

INTERVIEW WITH ERIC KANE  
NO LOCATION GIVEN  
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SUBJECT: The International Affairs Program

START OF INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER (I): Okay, what is your relationship to the International Affairs Program?

ERIC KANE (EK): I am study abroad coordinator. So anyone who goes to another country I help them figure out where they want to go. I ask them the right questions, hopefully, to get them on track. Look at programs with them, kind of figure which one costs this and which one costs that what they want to do, what their major is what how the credits are going to transfer, and a lot of different, all the dynamics associated with where and why I try to help students [inaudible]

I: How did you get involved in this?

EK: I spent a year myself overseas. I spent a year in Japan. Program sponsored through northern. And because of that I just I started working with Hal last semester a couple of hours a week. And this semester, I graduated last semester, so I started coming part time fifteen hours a week, and that I finally had the opportunity to do more than open my mail and answer the phones.

I: What programs [inaudible]

EK: Oh, all kinds of them. There's three main parts. There's international studies majors, which Hal advises so that's one, like, line in the triangle. Then all the international students on campus, we have about a hundred and ten international students that we advise, Diana Luke is the coordinator of that. She's in the English department. And then the other part of it is those people who study abroad, which is what I do. So people can go, students, indigenous Yoopers, and such, who go to other countries, so it's those three areas, I guess that make [inaudible]

I: Why do you feel like [inaudible] small world [inaudible] for our international programs?

EK: Oh, golly, it's where we're going, isn't it? I mean every department, every major and every minor, all the people, and the communications exploding and you know, surfing on the super highway, and stuff. It doesn't matter where you go to school at you have to have those capabilities. And you got to be in touch with what's out there because if you isolate yourself, you're isolating your knowledge because all your competition coming from other universities, no matter how big or small, are going to have those capabilities, are going to have those resources, such as international students here have opportunities to study abroad. And you, you say we don't have them because we're a small university, a lot of people are going to not come here because of that because they're going to be looking for a university that's going to be able take them ahead, move them ahead into the future somehow. And it's extremely necessary, I think, for us to have a program.

I: You studied abroad. How important is that to [inaudible] [Laughing] um, would that be an important thing for everybody [inaudible] international type deal?

EK: Depends on what you mean by useful. Um, college isn't just about getting a degree and getting a job, college is about learning how to learn and learning what's out there and broadening yourself in a way that goes beyond I think just what high school will take you. I mean it's beyond memorization and it's beyond tables. [inaudible] and, that sense I think studying abroad should be a bigger part of everybody's education if it's possible. I know America is the only country in the entire world that doesn't require foreign languages for college students. The only one in the whole world and I think that's pretty sad, personally [laughing] But, um, as far as usefulness as people look at usefulness in a different light, think 'will this get me a job?' well, for a lot of people yeah, it will get you a better job or greater pay if you're bilingual or trilingual, or whatever. As far as usefulness to yourself, which is why you came to college in the first place, I don't think anyone can argue with that. I know it's been incredibly useful to me.

I: How?

EK: Before I left, before I went to Japan, I really didn't have any Japanese language experience, or the culture experience. I wasn't really standing in line. I kind of went over there because I wanted to do something different and get away for a while, get away from the grind. And now every time I hear 'Japan' on the radio or TV I turn right to it, or anything over in Asia basically, I've become a lot more attuned to that. You know it's opened my doors so I can see other things that I never would have paid attention to. Made an investment in something I cared about.

I: What are the future goals of the international programs office?

EK: Oh, we got tons of them. [laughing] We want to see, right now we are actually dealing a lot with a decrease in the number of international students on campus, right now. Like I said, there's only have about a hundred and ten of them. We'd like to see that number, which is a bit over one percent of our population at Northern, the national average is about 3.1 percent, and we'd like to see Northern's international population go up to about five by our centennial which is '99, 1999, so, if we can do that, that'd be terrific. We also have a, right now there's a marketing plan in existence to do that. Studying possibly getting [inaudible] along with more intensive recruitment in certain areas, um, actually overall recruitment but especially some areas that we have such as Malaysia [inaudible], where there are a lot of students coming from there, but if we have seventeen students coming from there, which is more than any other country in the world, then we still [inaudible] Thailand, We'd like to increase those numbers in students all over but especially from those areas. [Inaudible] And then there's students studying abroad, I'd like to see a lot more students go abroad.

I: How many are there right now?

EK: Currently studying, or like this like year? I think currently there are about ten students that are in another country, but most people will go for a semester. Um, and, in that case, we probably had about thirty go abroad, plus our Africa trip this summer which has fifteen, so if you include that, those people, that's forty-five people. That's only forty-five people a year, and that's not real big, we'd like to see that number go up to the hundreds.

I: Isn't there a trip to El Salvador?

EK: Yep, there's another trip to El Salvador which is coming up in August. Um, that's just a couple week course, and um, I actually talked to Mary Barnum [inaudible] who did that over Christmas break about Hendrickson who works for the newspaper, and they both said they [inaudible] And when everyone comes back from a foreign country, I always say 'I want to go there.' You just get a little bug in your veins, you're just like 'I wanna go, I wanna go' It doesn't matter where but you just want to go learn about other people, languages, and cultures, and you realize sitting in Marquette we're kind of isolated

I: Right,

EK: And that's too bad.

