This year was an exciting one for the International Studies Program. We made a few changes in the major, adding a Development Studies Track as an option for students majoring in International Studies. Students will now also be able to create their own thematic track. This new change will help students focus on the topics and issues they feel most passionate about.

We also now have two departmental scholarships that help offset the cost of studying abroad for a semester.

The Olga Fischer-Proehl International Studies Scholarship was established in 2015 and draws from an endowment created in honor of Olga Fischer-Proehl, a German business woman of great strength, courage, and perseverance who accepted an extraordinary challenge when her husband suddenly died during early post WWII years and when there were three children under twelve to be raised. She decided to continue running the foundry, Uerdinger Metallwerke Wilhelm Fischer, which the couple had started in the late thirties. She did so successfully for the next three decades. The Olga Fischer-Proehl Scholarship was established by her daughter, Jutta Fischer Anderson, as a lasting remembrance of her mother’s life and accomplishments in the male-dominated heavy metal industry.

The $3,000 scholarship is awarded each year by the International Studies Board to an outstanding female International Studies major and is designed to assist the student financially while studying abroad. Claire Eichhorn is the 2017-18 award recipient. Claire will spend Spring Semester 2018 at the Universidad Torcuato di Tella in Buenos Aires. Congratulations, Claire.

The Melin International Studies Scholarship is the newest scholarship offered to IS majors. In June 2016, the Reverend John C. Melin, Luther class of 1970, his wife Barbara, and John’s Brother Bennett Melin generously created the Melin International Studies Scholarship. The scholarship was created in appreciation of the quality of the liberal arts education offered and received at Luther and as a means of helping students fulfill their dreams of studying internationally. Because of the donors’ interest in lifting up study abroad possibilities in less traveled locations, the primary preference for the scholarship is to an International Studies major with a focus on non-European or developing nations with a particular preference for Sub-Saharan African nations.

The 2017-18 award recipient of the Melin International Studies Scholarship is Abby Vidmar. Abby will use this very generous $10,000 scholarship this Fall Semester on her ACM program entitled, Ecology and Human Origins, located in Arusha, Tanzania.

Our students also participated in a number of off-campus activities. In November of 2016 four IS majors participated in the American Model United Nations Conference in Chicago, Illinois. Kylie Hanschman ’17, Emily Alcock ’17, and Anna DeWitt ’19 represented Belarus; and Nazário dos Santos ’19 represented Malta in this
conference that draws over 2,000 students from over 100 institutions all over the world.

Also in November, Vicky Torrillas ’17, presented the paper "Presidential Image Before and After a Crisis: Examining Newspaper Coverage of Dilma Rousseff in Brazilian Newspapers in 2013 and 2015" at the 49th Annual Conference of the North Central Council of Latinamericanists at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

In February of 2017, four IS majors presented papers at the Illinois Wesleyan Undergraduate Human Rights Conference. Sarah Grabe ’17 presented the paper “Low Fertility in Europe: A Women’s Rights Issue.” Anna Vazquez ’17 presented the paper “Rights For the Rapist or the Victim?” Emily Alcock ’17 presented the paper “The Feminization of Migration: Peruvian Domestic Workers in Chile.” Bernarda Kaculete ’17 presented the paper “Female participation in politics and labor force and its impact on gender inequality and domestic violence.”

In April of 2017 five IS majors participated in the Model European Union Conference at the University of Indiana. Vicky Torrillas ’17, Bernarda Kaculete ’17, Nazário dos Santos ’19, Asha Aden ’20, and Emma Johnson ’20 represented Portugal in this conference that brings colleges and universities from all over the country to discuss issues related to the European Union.

As you can see, 2016-2017 was a busy year for the International Studies program and the students majoring in IS. 2017-2018 is shaping up to be as exciting with as many students engaging with the world beyond Luther College in meaningful ways.