

## A Royal Success! The 2012 AIS Conference

*By Scott L. Crabill*

*Interim Vice Provost*

*for Undergraduate Education, Oakland University*

*2012 Conference Chair*

The 34th Annual AIS conference was held in Rochester, Michigan, sponsored by the Bachelor of Integrative Studies Program and the Office of Undergraduate Education at Oakland University. The conference was held in a picturesque setting at the Royal Park Hotel, situated amongst scenic trails, waterways, and a quaint downtown area. The theme for this year's conference was "Public Policy and the Promise of Interdisciplinary Dialogue," which featured keynote speakers and conference sessions that addressed the role of IDS within the future of higher education.

The keynote speakers did a fantastic job in addressing this year's theme and providing participants with much to think about in regard to the dialogue of IDS in the public sphere. Dan Butin (Dean of Education at Merrimack College) kicked the conference off with an energetic after-dinner speech that engaged and enticed participants to think deeply and critically about the relevance of IDS on the college campus, in particular the connections of IDS within the "Engaged Campus." Our speaker on Friday, Jeff Williams (Public Sector Consultants), brought the discussions into the realm of the workforce and political landscape. Employers and policymakers are noticing the relevance of IDS. The final speaker of the conference, Torin Monahan (Vanderbilt University) rounded out our speaker series by addressing the role of IDS within the work of surveillance, privacy, and security (SurPriSe). His was an engaging and sobering glimpse into the freedoms and privacy at risk with emerging technologies. Many were relieved to know that there is someone doing the important research of taking pictures of those taking pictures of us.

Approximately 121 people from the U.S., Canada, China, and Europe attended this year's conference. A highlight for many of us at the conference was the inauguration of the new international undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies Honors Society, Alpha Iota Sigma, which inducted 14 inaugural students from eight chapters at institutions across the United States. A special thanks to Pauline Gagnon and Michelle Buchburger and their committee, for the tireless work that went into creating the by-laws and identifying the founding members and institutions. Founding institutions and Honor Society advisers include the following:

- Baylor University – Anne Marie Schultz
- Franklin University – Michelle Buchberger
- College of the Holy Cross – Richard Matlak
- Oakland University – Julie Borkin
- Michigan State University – Christina DeJong
- SUNY Postdam – Gerald Ratliff
- University of Southern Florida – Melissa Sloan
- University of Texas at Arlington – James Welch

The role of the honor society in future conferences will be an added dimension to the conference and an exciting way to include student voices in research as well.

We were fortunate that the rain and cold held off until Saturday, allowing participants to enjoy chilly mornings and warm sunny afternoons for most of the conference. The gorgeous weather allowed many to venture out to the outdoor trails for a walk along the water and venture into town for shopping and some exquisite dining.

On behalf of the nine members of the Oakland University AIS conference planning team, we were honored to host this event. We truly feel that all the planning in the world does not make a great conference; it is the people who attend and participate. We look forward to seeing you in Ohio next year at the conference hosted by Miami University – Ohio.