“Title VI is shorthand for a series of federal laws, the first in 1958, when the National Defense Education Act provided funding for institutions with demonstrated expertise in specific languages and areas of the world, so that those institutions could teach more students and scholars, prepare some of them for government service, and significantly extend that expertise to the community at large.

Title VI came at a time when the United States realized that to ensure its role as a world leader, the country couldn’t ignore the world. Sixty years on, the United States is at a juncture, a potential turning towards a new isolationism. IU’s first Bicentennial Symposium, “International Education at the Crossroads,” brought to Bloomington experts in language and area studies, science, sociology, education, and other disciplines—along with representatives of federal educational programs, business, and the military—to celebrate the anniversary of Title VI and to address the future of its mission.

Nearly all the current IU conference participants had benefited from Title VI programs as students, professors, or both. It would have been difficult to find anyone who questioned its value. But all recognized that those values are threatened now by the belief of many that the world is a dangerous place and the United States might be better off keeping it at bay. The challenge for the two days of meetings was less to assert the value of language and global cultural training, and more to find ways to communicate that value to the communities and states that the universities serve. Twenty-five speakers explored the impact of international education, and of Title VI specifically, in four main areas: national and international security, academic preparation, access to language and global training, and community outreach. A sampling of the presenters’ comments suggests their sense of urgency, the depth of their commitment, and the variety of solutions they proposed.

Participants had many answers, but certain themes stood out:

1. Global and international studies must not be isolated in a corner of the university curriculum, but should become a part of every subject area.
2. Language and area studies cannot be at the mercy of the latest global conflict, but rather must be ready to assist whenever and wherever crises arise.
3. It is a fallacy that because English is so widely spoken, mastery of other languages is no longer necessary.
4. Language education must start earlier and be a part of all elementary school students’ education.
5. International education is good preparation for the workplace, regardless of the type of job.
6. International education is local and global. Programs must reach out to their communities with teacher training programs and other opportunities to encounter global learning.
7. The United States’ power to lead and to do business in the world depends on its language and cultural expertise.

There is much to be gained by participating in a multilingual world and so much to lose if we remain stubbornly monolingual. The best strategy for responding to an unpredictable, ever-changing world is also the broadest strategy. Particularly in international education, we cannot afford to chase in intellectual fashion the forms of the latest global conflict to the exclusion of other regions, cultures, and languages.

Linguistic diversity is deeply embedded in our history. This diversity is a cherished part of our nation’s past, a fact of our present, and a key to our future.

“Title VI has allowed Indiana University and many other institutions represented in this room to build their capacity, to serve a wide array of stakeholders, ultimately making our country smarter, more prepared, and more secure.” – Hilary Kahn

“The increased study of languages is not only a political necessity but it is increasingly demanded by students, at least at IU.” – Michael McRobbie
I’m not so sure international education is what we should be doing. Maybe all of us in our profession should go from international education to the challenge of making international part of what it means to be educated.

In sociology, if I published in area studies journals, it would be seen as ghettoizing sociology. Area studies would see sociology as reducing global differences, as reducing them to a common denominator. The coming together of these two threads and making them speak to each other in new ways finally made me accepted. We understand nationalization and social relations much better if we come to that inquiry understanding what those regions are about.

The world has moved from international to global. The speed by which information, people, goods, and money move has changed. Things become important to understand in a global context, whatever you are studying. You sneeze in Iowa, the interest rates go up in India. Our perspective was a North American perspective. We need to recognize that there is a lot about the world we don’t understand. Columbia has an office in Amman, Jordan, not because we have the questions and answers, but because we want to identify with our peers the important questions that matter in that region. The same is true when we go into local communities like Harlem. We engage in a process of exchange.

We still create a relatively naïve vision of the world, a relatively naïve vision of education, and a relatively naïve vision of international education. We think that when students are exposed to something international, something will happen to them that will automatically make them globally-able students. Our assumption has been that open-minded individuals will become multiculturally tolerant and will become informed citizens, that they will now lead more interconnected societies that will increase economic welfare and will lead to more equal societies. We need to rethink the role of international education in a world which still has persistent social inequality and ideological polarization. We have been unable to make the case that international education is not something else, but is central to achieving the goals that are in the top level. We want to increase employability. We want to improve quality. We want to achieve equity and access. That is where international education needs to make the case that it is contributing to that. Otherwise we are going to be seen still as a marginal element of higher education. Nobody will make the case for us.
International education is more central to learning than ever before. Not a luxury for a few, but it is necessary for all our students to be open to the world and have some understanding of how the world impacts on us and how we impact on the world. We have to stop seeing other countries and other institutions in higher education as rivals. We are all neighbors.

Dawl Michele Whitehead
Senior Director for Global Learning and Curricular Change, Office of Integrative Liberal Learning and the Global Commons, Association of American Colleges and Universities

Our college student population is changing. The K–12 sector is becoming more and more diverse: These are students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students who are returning from the military or still in the military—nontraditional college students. We need to be ready for these changes at our institutions. We need to look at how we are engaging these students in international education.

Seventy-eight percent of employers agreed that college students should these students in international education.

Brian Edwards
Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Tulane University

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences reports on Language Education for the 21st Century mark the first time there has been a study on the national scale of language capacity and language learning since the Carter administration. We need to think what language learning means on a K–6 level, a K–8 level, a 9–12 level, and in colleges. The different levels are not talking enough to each other. It is crucial to build a language pipeline and develop partnerships in bridging these gaps. Language learning is a K–college proposition.

