

The big picture

BY DALE ROGERS MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

The United States may be the most powerful country in the world, but we are far from worldly. Fewer than 20 percent of Americans possess a passport; only one of every four Americans follows international news, according to a recent study. The most-cited reason? U.S. citizens say they don't know enough about other countries to understand current world events.

Clearly, we have a problem, though not a new one. In today's world, made small by modern transportation and information technology, we can't afford to remain apart from the rest of the globe. We all need to see the big picture—to understand how our world is connected and appreciate its diversity and complexity. That means not only paying far more attention to the problems and perspectives of countries other than our own, but also learning more about the many peoples and cultures here at home. The U.S., after all, is not one monolithic society that speaks with a single voice; rather, we are a mosaic of ethnic, racial, gender, religious and economic communities, with many different cultures.

There is a growing realization that global and intercultural (or multicultural) education are closely related, requiring understanding of the world from viewpoints other than our own. I particularly like the way this convergence was described in a recent report from the Association of American Colleges and Universities as a "shared interest in understanding diverse cultures and understanding cultures as diverse."

My own commitment to global and intercultural awareness began with the eye-opening summer that I spent in Perigeaux, France, with the Experiment in International Living. The commitment increased as my parents traveled the world when my father served as the U.S. Attorney General and later as U.S. Secretary of State. Now, the phrase "our world family" takes on a new personal meaning; this August my husband and I and our daughters (Cynthia, Jessica and family) traveled to Zagreb to attend the marriage of our son, Clayton, to Antonia Daljev, who is Croatian.

These experiences help explain my belief that Wheaton's historic commitment to appreciating the world's diversity is so important. The study of global perspectives is infused throughout the curriculum and includes connections with racial, ethnic and gender issues. Former president Alice F. Emerson launched global awareness initiatives that provided students and faculty with increased opportunity to study abroad, and to



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share what they learned with others on campus. Since then, the college has expanded its international efforts. For instance, the Roberts College program sends Wheaton students to an English-language summer camp in Turkey, and the Davis International Fellows program allows students to pursue independent study and research abroad. And this summer Wheaton strengthened its partnership with the Vela School in South Africa, where faculty and students worked and learned together.

Still, we don't measure success solely by sending more students to study abroad or by expanding the countries they visit beyond the familiar Western European na-

tions (though we have done both). While these are important goals, we also are committed to furthering cross-cultural and global education on campus. The faculty are integrating a broad range of world perspectives into courses in every discipline; the new curriculum identifies cross-cultural knowledge as a key ingredient of a Wheaton education. Worldfest, the cultural programming series that runs throughout the year, is a notable example of an initiative that enriches campus life beyond the classroom. Students hunger for these experiences. Indeed, this year's Otis Social Justice Week program, which examined issues of race and class in the U.S., was organized with student help and provoked much thoughtful discussion in residence halls as well as classrooms.

Recognizing the importance of these programs, the college intends to intensify its efforts. This fall, the Center for Global Education will open in the Davis House, thanks to a generous and strategic gift from trustees Sukey Nichols Wagner '56 and Diana Davis Spencer '60. The expansion of international and cross-cultural internships and research opportunities for faculty and students will be an early focus, leveraging the already considerable impact of the Davis and Filene Fellows programs and the Mars Student/Faculty Research Partnerships. The center will develop and manage partnerships with institutions abroad, an important step in our efforts to broaden student and faculty involvement in study abroad, as well as boosting the effectiveness of our on-campus efforts.

The need for global and intercultural knowledge has never been more urgent. With the active support of the Wheaton community, our college will succeed in multiplying the connections that students are able to make among their studies and the world they are learning to understand and improve.