

"The goal of Valencia's Global Distinction (VGD) is to prepare students to live and work in an interdependent and multicultural world, while having the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a competent global citizen." The program, therefore, provides Valencia students with the opportunity to learn and practice the principles of how to live in and contribute to a growing interdependent and multicultural world. Its brief history, below, reflects not just the dedication of a group of faculty and administrators to bring this program into fruition, but also Valencia's commitment to global learning and experiences.

In 2011, under the leadership of SAGE Director Jennifer Robertson, Valencia took the first steps toward VGD by surveying faculty, staff, and students for their thoughts on what it means to be a global citizen. Over 1,300 participated in establishing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the Global Citizen Competencies, one of our founding documents. The Internationalizing the Curriculum Committee held the kickoff INZ!: the Big Event, on June 28, 2013 with a guest speaker, Carl Jubran, and a gathering of faculty to discuss integrating international content into the curriculum. The following year saw the development of Internationalizing the Curriculum, a professional development course for faculty, the beginning of the toolkit process for creating and approving international content, and the first list of internationalized courses. As of Spring 2021, over 40 toolkits have been completed and our course list includes over 80 offerings in English, Speech, Science, Mathematics, Humanities, Business, and the Social Sciences.

As part of this curriculum internationalization process, a global program was created to incorporate all the global components of the college, including globalized initiatives, courses, travel abroad trips, etc. A team of devoted faculty members and administrators began the process of building the program's component in 2015. Professor Aby Boumarate was selected to build the program's key components, along with other members of the INZ committee, and serve as the first faculty mentor tasked to assist collegewide students in earning the Valencia Global Distinction medallion. The program was awarded the US Department of Education UISFL Grant (Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program) from October 1, 2014, through September 30, 2016, so funding for its many fundamental structures became a reality under the leadership of Karen Borglum, Assistant Vice President of Curriculum and Articulation, who oversaw the efforts to build a cohesive and functional global program.

In the spring of 2015, the program was rolled out for students while addressing some newly emerged challenges, including accelerating the capstone process to accommodate a surprising group of students, four early graduates, who were ready to graduate from the program within a few weeks from its launch. In the post-launch stage, however, measured growth was maintained while expanding the collegewide outreach to provide more students with this opportunity to harness global citizenship skills while affirming the college's commitment to global education. The program was expanded from the East campus to the Osceola and West campuses in 2016, and two devoted faculty members, Librarian Beth King and Professor Tami Gitto, joined the program as faculty mentors and took the helm to expand the program's outreach on their respective campuses. In 2018, the program adapted a Canvas space to monitor student progress and offer an online orientation that accommodates students from all Valencia campuses, and Professor Vivian Ruiz joined the program as the fourth faculty mentor.

Today, and in the post UISFL grant era, the program continues to grow, and seven devoted faculty members currently serve as student advisors (AKA student mentors). The global pandemic of 2020 offered the opportunity to bring VGD completely online, including online co-curricular activities and capstone, and to develop a two tier system: Global Ambassador and Global Citizen. In the temporary absence of travel abroad trips for students due to the pandemic bans, the VGD program has lived up to its internationalization of the curriculum goals and has become a home for our students' global learning experiences and an inspiring model for many colleges and universities.