I: Okay, um, how long has this been, [inaudible]

EK: Since last summer, this is where I'm not really sure of... I know Hal would be better able to answer this, I believe it was since last summer that the department was established, as before it was separate departments. There was the office of international education, which was Dr. Saari was the head of that. And there was multi-cultural affairs, which handled all these international students. Where they figured 'why not combine them?' you know, and make an international place just as you see in our letterhead that's what it was called, and on our address here. International place. This is where all of the international things take place. It's this office, and so we consolidated that and now that's why we have the three facets we do now. Because Hal used to be the international studies major advisor and now that's the part of his office [inaudible] multicultural affairs, and the international education part. So they're all combined.

I: How many majors are there in the international education?

EK: Thirty-eight. Thirty-eight international studies majors. And right now we're making an effort to get more than that. We'd like to see more people and the neat thing about that major is that unlike a lot of majors, it's not really constrictive to minors. Because, and I think that speaks about internationalism in general, because it's open. Everything is going international. You can be a geography major and you can be, I wrote a letter today about it. You can be, what, a communications you can be any of the sciences, any kind of major you want to be, or minor, you know, and it's going to have international implications. And if you speak two languages or if you speak two languages, or if you understand cultures, then you're a step above the person who just knows specifically about that major. The person with a business degree is going to have a real rough time making it if their only language is English. And there, it's hard to find companies now-a-days that don't have international interest. If you want to move up that ladder and go the places the business is going, you have to have that knowledge. If you know you're stuff then you don't have to pick up those skills somewhere else, so why not pick them up in college like you're supposed to be doing. That's why the international studies major requires you to study abroad for at least twelve weeks.

I: How long has that been offered at Northern?

EK: I don't remember. Um,

I: Okay, then,

EK: Yeah, I don't know, I think it's about- we have majors graduating now, we've had majors in the past graduate. So, I know it's also fairly new, so I'd guess probably not longer than ten years, maybe seven or so, I don't know. I wouldn't quote me on anything there because I really don't know.

I: [Inaudible]

EK: Yep, that sounds about right, about seven or eight years or so. I would have loved if it had existed before that.

I: What kinds of problems has the department run into?

EK: Money. Give us money. No, um, we inherited the budgetary things, you know. We just, it's been tough because right now there is no budget because we don't know how much we're going to spend. You know, because all the different offices combined and kind of put everything together. And figure out what the costs are going to be that in addition to what we want to do as far as expanding and the number international students and number of students studying abroad, it makes it difficult to say how much money we need. So therefore it's difficult justifying any expenses. Because you can't see the future.

I: So if the budget, if you really held it back, grow?

EK: Well, I think, you know what I think, I think we're dealing with a really good job with what we have and I think that the usefulness and purpose of this office is going to be seen soon. And you know I can't complain too much about anything, but we're doing the best with what we have now and that's all you really can say about it. Until we can get some more monies.

I: Okay, what can you tell me about the International Student Association?

EK: International Student Association is the International Student Club, is uh, I think all international students are automatically members into that club. There's no dues or fees or whatever to get into it, it's just a club for international students to get together. And like the International Food Fest is something that they put on.

I: On Sunday?

EK: Yeah, going to be this Sunday.

I: And what does that offer them?

EK: What does it offer the students?

I: Yeah.

EK: I think it offers them a place, well obviously it's a meeting place, besides orientation, to get a chance to meet, well, particularly more informally. It provides a list of all the international students from our office, so we know, updated address list and stuff like that. Well, hopefully it will. It's what we're hoping it does. Sometimes it falls short. But overall I think it's a really [inaudible] way for the president or vice president, he'd be a real good person to talk to on that. I know I'm not real involved with them, right, I

hear all this stuff from just being here, the office and in the study abroad. It's actually called the 'CASA' which is house or home in Spanish, Cultural Awareness Study Abroad organization. And that organization is pretty much brand spanking new, um, it just started this last semester. Well, actually it was going last year, some people started it up last year, but there weren't a whole lot of members in it or involved. And now this year we have about twenty-five people signed up on the list although we haven't been coordinated to do all that stuff yet, now we have tables up and we've had a couple of socials and stuff with them as a group but we haven't made, the group hasn't made much,

I: Are you a part of that?

EK: I kind of kicked it, kick started it early in the fall.

I: Oh, really?

EK: Yeah, we had it going, we had all the information meetings, and got that going, we got officers elected. And then the new president got a job at, right now he's working on we're doing some things, and he's looking into getting it into like a national organization. And they do have a national study abroad association type, like a fraternity of sorts but not that social stigma aspect. It's more like a service community would be, a certain international [inaudible]

I: Has it been hard to find a lot of students who are [inaudible]

EK: No, actually, at the first couple of meetings we had tons of people, everybody's like, 'yeah, I'd love to be a part, I'd love to be a part.' I got geography majors, and all those people had an interest in international things because they could go places, a lot of people were really interested in it. That interest is still there, it's just, the group has to get something concrete, some goals, and some stuff like that to get going. And right now we're, we're building some leadership. Really any organization can't expect them to go out and win organization of the year first year, or second year, no you have to build that up, build up strength and build up somethings you have done in the past, establish some traditions. Stuff like that, and that's somethings we have been doing. Uh, we're working on it. Why, are you interested in it?

I: I'm thinking about it. Okay.

EK: Ha [Inaudible]

I: Well thank you very much, I got a lot of background.

END OF INTERVIEW