

## **Undergrads enjoy many choices through Individual Program of Study**

Alumni who have been working for a while know that regardless of what you study in college, odds are, you will be doing something different than what you imagined as an undergraduate student.

Realizing that, the Mason School of Business leadership has developed a plan that allows students the flexibility to pursue a wide range of interests to achieve a well-grounded business education.

The Individual Program of Study (IPS) was formalized two years ago to challenge our students to identify their goals and develop a plan uniquely suited to their interests, says Chris Adkins, director of the Undergraduate Business Program.

“Students who come to William and Mary have such diverse interests,” he said. “We want to help them use their time here to develop their strengths and pursue their interests.

“Many of our students earned advance placement credits in high school, which gives them the flexibility to do advanced course work at William and Mary and to study abroad. Our small size and the dedication of our faculty and staff allow us to work with students individually to overcome obstacles, so that students can have unique academic experiences at William and Mary.”

This flexibility means that most students are able to major in one business discipline and concentrate in another business discipline and combine this with a second major or outside minor in areas such as economics, theater, music and foreign languages.

“Add to this the opportunity to study abroad and you have the making of a truly challenging Individual Program of Study,” Adkins says. “In the Undergraduate Program we have recently added the designation, ‘With an International Emphasis,’ to our degree for those students who satisfy the demanding requirements, and we are approaching the point where almost half of our graduates will have some international experience.”

Adkins would like to see every business student study abroad. “When you are able to view your familiar world through another’s lens, you gain the insight and understanding that is the essence of a global education, which is vital in today’s business world.”

“The IPS does not stop when our students graduate,” said William (Bill) Geary, Ph.D., assistant dean of the Undergraduate Program. “For many students, their IPS includes plans for graduate school and professional education. The challenge for students to take ownership of their IPS and to continuously revisit and revise their particular program of study is both a marvelous opportunity and an important part of learning how to set goals and achieve balance.

“We call the Undergraduate Program in the Mason School ‘a business program without walls,’” Geary said. “This approach to learning rests on the core strengths of our university and provides our students with the breadth and depth that will sustain them through many life changes.”

This fall, the Undergraduate Business Program hosted its first Executive-in-Residence, Kathy Durden, a managing director with Navigant Consulting with 25 years of business experience. Durden, a William and Mary (BBA) alumnae who chairs the Business Partners

Board for the Undergraduate and Master of Accounting (MAcc) programs, team taught courses with the faculty, met with students one-on-one and in small groups, participated in panel discussions and co-lead a seminar.

Beginning this semester, select business students will be able to “Distinguish” and enrich their IPS plans by opting for advanced coursework in one of three areas: consulting, entrepreneurship and faculty-student research.

The 24 students selected to participate in the three-credit consulting course, led by professors Jonathon Palmer, Ph.D., and Ron Sims, Ph.D., will study the skills of strategic analysis within the context of the consulting process. They will participate in a case competition sponsored by Navigant Consulting and attend an intensive one-day retreat as part of the course.

“Students will benefit from their interactions with fellow students and experts in the field, while working on real-time organizational problems,” said Sims. “They will gain confidence in strategic analysis, change implementation and evaluation of consulting projects.”

In the entrepreneurship course, led by Dick Ash, Ph.D., 10 students will benefit from live cases with businesses both at the “seed” stage and those that are more established. The course will use pro-active case studies and guest speakers, as well as faculty and Executive Partners, to help students learn to create their own businesses and write complete business plans. An Executive Partner is assigned to every two students to mentor them throughout the course.

“They will interview entrepreneurs to determine what really works and if they – the students – have the ‘right stuff’ to be successful entrepreneurs,” said Ash. “It is an intense, hands-on experience, and they will become not only book smart, but street smart, as well.”

