

The Graduate

News from Valparaiso University's Graduate Division

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Graduate Enrollments Surge!

In just one year, Graduate enrollment at Valpo has increased from 399 students to more than 510. So what can be credited for this nearly 80 percent increase? Graduate Dean David Rowland attributes it to the fact that representation of programs is up regionally, nationally, and even internationally. The partnerships that the University has established with India, China, parts of Africa and the Middle East "have become increasingly fruitful," Rowland said. "We are quite actively attracting students from all parts of the world."

As the reputation of Valpo's Graduate Division increases, the University is continuing to heighten its selectivity in choosing candidates. This allows for an "overall greater impact on the direction of the University," Rowland said.

As with all change, the enrollment surge has presented some challenges. One challenge, Rowland says, "is ensuring that we provide every student with the best quality of education possible." This is closely followed by the task of "keeping up with our own growth," he said. But Rowland assures that he and his staff have taken steps to address these issues, such as coordinating and promoting all-grad student events for the first time. "As part of this process we're looking for greater involvement by graduate students at all levels at the University and [we're] also looking for ideas, feedback, and suggestions from students regarding how to ensure a positive Valpo experience for all students," he said. If enrollment increased by nearly 100 graduate students this school year, who knows how many grad students will walk Valpo's campus next year. "We're extremely proud of our students and hope that students are extremely proud of their Valpo identity – they bring a whole new dimension to this campus, which is different and new," Rowland said. "I'm also extremely pleased with the hard work of my staff."

Graduate Studies to Host Fall Open House October 10

The Office of Graduate Studies will be hosting its first-ever Fall Open House on October 10, 2008, beginning at 11:00 am. Prospective students and their guests will be able to meet Program Directors and faculty, learn more about our programs, visit a class, tour campus and talk with current Valpo graduate students.

How can you help? We need graduate students to be available all afternoon to give tours of campus and mingle with the students and their guests in Kretzmann Hall's Boardroom. We'd like to have all programs represented! If you will be available at any time between 11:00 am and 5:00 pm on October 10, please email Jamie.Haney@valpo.edu with the time you're available and if you'd be comfortable giving tours of campus.

*Congratulations to **Mahdi Aben Ahmed**, ESC and TESOL alum, who is a new student in the Indiana University of Pennsylvania English/Composition & TESOL Ph.D. program, and to **Mahdi Abulhasana**, an ICP alum and the first international student recipient of the Outstanding Student Award, given out in May 2008! We are very proud of both of you!*



Important Dates & Deadlines

- Oct. 3: Deadline to apply for
- December graduation!
- Oct. 10: Graduate Studies
- Open House
- Oct. 11: Homecoming
- Oct. 17: Presidential Inauguration
- Oct. 23-24: Fall Break (no classes)
- Nov. 7-9: Family Weekend
- December 14: Winter Graduation Luncheon

By the numbers

The numbers don't lie. This year, VU's enrollment in the Graduate Division is up nearly 80 percent, and the numbers are also revealing the areas of study that graduate students are choosing to pursue. In addition to several growing programs, this year Valpo is offering two new graduate degrees which are attracting students to VU—a Doctorate in Nursing Practice program and a Master of Science in Information Technology. Couple this with two of the fastest-growing graduate programs on campus—International Commerce and Policy and Chinese Studies—and it's easy to see why students are choosing to pursue their graduate degrees at VU.

In its first year, the Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) program has 17 students—two students more than its anticipated goal, said Janet Brown, Dean of the College of Nursing. “The DNP is the credential that will be required for advance practice nurses to sit for certification as of 2015,” Brown explained. “Therefore, if a nurse wants to practice as a Clinical Nurse Specialist or Nurse Practitioner, then the DNP will be needed.” In its first few weeks, Brown says the program has been going smoothly and hopes to see it grow in the future. With 13 students enrolled in the Master of Science in Information Technology (IT) program, the numbers indicate that IT is also right on track with its target goal of 12-14 students. “The field of Information Technology is growing very quickly and impacts nearly every aspect of life,” said Jen Gregory, Director of Instructional and Learning Services. “While the field grows, the need for qualified professionals also grows.” Gregory says the program is currently planning courses for the spring semester and summer sessions.

