

URI FRENCH MAJOR EXPANDS INTO ONE OF LARGEST PROGRAMS IN U.S.

Alain-Philippe Durand, Associate Professor and Head of the French and Francophone Studies Program at the University of Rhode Island, has a mantra: "The B.A. in French- don't leave URI without it!" More and more students are taking his advice.

During the past six years, the undergraduate program in French at URI has become one of the largest language programs in the country. With only 30 students enrolled in the major in 1999, the number of students in the program has now tripled. At 108 students, the number majoring in the program has even surpassed those at Pennsylvania State University (90) and Harvard University (19).

Durand is excited by the program's expansion. "My colleagues and I are constantly working to develop a true sense of community," he said. "While our program is demanding, it is also a lot of fun. The opportunities for both French students and graduates are endless. Students have the chance to study abroad in various countries, including France, Morocco, Senegal, and Belgium where they can take classes, pursue internships—or both."

Beginning next academic year, thanks to a newly signed agreement, students will be able attend classes at *Université Laval*, one of Canada's leading universities. Laval is located in Quebec's historic capital city. It has received more than \$230 million in external funds last year for research and international cooperation.

Ninety-five percent of French majors are majoring in one or two other disciplines, and the majority of them graduate in four years.

"This is not your grandfather's language department," said Joseph Morello, Chair of URI's Department of Modern and Classical Languages. "Although we do maintain our traditional role of teaching language and literature, the department has also become the center for internationalizing the curriculum. Students studying engineering, business, government, science, education, or the social and health professions all have the opportunity to develop international and intercultural communication skills at URI."

Monica Reynolds, a senior studying French and international business, loved French in high school, and thought it would be a great way to make her international business major more versatile. "Not only will I be able to get a job in business, but with my French skills I'll have the chance to work almost anywhere in the world," Reynolds said.

The URI student developed a new appreciation for both the language and the cul-

ture when she traveled to Marseille, France for the business and French study abroad program during the spring 2005 semester. "It was so interesting to learn more about the people and their way of life, and to learn to speak the language better," she said.

The most popular dual programs the University offers in French include business administration, political science, pharmacy and the international engineering program (IEP). According to the URI IEP Web site, URI is educating "more bilingual and cross-culturally competent engineers than any other university in the country."

Lars Erickson, Director of the French IEP at URI, said many students come to him wondering why they should study French with engineering. "France is one of the strongest economic forces in Europe, with a highly trained workforce," Erickson tells them. "There are huge French investments in the U.S., as well as American investments in France, and the IEP has proven a clear demand for American trained engineers with good French skills."

Additionally, in the past few years graduates of the URI French program have:

- become M.A. and Ph.D. candidates at prestigious universities;
- landed jobs teaching French overseas;
- used their knowledge of the language to work for the Peace Corps; and
- been employed by major corporations around the world, such as General Electric, NYU in Paris, Saint Gobain, and 1-800-DENTIST.

To learn more about URI's French program, go to [www.uri.edu/artsci/ml/programs/french].

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