majors relative to international studies			
	Larger	About the same	Smaller	Major not offered
Anthropology				
Area Studies				
Economics				
Foreign Language				
History				
International Business				
Political Science				
Sociology				
Other (please specify)				

What disciplines contribute courses to the international studies program?

	Rate each of the following disciplines in terms of their contribution to

Discipline	international studies			
	Offers large number of courses	Offers a few courses	Does not participate in the international studies major	Discipline not represented at this university
Anthropology				
Area Studies				
Economics				
Foreign Language				
History				
International Business				
Political Science				
Sociology				
Other (please specify)				

In the past five years, has there been any change in the disciplines that contribute to the international studies program?

(yes, no)

If so, which disciplines have been added? Which ones have stopped participation?

Discipline	Discipline has started to participate	Discipline has ended participation	Discipline already participated & continues to do so	Discipline not represented at this university
Anthropology				
Area Studies				
Economics				
Foreign Language				
History				
International Business				
Political Science				
Sociology				
Other (please specify)				

Does the program include an Introduction to International Studies (or similarly titled) course required of all majors?

(yes, no)

Is course a part of your institutions' core requirements?

Approximately how many students are serviced by the course each academic year?

Has this requirement been instituted or enhanced in the past five years?
(yes, no)

If yes, in what way? [open-ended]

Does your program include a capstone experience required of all majors?
(yes, no)

If so, has this requirement been instituted or enhanced in the past five years?
(yes, no)

If yes, in what way? [open-ended]

What options does the program provide for capstone experiences?

- a. Senior capstone course or seminar
- b. Senior thesis
- c. Study abroad experience
- d. International internship experience
- e. Domestic internship experience
- f. Other, please specify: _____

Other than intro or capstone, any other interdisciplinary courses specifically targeted for IS majors?

Instituted any other curricular changes over past five years?

Does your program sponsor any student organizations or clubs?

Does your program have any physical space specifically devoted to it, such as a common room or facility?

IV. Program administration

The administration of the international studies program consists of (indicate all that apply)

- a. Director
- b. Administrative office staff (how many)
- c. Academic advisor (how many)
- d. Other, please specify _____

(maybe this should be in table form and also indicate whether people are full-time, half-time, etc.)

In all, how many full-time administrative personnel work with your program?

How many part-time administrative people work with your program?

In what discipline did you receive your graduate degree(s)? (check all that apply)

- a. Political Science
- b. Sociology
- c. Foreign Languages
- d. Economics
- e. International Studies
- f. other (please specify)

How long have you been responsible for your program?

What is your academic rank (check all that apply)?

- a. Professor
- b. Associate Professor
- c. Assistant Professor
- d. Instructor/Lecturer
- e. Dean or Associate Dean
- f. Chair

What proportion of your time and responsibilities are officially devoted to your program?

- a. 25% or less
- b. 50%
- c. 75%
- d. 100%

Were you recruited from a different institution for the specific purpose of running the program?

If so, was this the first time that this occurred?

In the past five years, has there been an increase in administrative personnel?

(yes, no)

If yes, what staff has been added?

- a. Administrative office staff
- b. Academic advisor
- c. Other, please specify _____

(here, again, we'd like to know whether these additions were full-time, half-time, etc)

In the past five years, has your program been allocated new tenure-track (or tenured) faculty lines, either exclusively or split with a specific discipline?

- a. the program was allocated one or more new lines
- b. the program was allocated one or more new lines that were split with a specific department
- c. the program was not allocated any new lines
- d. the program does not have its own faculty lines

If split line(s), with what department or program?

Are any faculty or lecturer positions devoted at least half-time to your program?

In the past five years, has your program been allocated new lecturer positions?

- The program was allocated two or more new lecturer positions
- The program was allocated one new lecturer position
- The program was not allocated any new lecturer positions
- The program does not have its own lecturer positions

V. University administration

In the past five years, which of the following leadership positions have changed hands (either from within the institution or by hiring someone from elsewhere)? (Indicate all that apply.)

- University president
- Provost/vice president for academic affairs
- Dean of the college
- Director of international studies

In the past five years, have any of the following occurred (check all that apply, or do a strongly agree to strongly disagree scale?):

- The university has restructured or reorganized the schools and colleges that bring together departments and/or disciplines
- New interdisciplinary academic programs have been created
- New disciplines have been established as independent academic units (such as departments)
- The university has strengthened financial support for study abroad programs
- The university has strengthened financial support for international programs

In the past five years, has the institution's enrollment increased, decreased, or remained stable?

- Enrollment has increased dramatically
- Enrollment has increased somewhat
- Enrollment has remained stable
- Enrollment has decreased somewhat
- Enrollment has decreased substantially

In the past five years, in what other ways has the student body changed? Has enrollment of the following categories of students increased or decreased?

	Increased	Decreased	Remained Stable
Students who have completed a two-year degree			
Non-traditional students			
Veterans			
Ethnic diversity			

International students			
Overall academic quality of student body.			
Size of honor's program			

Are there any other changes regarding your Administration or the student body that you feel may have had an impact upon your program?

VI. Program growth

In the past five years, has your international studies program grown or declined in terms of enrollment?

- a. Strong growth
- b. Moderate growth
- c. Remained stable
- d. Moderate decline
- e. Strong decline

If growing, roughly what percentage did program grow during that time?

If declining, roughly what percentage has it declined during that time?

If decline, to what do you attest its decline?

- decline in resources
- advent of related/overlapping programs
- change in institutional priorities
- change in program structure

In your opinion, which (if any) of these factors have been important in bringing about growth?

- overall university emphasis on international and/or interdisciplinary efforts
- rapid enrollment growth of institution in general
- decline in related programs
- curricular and/or personnel changes or additions
- external funding
- global events/ shifts in student interest

In assessing your program, what do you think is the most important factor that contributed to its growth?

Looking into future

- plans for program
- curricular change
- external funding
- new center/interdisciplinary efforts

- residential/living learning centers
- development into department/school

Open-ended closer – biggest challenge in facing the future?

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