So what do the numbers say about some of the older grad programs at VU? Nearly 20 percent of VU's graduate population are pursuing degrees in International Commerce and Policy—one of Valpo's largest graduate programs and one of only two like it in the USA. ICP, which has been around since 2003, was “designed especially for students wanting to develop proficiency and understanding in areas related to international relations, business and policy,” said Jennifer Guziewicz, Coordinator of Academic Services. “Alumni from the ICP program have gone onto careers in a wide range of areas, to include law, politics, government, NGO's, and business,” Guziewicz said. Similarly, enrollment in the Master of Arts in Chinese Studies has “roughly tripled” in the three years that it has been on campus, said Dr. Benjamin Ridgway, Assistant Professor of Chinese. The program, which offers students the opportunity to enhance their Chinese linguistic and cultural skills to a level where they can successfully pursue different professional careers, hopes to “maintain about fifteen newly enrolled students each academic year,” Ridgway said. Like the ICP program, one aspect of VU that may attract students to the Chinese Studies program is the increase in international students and international connections on campus. “The strength and breadth of interests of faculty who teach the topics classes within the program, in areas such as history, language and literature, economics, political science, psychology, and business administration to name a few (may also increase enrollment in the Chinese Studies program),” Ridgway said. With the increasing popularity in VU's graduate programs, no one knows what the numbers will say for these programs next year.

Grad Student Facts!

- 510 students—251 are new for Summer & Fall 2008
- 22% international students, representing Saudi Arabia, China, Thailand, Japan, Brazil, Ukraine, Belarus, Benin, Palestine, Yemen, India, Germany, Poland, & Macedonia
- Average age: 30 years
- 60% are from outside Northwest Indiana
- 60% female, 40% male
- 55% full time
- Largest programs: ICP, Nursing, MBA, Education, Counseling, MALS, Sports Admin

First All-Graduate Student Picnic is a Success!

On Friday, September 5, the MALS program and the Graduate Studies office co-hosted the first-ever All-Graduate Student Picnic in the Christopher Center Community Room. More than 100 students and a dozen faculty from a variety of programs attended and spent the evening mingling and enjoying dinner.

Students also won an array of door prizes donated by several VU offices and the Valpo Athletic Club, including Valpo gear and trial athletic club passes. Special thanks goes to Lauren Kawecky, Megan Mathison-Wynia, and Abigail Rom, all of the MALS program, who assisted the Graduate Studies office in planning the dinner!

If you are interested in helping plan future graduate student events, please email Graduate.Studies@valpo.edu



STUDENTS AT DINNER...

Valpo MA Chinese Studies Student Volunteered at 2008 Beijing Olympics!

VU graduate student Derik Bron was amongst the likes of such champions as Michael Phelps, Nastia Liukin, and Dara Torres at this summer's Beijing Olympics. Bron didn't compete, but he did take part in the Olympic games by volunteering at language services at the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center. Bron, a Chinese Studies student, was initially approached in January by Yan Yang, the Coordinator of International Recruitment at VU, about being a volunteer translator for this summer's Olympics. Knowing that the commitment would hit his pocketbook hard, Bron "brushed off the suggestion at the expense of practicality," he said. But after some coaxing from parents and friends, Bron gave in to the idea and applied in late January. He was accepted weeks later. From July 14 to August 24, Bron volunteered at the Sailing Center office, which was responsible for providing written translations and some oral interpretations.

"We translated the PowerPoint presentation for the Qingdao Olympics Opening Ceremony and provided interpretation for Athlete Welcome Ceremonies," Bron said. "My main duties were to proof-read English translations to ensure understandability and readability."

Because he was in Qingdao, far removed from Beijing, Bron was limited to only translating for sailing events, but he was able to get a picture with an American athlete who won gold in one of the sailing classes (*see photo*). "I really enjoyed the experience as a whole," Bron said. "The medal ceremonies, the athletes, the Chinese food, the ocean, the new friends, the long hours – all of it contributed to a great summer at the Olympics."

And Bron is no stranger to China. "In 2001-2002 I lived in the city of Lijiang, located in Yunnan Province," he said. "There, I studied Chinese for a year while my parents were English teachers. Last year, I studied in Hangzhou for the MACS summer immersion program." Translating for the Beijing Olympics was life-changing for Bron. "I've never done anything like this before, but I am always open to doing new challenging things like translating," he said. He encourages anyone interested to sign up to volunteer for the London 2012 Olympics.



The President at a Glance

Hailing from Denver, Colo., President Mark Heckler is Valparaiso University's 18th president. Heckler and his family arrived in Valpo on June 9 and he began work as President on July 1. Following are a few things that every student should know about one of Valpo's newest faces on campus.

Why did you decide on Valpo? What interested you about the school?

VU's mission is what attracted me here. Valpo is an institution grounded in the Lutheran tradition. Its commitment to prepare students to lead and serve in church and society, its strong sense of itself as an academic community, and its commitment to excellence in scholarship while remaining true to its history as a faith based institution had tremendous appeal.