Kim Potowski
Professor, Spanish Linguistics, University of Illinois at Chicago

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Why do this? Baldwin asks. “Our language may never be a language important to global economy, global politics, but it’s important to us because it’s part of who we are, part of our identity, and it’s the most efficient and effective way for us to communicate culture. We have learned over the years that this is important to our youth, too. And they don’t have any other country to go to.”

In its “Call to Action,” the American Academy of Arts and Sciences included support for heritage and indigenous languages as one of its five priorities for language education in the United States. While the revitalization of Myaamia may not enhance U.S. powers in world affairs and business, it does drive home the importance of language to its speakers and the folly that relying on the world’s knowledge of English is sufficient to make our way in the world.

Daryl Baldwin (Kinwalanihia)
Executive Director, Myaamia Center, Miami University of Ohio

Baldwin introduced his session in a language that no-one else in a room full of language experts could understand. He then related (in English) the story of the 1846 forced resettlement of the Miami tribal nation from Ohio, Indiana, and Southwest Michigan first to Kansas and then to Oklahoma. “Resettled to what would become Oklahoma, less than 500 individuals stayed with the tribal nation. With the loss of land and population, depression, and many leaving to find work, the forced assimilation was highly successful. By the 1960s and 70s, the last speakers passed, leaving a huge cultural void in that community. The generation before me heard speakers or were around speakers, but my generation was not that fortunate.”

Two decades later, based on the work of linguist David Costa, on about three centuries of documentation, and with the support of Miami University, the Miami tribe began to revitalize their language, Myaamia. Today, young Myaamians can attend Miami University on generous scholarships as part of a heritage program that requires them to learn the language, culture, and modern issues of the Miami and to fulfill a capstone topic that gives back to the community.

Parents want this for their children, even parents in rural districts. Myaamia needed to be a language important to global economy, global politics. But it’s important to us because it’s part of who we are, part of our identity, and it’s the most efficient and effective way for us to communicate culture. We have learned over the years that this is important to our youth, too. And they don’t have any other country to go to.”

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Lee H. Hamilton
Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1965 to 1999; Distinguished Scholar, IU Hamilton Lugar School; Professor of Practice, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, IU Bloomington

If you’re gonna catch squirrels, you gotta go where the squirrels are. You have to have an outreach program. Indiana has a lot of expertise, but there is a tremendous gap between Washington County and Monroe County. How do you close the gap? They’re not going to come here. They’re suspicious of you and me. You’ve got to go to them. You have to know the county you are going to and have to go with a clear message of what needs to be done and why. You have to listen to things you are not going to like. You’re going to have to develop credibility. You do that by engaging them with their problems, listening to them, consulting with them at every step of the way. And keep the lines of communication open and clear.

How does the academic community best help me as policy maker?
I don’t find enough focus on that. Presidents know where they want to go, and they have a pretty good idea of what they want to try to accomplish. The tough question is tactical. How do we get there? That’s what I find missing in the academic discussion. What policy should be is an important debate. But another part for the policy maker is how we get there. There should be less emphasis on the policy debate and more emphasis on how to improve government, on the mechanics of making government work better.

Mary Sue Coleman
President, Association of American Universities

It’s encouraging that faculty members are seeing a role outside the walls of the university. I am impressed by the degree to which Title VI programs across the country are reaching out to K–12 schools, doing things in communities and helping teachers in a way that perhaps didn’t happen 30 years ago. It is really exciting to see the hunger and thirst of those communities to be involved. They see this as something very special.

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Kathleen Claussen
Associate Professor, University of Miami School of Law

There are communities in this country that are foreign to one another, and that too is part of global education and communicating across cultures. International education provides global competencies that include problem-solving skills, the ability to anticipate potential challenges, situating issues in a larger picture, familiarity with cultures, and cooperating as a team. Global education empowers professionals to engage global to global and back again.

Takyiwa Manuh
Director of the Social Development Policy Division at the UN Economic Commission for Africa [ret.]; former Director of Africa Studies, University of Ghana

We need to take community outreach much more seriously, especially in an atmosphere where expertise is questioned. We cannot take for granted that what we do has an ultimate good. We are going to have to be better at communicating and disseminating and engaging and dispelling many of the fears and the misunderstandings that communities have about our work.

Diane Auer Jones
Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Office of Post-Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

We need people who are in work-based learning programs and apprenticeships to also have fluency and also have cultural awareness, because even if somebody never leaves the United States, the day-to-day life at work in a job in the community requires you to have an understanding of languages and cultures. We know that international education bridges cultural divides and that it brings people together to celebrate their sameness rather than to exploit their differences.

The final session of the conference brought together representatives of units that support international education. They spoke to each other and to all the attendees about the programs they offer, the ways they define and measure global competencies, and their conclusions about the success of their efforts. Left to right: Anthony Koliha, Department of State; Robin Matoss Helms, American Council on Education; Cheryl E. Gibbs, Department of Defense; Sam Eisen, Department of Defense, and Tim Duvall, Department of Education.

Conference Panel Moderators
Lee Feinstein, Russell Valentino, Hannah Buabum, Patrick O’Meara (Indiana University)
Gil Latz, Tim Duvall (U.S. Dept of Education)