WKU aspires to be a leading American university with international reach. For WKU’s faculty and students, extending the university’s international reach is more than simple rhetoric or academic theory! It’s a practical necessity demanded by rapidly changing global conditions. Every WKU graduate in the future will be living and working in communities that are increasingly shaped by international political, economic, and environmental changes. Whether it’s a rural farming community in southeastern Kentucky, a major metropolitan area, or any location in between, no place or individual remains unaffected by globalization. From the food we eat, the entertainment we consume, and the clothes we wear, to the oil we need and the air we breathe, our local lives are inextricably intertwined with international forces.
WKU's graduates must develop a greater understanding and awareness of their place in the global system in order to live more productive and rewarding lives. WKU's internationalization initiatives are designed to help create that awareness and greater understanding of the wider world. From study abroad programs to global research projects, and from hosting international students on campus to embedding a more intentional international engagement component in courses and programs, WKU's faculty are deeply engaged in preparing their students for success in a global society.

Many academic programs at WKU have a long history of engaging with communities other than their own. For example, geographers and geologists have always centered their research in a wider world context, as the very nature of a "geo" or spatial perspective demands a global approach. Over the past decade, faculty and students from the Department of Geography and Geology have visited all seven of the planet's continents and crossed its many oceans and seas multiple times. They have built strong research partnerships with other faculty and students in places as distant from Bowling Green as Guilin (China), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Oxford (England), and Bhutan, Botswana, Colombia, and Indonesia, to name but a few.

Study abroad programs, research projects, and other academic activities have taken Geography and Geology faculty and students to at least 75 countries during the past 10 years. Each year the department runs study abroad programs to different parts of the world as part of its global education initiatives. In recent years, students from across the WKU campus have

Leadership Studies and Geography students explore urban growth and change in Paris.
Romanian graduate student Narcisa Pricope enters data deep underground as part of her master's thesis research in the Upper Green River Basin.

WKU Department of Geography and Geology faculty and students in the Atacama Desert, Chile, on the annual study abroad field camp program.

traveled to Tanzania, the Yucatán, the Bahamas, Australia, France, Chile, Argentina, Britain, Ireland, and other exciting destinations to study geography, culture, geopolitics, geology, and environmental change. In exchange, faculty and students from Brazil, Britain, China, Colombia, Ghana, India, Iran, Korea, Mexico, Nicaragua, Romania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, and Taiwan, among other destinations, have studied in the department and have contributed to the intellectual vitality of WKU and its wider community.

Similar stories about international engagement can be found in academic departments across the campus, with new initiatives and opportunities developing almost weekly. Indeed, throughout the University, faculty and students are engaged in myriad activities that are global in scope. WKU has recently joined a national effort to promote internationalization and to understand how different programs and faculty are engaging with global issues. Each college has representation on WKU's recently established International Education Council, which works to encourage study abroad, international research, and student/faculty exchanges. Moreover, each college has established its own international education committee in order to help create international opportunities for faculty and students and to better harmonize college strategies with the overall internationalization mission of the University. Innovative short-term and semester-long study abroad programs are now available to students, not only through the long-established consortia like KISS (Kentucky Institute for International Study) and CCSA (Cooperative Center for Study Abroad) but also through newly established department-
tal programs. Spend a year in Spain or a semester in Japan, a month studying the Mediterranean world or two weeks in the Bahamas – the academic choices for today’s WKU students are varied and the destinations exciting!

Many WKU alumni were fortunate to have participated in a study abroad program during their college years, or have traveled and worked internationally since leaving the Hill. They know that a broader perspective on the world around us is critical not only for the nation’s long-term success but also for their own and their community’s growth and development. It’s not surprising, then, as WKU’s new capital campaign seeks support for the University’s internationalization efforts, that the alumni will play a crucial role in WKU’s efforts to become a leading American university with international reach. As WKU transitions to an academic community that thinks globally while acting locally, in addition to thinking locally while acting globally, more exciting opportunities for faculty and students to engage more productively with the world around them are emerging. From research on water quality in southwestern China, analyses of animal DNA in Kenya, sociological studies of the indigenous Mayan communities in Chiapas, or mapping land ownership in Colombian cities, to understanding economic structures in Nepal, the possibilities for WKU faculty and students to better understand the global human condition are endless. Linking the local to the global at WKU has never been more exciting or rewarding!