What are your initial thoughts on being here? How have things been going so far?

First, I am impressed with the overall quality of VU. The students are first-rate. The faculty bring superb academic credentials, conduct significant scholarship, and demonstrate a real commitment to student learning. I am truly inspired by our faculty and students...It has been both exhilarating and exhausting!

How do you intend on working with and or improving the graduate program?

Later this fall, the University will engage in a conversation that will articulate a vision for its future. My hope is that this conversation will bring greater focus on the importance of growing a quality graduate program that will garner a comparable level of attention and care that the campus lavishes on our undergraduate population. I believe that graduate education presents a wonderful opportunity for our future and deserves an appropriate level of attention and support. I look forward to engaging the University community in dialogue on this concern and to developing strategies toward improving the graduate experience on campus and online.

What does the future hold for Valparaiso University as a whole?

Student demographics are changing and there is increased local and global competition for students. More universities focus on the applied aspects of educational programs as demands from future employers increase. We are under extraordinary economic pressures to keep the cost of education affordable and accessible for students from lower socioeconomic groups. These are significant challenges for the University, but I am confident that the kind of education that is the hallmark of the Valpo experience will be in even greater demand in the future. If the University is able to focus its efforts, to bring distinctiveness to everything that it does, and to offer programs of the highest quality, it will not only survive the challenges that are in store, but will thrive and prosper.



VU PRESIDENT
MARK HECKLER

Valpo Highly Ranked Again in US News & World Rankings*

While Valparaiso University is again identified as one of "America's Best Colleges" by U.S. News & World Report magazine in its annual rankings, the University has received additional recognition in a new category for universities that merit special attention. The University has been identified as one of the Midwest's top-ranked, master's-level universities for the 20th consecutive year, earning a No. 3 ranking in quality, and also cited as a "best value" with a No. 2 ranking in the Midwest.

In addition, Valparaiso is ranked third on a new list of "up and coming" institutions in the Midwest. The magazine created this additional category "to identify colleges and universities that have recently made striking improvements or innovations—schools everyone should be watching." Schools on the list were identified in a survey of university presidents, academic deans and deans of admission as institutions "firmly focused on improving the job they're doing today."

...Institutional rankings are compiled in a variety of categories according to mission and geographical region. Valpo is ranked among Midwestern universities that offer a full range of undergraduate and master's level programs. The magazine determines quality based on an evaluation of 15 "indicators of academic excellence" and an opinion survey of college and university academic leaders, and then ranks the schools in each of four geographic regions.

"While the U.S. News rankings are just one of many indicators of an institution's success, I find the rankings of Valparaiso confirm what we know: we have a highly respected academic program that is a tremendous value to students and their parents," President Heckler said.

"Perhaps the most telling ranking is the new list of 'up-and-coming schools.' Our place on that list confirms that Valparaiso is known throughout the country as being well positioned to break through to even higher levels of excellence and that we're an institution to watch."

**Excerpt of VU University Relations News Release*

Harmony through Music

More than 2,000 years ago, Confucius said: music should and is able to help bring harmony to the world. That's exactly what the Confucius Institute at Valparaiso University (CIVU), in cooperation with other Midwestern schools with Confucius Institutes, set out to do this month with the launch of the first Great Lakes Confucius Institute Music Festival.

The aim of bringing the troupe to the area was to promote Chinese culture throughout the Midwest. On September 16 and 20 (this time in conjunction with VU's symphony and five high school orchestras for a culminating gala concert) the Silk & Bamboo Performing Troupe—one of the largest performing companies of China—performed on campus.

The 25-member troupe comprised of instrumentalists, dancers, vocalists, acrobats, and even a puppet show actress, presented several programs through the Midwest featuring traditional Chinese instrumental and vocal music, folk dance, magic, excerpts from the most famous Beijing Opera classics and more.

Jin Zhang, an English Studies and Communication student from China said many of the Americans watching the shows seemed to appreciate them. "It's a kind of intercultural communication," Zhang said. "At the end [of each show], the audience gave an overwhelming applause for the performers." Zhang added that students were cheering throughout the shows and were interested in learning how to play the Chinese instruments.

"I was truly impressed and overcome with a sense of peace when I heard the other three performers," said Marsha Gerhardt, office assistant in the Graduate Studies and Continuing Education office. Gerhardt was unable to attend the troupe's on-campus performances but was able to attend a private performance, which included four troupe members—three instrumentalists and a magician. "These gifted performers left me wanting to learn and hear more," Gerhardt said. "It was definitely cultural and educational because it spoke to everyone in a universal language—music."



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