Thirty high school students from the United States and Europe came to Bloomington to participate in the first Institute for International Studies from July 7 to July 27.

Center Director Brian Winchester said the institute is financed by a grant from IU President Myles Brand's Strategic Directions Charter and a small tuition fee each student pays for the three-week program. Winchester, who just took over direction of the center, said he is planning a complimentary teacher's institute next summer.

"We have high school programs for chemistry and music, but this is the first time we've sought out bright high school students interested in international studies."

Winchester said highlights of the institute included a problem-solving obstacle course, an environmental simulation game called "Fishbank," and lectures on international conflicts by U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, R-Ind., and former U.S. Rep. Frank McCloskey, D-Ind. Students also took part in an interactive video conference with South African high school students at a similar program at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Winchester said, "We thought it would be useful if they had a dialogue with kids their own age in another country."

Arsenal Technical High School social studies teacher Ron Reichel is one of a select group of Indiana high school faculty that the institute is using to mentor students. Reichel said Arsenal is an Indianapolis "foreign language magnet school" that ties language study to an international studies program. He said the institute's quest to involve teenagers in international issues mirrors Arsenal's approach.

"We've attempted to get kids to think globally but act locally with what they learn," Reichel said. "They engage in projects having to do with things like AIDS or hunger or whatever."

One of those students is Ryan Olesh, a junior at Burke High School in Omaha, Nebraska. Although the students had been on the campus just a few days, Olesh said they had already participated in "Fishbank," which challenges students to manage their own fishing company.

"It's hard to tell at what point your ships won't bring in any more fish because of environmental and other factors, and your revenue begins to go down," Olesh said. "We learned that competitiveness will eventually degrade our non-renewable resources."

Olesh said he had considered going on a trip to Israel this summer, but decided on the IU Institute instead. He said he liked the institute's focus on public policy problems.

"I think it's really important for teenagers to be aware and have a larger impact," Olesh said. "Some of these issues are controversial, but I don't think that takes away from the importance of the topics."

— Andrew Moulton
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