REEI/SPEA Dual Degree Graduates
Earn International Internships

This year, the dual degree program of the Russian and East European Institute (REEI) and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) at Indiana University Bloomington has placed five graduate students—a record number—in the U.S. Department of State internship program. The internship program has existed for more than 20 years to give undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to gain firsthand experience in international diplomacy and foreign service. Competition for overseas postings in the program is very high. Interns work with a mentor in a specific section of the U.S. embassy in the country to which they are assigned. The interns do serious work, drafting diplomatic cables, attending senior-level staff meetings, and helping with arrangements for special visitors and events.

The five students, who are pursuing an REEI master’s degree concurrently with a SPEA master’s in public administration degree, will take up their internships in the summer of 2004. Richard Bakewell will be working in Sofia, Bulgaria. Stephanie Hockman has been assigned to work in Uzbekistan. Karen Kowal has accepted an assignment in Chisinau, Moldova. Aron Liptak will be working in Tbilisi, Georgia. Steven Page will intern in Prague, Czech Republic.

The REEI/SPEA dual master’s degree program was created in the late 1990s and currently enrolls a dozen students. The program appeals to students who wish to combine their overseas experience and language study with a set of professional skills for work in public administration or government service. Many of those enrolled are returned Peace Corps volunteers who have served in the region. Eight students have completed the dual degree program since its inception, and all have gone on to employment in government and nonprofit agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Eurasia Foundation, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, and the Urban Institute.

Last summer, dual degree graduate Mark Betka wrote this description of his internship at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, Poland. “My internship was invaluable to me for many reasons, chief among them the breadth of substantive experience I gained. As an intern in the political section there, I was tasked with interviewing local leaders, drafting reports on political developments, and updating the State Department’s Annual Report on Religious Freedom. State Department interns are expected to fully contribute to their assigned post.”