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UW part of national effort for greater ties with Indonesia

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News and Information

For 16 years, Randall Kyes, research professor in psychology and director of [the UW Center for Global Field Study](#), has led undergraduate and graduate students on fieldwork expeditions to Indonesia.

Once on Tinjil Island, a biodiversity hotspot and home of one of Southeast Asia's premier primate natural habitat breeding facilities, students conduct their own field studies while developing research relationships with Indonesian students and researchers.

Now Kyes' program, [International Field Study Program-Indonesia](#), is getting a financial boost from the feds. The UW is one of six U.S. universities to receive funding from the U.S. Department of State's [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) to increase the number of American students studying in Indonesia, the [fourth most populated country](#) in the world.



Entang Iskandar

Randall Kyes with UW students during a field course discussion group on Tinjil Island in 2008.

Worldwide, Indonesia is also the third most populous democracy and has the largest Muslim population. Its more than 17,000 islands make it the world's biggest archipelagic country.

The funding, which is part of the State Department's two-year [U.S.-Indonesia Partnership Program for Study Abroad Capacity](#), reflects the Obama administration's interest in cultivating relationships with Indonesia as a way to improve opportunities for business, education, science and technology partnerships between the two countries.

The [Institute of International Education](#), a nonprofit that coordinates international exchange programs such as [the Fulbright Program](#), will oversee the U.S.-Indonesia study abroad partnership.

Kyes, a core scientist at the [Washington National Primate Center](#), has been conducting primate field research in Indonesia since 1990. He said: "I'm very pleased to see that the U.S. government is working to improve ties with Indonesia. I believe this initiative is an important step in helping to expand the study abroad opportunities in Indonesia which ultimately will serve to benefit both countries."

The UW is among the most active U.S. universities in Indonesia with faculty and staff throughout campus doing fieldwork and other studies there.



Group photo including Randall Kyes (top row, far left) and UW and Indonesian students participating in the 2010 field course on Tinjil Island, Indonesia.

“The UW has emerged as an acknowledged national leader in Indonesian studies, with research strengths across the entire spectrum of disciplines, including language, culture, history, law, public health, anthropology and environmental science,” said Stephen Hanson, UW vice provost for global affairs.

Kyes’ program, in particular, has been “one of the real pioneers in bringing American students to study in Indonesia, working alongside their Indonesian colleagues on crucial issues involving environmental preservation,” Hanson said.

The State Department funding to UW will be used for student stipends for Kyes’ summer program, [International Field Study Program-Indonesia](#). The stipends will help defray the costs of travel to Indonesia and will be available for next summer’s expedition, June 28 to July 24, 2012.

[Application information](#) will be available later this summer and applications will be due in February 2012.

The summer program includes a required pre-trip preparation course offered during the spring quarter at UW. The course covers basic Bahasa Indonesian conversation skills, planning student research projects for the trip and preparing students for what they should expect while living on Tinjil, a remote island with no permanent residents.

“Students get to experience firsthand what it is like to live in a tropical jungle setting while conducting research,” Kyes said. Daily life includes hardships with pesky insects, temperature extremes and lack of running water and electricity.

This year three students, two from UW and one from the University of Texas at San Antonio, will accompany Kyes to Indonesia.

More than 60 UW students have participated in the month-long summer program since it began in 1995. The program is conducted in collaboration with Bogor Agricultural University and also involves Indonesian students.

The students have conducted surveys of vegetation and biodiversity, such as in crabs, reptiles, birds and coral populations. Following Kyes’ expertise, other students have studied primate behavior, including sexual and feeding behaviors, dominance, mother and infant relationships and issues of human-wildlife conflict.

The students get a vivid experience with fieldwork while learning about the interactions between conservation biology and global health.

“The environment and human health are intimately linked, and we are seeing increasing appreciation of the need to study these areas as an integrated system,” Kyes said. “To be effective in conservation, we have to be aware of human impacts on the environment.”