

New collaborative program brings Japanese Studies major to UWO

by Audralynn See - Monday, June 13, 2011

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Expanding the number of elective and advanced courses while increasing student progress is the goal of a new Japanese Studies major, a collaborative program between the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

UW Oshkosh began offering Japanese courses in 1987 and first offered a Japanese Studies minor in 2000. Since then the minor has become increasingly popular among students.

“As globalization advances and the world is becoming more interdependent to each other, I believe people are more aware of the importance of understanding different cultures,” said Yoshiro Hanai, coordinator of the UW Oshkosh Japanese Program. “It may also be true that growing interest in Japanese popular culture is greatly contributing to the recent increase of interest in Japan.”

Due to the increased globalization, international trade, travel and communication, the need for college graduates with foreign language or cross-cultural skills is growing rapidly.

A summary of the new Bachelor of Arts Japanese Studies program, approved by the UW System Board of Regents on June 10, describes its primary objective as, “Engaging students in an innovative, rigorous, multidisciplinary program that focuses on the language and culture of Japan and Japan’s unique and significant role in the global community.”

The collaborative program will allow for a wider array of offerings and more easily support degree completion than a major offered by one campus alone. Students will take the core language requirement on their home campus with the opportunity to take elective and advanced courses through online and distance education offerings of the other campus.

“Currently only one UW System campus offers an undergraduate major in Japanese Studies,” Hanai said. “Our program will allow more Wisconsin students to pursue a major in this field.”

The program goals include developing a broad understanding of Japanese studies, demonstrating oral and written communication skills, understanding and applying knowledge of human culture, understanding and applying intercultural knowledge and also applying effective research skills.

“The Japanese Studies major will be in congruence with the Governing Ideas and Strategic Directions of the UW Oshkosh that emerged from the recent strategic planning process, specifically the University’s commitment to globalization and diversity,” Hanai said. “By focusing on the study of Japanese language, culture, history, art, literature, religion and contemporary issues, the Japanese Studies Major will bring an awareness of this rich culture to the campus.”

At UW Oshkosh, the new Japanese Studies major is expected to enroll about 10 to 15 students each year.

A survey of Japanese Studies graduates at one college found them in jobs in government, technology positions (computer software and website construction), translation (written and simultaneous, newspaper reporter, cultural liaison for businesses), health care, law, education and the nonprofit sector, according to a summary of the program presented to the UW System Board of Regents.

“Many professional employment opportunities await graduates with a major in Japanese Studies,” Hanai said.