

The Wheaton Record

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Wheaton to offer Intercultural Studies M.A. in Hong Kong

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Wheaton College will offer an Intercultural Studies graduate degree at Lumina College in Hong Kong beginning Sept. 2018. The final contract was signed in Hong Kong in July 2017. Lumina will act as the host for the M.A. degree, requiring that students apply through Wheaton, and employing professors from Wheaton College, including Intercultural Studies Professors Scott Moreau, Robert Gallagher and Susan Greener, to teach the classes in English.

Academic Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of Intercultural Studies Scott Moreau explained that the process of creating the program began about three years ago when Academic Dean Nick Perrin took a trip to Hong Kong and met President of Lumina, Wing-Tai Leung. Leung had recently started Lumina to bring a Christian liberal arts education to Hong Kong. "Lumina wants to offer 5 M.A.'s and Wheaton is the first one they approached to see if we wanted to come on board with them," Moreau said. According to Moreau, the Intercultural Studies degree seemed like the most sensible choice for Wheaton to offer internationally.

One of the reasons that Lumina approached Wheaton was their attraction to a Christian liberal arts degree. Interim Dean of the Humanities and Theological Studies Lynn Cohick said "in many parts of the world, a liberal arts education is not common." [There is a] "richness that a liberal arts education brings in thinking theologically and analyzing the Bible," she said. "[Hong Kong] just [doesn't] have that, it's much more of a research university model ... [Lumina] wanted that component of thinking broadly and biblically."

It took about a year for the contract to be written and signed by both Wheaton College and Lumina. Then, a 30-page document was submitted to the Hong Kong government for approval. Once approved, Wheaton will ask its own accreditors for approval. After this process is completed, Lumina can begin recruitment and classes are set to start on Sept. 18, 2018.

Lumina currently has three master's programs listed on their website: Wheaton's M.A. in Intercultural Studies, Asbury University's M.A. in Communication: Digital Storytelling, and Cairn University's M.B.A, all of which are still pending approval from the government.

The M.A. in Intercultural Studies will take three to five years to complete and is offered on a part-time basis with 10 courses in total, or 36 credits. These courses are hybrid, with students meeting two full days for face-to-face instruction at the beginning of the course, followed by online tutorials and coursework. Students will take one course each semester for all three semesters in a year (summer, fall and, spring).

The program is based on a hybrid model because since Wheaton is not targeting full-time students, but rather "looking for people who are already professionals, who perhaps are working for Christian churches or ministry agencies, but even professionals who are working in secular settings and need to improve their skills in being able to communicate better across cultural boundaries," Moreau explained.

According to Cohick, working with Lumina also brings Wheaton new resources and opportunities. There is a “desire for Christian communities around the world to work together. It really is a partnership There is a sense in which Lumina gives us opportunities to think broadly and deeply about the global church as it relates to cross-cultural engagement all for the purpose of presenting the gospel faithfully,” she said.

Moreau envisions the program to eventually support “three cohorts going through — of 25 students each —, with 75 students altogether.” In the meantime, Lumina needs 10 students to start the program in September, or they will have to wait until the next year to begin recruiting.

All students must apply through Wheaton and have status as full Wheaton students, though they will live and study in Hong Kong.

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