The first full calendar year during which the Office of Overseas Study carried out its operations in the Leo R. Dowling International Center at 111 S. Jordan Avenue was 2013. While the Center may have outgrown the needs of IU’s ever-expanding international student population, it has turned out to be an ideal location for study abroad activities. Undergraduate students who live in the residence halls near the Center stop in on their way to class to look over numerous resources as well as check in with the Overseas Study advising staff, who are available for walk-in appointments every day.

For more than 40 years, IU students have had a centralized place to inquire about study abroad opportunities all over the world. The relocation of Overseas Study to the Dowling International Center coincided with its fortieth anniversary. To commemorate the occasion, the office hosted a special reception on December 7, 2012, to welcome friends and colleagues to its new space to recognize four decades of study abroad programming. In its 40 years of operation, the office had sent 40,000 students abroad. In honor of the move and the occasion, the main meeting room in the Center was named after the founding director of Overseas Study, Professor Walter T. K. Nugent, who first took on responsibility for study abroad when he was associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1967 to 1972 and then founded the office in 1972. He selected renovated space in the refurbished old library on Indiana Avenue, now Franklin Hall. Nugent expanded study abroad programming and built institutional systems to facilitate student registration and financial aid portability from throughout the IU system while also ensuring quality oversight by a centralized faculty committee. He was associate dean for international programs from 1974 to 1976 before leaving Overseas Study to devote himself full time as chair of the IU Bloomington Department of History. Now a professor emeritus from the University of Notre Dame, he was present at the anniversary event for the naming of the Nugent Room, which was a surprise to him and to the attendees.

The Nugent Room has hosted myriad events in the past year, including information and orientation sessions for students, workshops on study abroad for faculty and staff, welcome events for high school students and their parents on Red Carpet Days, and video conferencing with students abroad to bring together outgoing students.
with their peers who are already abroad. The Office of Overseas Study also employs a dozen peer counselors who are available on a daily basis. They are returnees who were abroad for a semester or an academic year and have undergone training to assist prospective participants. Working with students allows returners to articulate the steps they themselves went through to choose a program, prepare for it, and successfully complete all aspects of the experience. Increasingly, students also have volunteer and internship experiences as part of their programs abroad. In fact, Overseas Study created a new advising position to concentrate on experiential programming—service learning, internships, volunteering, or research.

Study abroad is now considered an integral part of an IU degree. On the IU Bloomington campus, 25 percent of students who graduate with a B.A. or B.S. degree have had at least one international credit-bearing experience. And IU was ranked by the Institute of International Education as fifth in the U.S. for the total number of students abroad for 2011–12.

The culmination of the anniversary recognition efforts will be the publication of the history of Overseas Study at Indiana University this spring, as recounted by all of its directors. IU students have left their global footprint for many decades and will continue to do so in the coming years. The written history provides insight into how programming decisions were made and how participation went from 100 students a year in the 1960s to 3,000 students today.

A segment from the soon-to-be-published 40th Anniversary Retrospective: Overseas Study at Indiana University (Kathleen Sideli and Walter Nugent, editors)

As recounted by Merle E. Simmons (1918–2008) in 1992 about his site visit to Europe with Dean Doner, Purdue University, in 1966.

The students being gathered around us in Hamburg, we asked them what they had to report about their experience abroad. Our queries at first met with almost total silence. The students were simply taking time to think before formulating their answers. There was no attempt by the students to dazzle either Dean Doner or me or their fellow students with the brilliance of their observations; rather they all seemed to be genuinely concerned with convincing us that considerable thought had gone into the formulation of their usually very quiet and very responsible answers.

In Strasbourg the atmosphere at our interview was much more lively. Students were quite animated and even emotional, though they always displayed also a certain basic intellectual discipline. They seemed to want to bring great intelligence to bear upon their analysis of all problems. A French eighteenth-century rationalist like Voltaire or Rousseau would have been proud of them. Dean Doner and I felt that our group interview had been very fruitful and we came away impressed by the quality of the thought processes that went into our students’ responses.

Madrid was another world. Dean Doner and I could hardly ask a question before we were besieged by spontaneous and multitudinous answers coming from all directions. There was no hesitancy on the part of anyone to express himself/herself with confidence and vehemence on practically any topic that came up. Nor was there any hesitancy to step on or interrupt someone else’s comments in midair. The volatility of the Madrid group coupled with its very constructive attitude and its determination to give Dean Doner and me a real earful were overwhelming.

So it was that Dean Doner and I concluded that there were certain normative psychological differences between the German, French, and Spanish cultures which our students had picked up as part of their acculturation process. An interesting phenomenon, it led us to reflect that not all popular stereotypes should be considered either totally groundless or destructively negative in their consequences. On the contrary, our students in Hamburg, Strasbourg, and Madrid all seemed to have turned whatever allegedly stereotypical characteristics they had acquired from their contact with their respective cultures into real positives. In so doing they had simply succeeded in becoming in some small measure Germans, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, at least for the time they resided in Europe.

Merle E. Simmons led in the founding of the academic-year programs in Madrid, Strasbourg, Hamburg, and Bologna, and he created two programs in Mexico and a graduate program in Madrid.