“Thanks to a gift from a great friend of the Undergraduate Program, we are able to provide up to \$4,000 to support a student who joins with a faculty member to focus on a research project,” said Geary. “The opportunity to distinguish your IPS by working with a faculty member on a research project is the type of educational experience that speaks to the strength of our commitment to excellence in undergraduate business education.”

With all the opportunities provided to undergraduate business students through the IPS, students can be the architects of their education. “Really, the possibilities and combinations are almost limitless when you factor in the opportunities for study abroad that are also built into the curricula,” Geary said.

“Our Undergraduate Program is unique because it is William and Mary’s Undergraduate Business Program,” he said. “While offering a breadth of opportunities that are characteristic of an excellent university, our size translates into a learning environment focused on the individual and innovative approaches to learning.”

### **IPS: ‘The ability to tailor my study of business’**

Kathryn Jeffreys ’06 says she likes the IPS model because it allows her to tailor her study of business more specifically towards the areas she is interested in. Beth Galloway ’06 says that if not for the IPS, she would not have been able to study abroad, double major and still graduate on time. Jeremy Evans ’07 likes being able to pick his own path.

Clearly, it has worked well for them.

“I was very thankful to have the opportunity to make the most of my IPS and get a complete study abroad experience without having to worry about credits and graduation deadlines,” said Galloway, from Virginia Beach, Va., and a double major in marketing and German. She studied for a semester last spring at the European Business School in a small, wine village called Oestrick-Winkel, located near Frankfurt on the Rhine River.

“The town we lived in gave me a completely different perspective of German life,” Galloway said. Aaron Kraus '06, an accounting major, also studied abroad last spring at the same school.

“Not only did we have to adapt to German culture in general, but also to the ways of small-town life. It was interesting that no one knew who we were exactly, only that we were new and different. We also ended up learning a lot about other countries and cultures thanks to the International Studies Program we were a part of, which had students from all over the world – everywhere from the United States and Canada to Indonesia.”

Galloway said that although most of her classes were in English, when students and faculty discovered that they spoke German, they began to speak in the language with them. Also, most of the townspeople either did not realize right away that they were exchange students or they did not speak English, so they had to rely on German to get through everyday situations such as ordering in restaurants, taking mail to the post office and shopping in the grocery store.

“I think I improved my German quite a bit by watching television and applying what I already knew while picking up everyday words and phrases.”

Jeffreys, a double major in economics and marketing, also from Virginia Beach, spent her entire junior year abroad for the 2004-05 academic year at the Manchester Business School in England.

“I absolutely loved it!” Jeffreys said. “I was a little nervous about being the only one going from William and Mary, but that turned out to be my advantage, because it made me branch out more.”

Life in Manchester was completely different from Williamsburg, and being in a big city was an adjustment. “It sounds cliché and corny, but going abroad really did expand my horizons. You don’t realize before going how much an international experience can affect you, but after an entire year abroad, I grew and changed a lot.”

“I met people I would never have met, saw places I would never otherwise have seen, and all that affects your view on the world and who you are as a person. I wouldn’t trade anything for that experience.”

Jeffreys is participating in the consulting “Distinguish” program this semester to build a foundation on which she can base her future career in consulting. She already has a job waiting for her with IBM Business Consulting Services in Washington, D.C.

“With all of the class exercises, projects with outside companies and the Navigant Consulting competition in February, I hope to gain a great introduction and a lot of experience within consulting that will be applicable and useful outside the classroom and beyond college.”

Evans, from Roxbury, N.J., is a finance major with a concentration in accounting and hopes to work in consulting or investment banking. He likes the IPS program because it allows him to take courses outside the business school and still graduate on time. “The fact that I’m not

pressured to take a thousand credits in my major and have time to explore other fields of study is what I like best about the program.”

He is also participating in the consulting “Distinguish” course. “I hope to gain a systematic approach to the consulting process,” he says. “I expect to practice my consulting skills and develop tools that will help me in the consulting world. I also expect to receive valuable guidance from those who have experience in the area.”