Mid-morning between classes, outside the Halbritter Center for the Performing Arts.
Political scientist Emil Nagengast was hired by Juniata College in 1996 to teach international politics, with Europe and the former East Germany—he'd studied at Karl Marx University in Leipzig shortly before the Berlin Wall fell—his special province. But in 2004, with a conscience pricked by complaints from two former, African-born students about the Eurocentricity of his course, he spent a sabbatical in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, examining the workings of the fledgling African Union. The next year, with guidance and help from a Washington & Jefferson College professor who had already begun taking students to The Gambia, Nagengast led four Juniata students to Senegal and The Gambia for three weeks. In 2008 Juniata and other colleges in Pennsylvania formed a Keystone Study Away Consortium to offer a full semester at the University of The Gambia. Nagengast, or Nags as students call him, now has led eight summer trips to The Gambia and launched a winter class as well. He calculates that 135 Juniata students to date have studied in The Gambia over summer and 31 in spring semester. His Introduction to International Politics course now devotes as much time to the African Union as it does to the European Union (one week). Of his mid-career switch in interests, Nagengast recalls that when he broached the idea of education abroad in West Africa, administrators "just said, 'Interesting. Go do it.' They trusted me.”

Political Science Professor Emil Nagengast with a poster urging students to sign up for a winter class in The Gambia.
student body was drawn from within the borders of the Quaker State. But that is changing.

A LONG INTERNATIONAL JOURNEY

Juniata set out almost two decades ago to make itself a more globally minded campus. A 1993 strategic plan identified internationalization as a top priority and urged the recruitment of more international students. The next year it opened an Intensive English Program to help attract them to Huntingdon. Juniata in 2004 joined the American Council on Education (ACE) Internationalization Collaborative, and its 2008 strategic plan embraced a goal of raising international enrollments from 6 to 10 percent. It reached that mark swiftly, with 166 students on visas on campus in 2011-12, including 50 from China. President Thomas Kepple said he would gladly see that percentage double to 20 percent so long as Juniata’s overall enrollment keeps growing as it has on his watch, from 1,200 in 1998 to the current 1,600. Juniata’s out-of-state enrollment has doubled to 40 percent.

“IT’S BECOMING A BETTER PLACE. IT’S HARD WORK IN ADMISIONS, BASICALLY,” SAID KEPPEL, WHO WILL RETIRE IN MAY 2013. STUDENTS ARE DRAWN IN PART BY JUNIATA’S GENEROUS FINANCIAL AID FOR BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS. DEAN OF ADMISSIONS MICHELLE BARTOL SAID, “WE’RE NEVER COASTING. RIGHT NOW WITH CHINA RECRUITMENT, EVERYONE ELSE IS KIND OF CATCHING UP. WE’VE GOT TO STAY ONE STEP AHEAD.”

The college, which boasts an alumnus with a Nobel Prize in physics (William Phillips ’70), is particularly strong in the sciences and sends dozens of graduates to medical and graduate schools. For international parents, “the sales pitch is they already know people who’ve sent their children here and they’ve done well,” said Kepple. “Ninety percent of our Chinese students graduate. That’s larger than our U.S. student number.”

LANGUAGE HOUSES AND A GLOBAL VILLAGE

Dean of International Education Jenifer Cushman and Rosalie Rodriguez, the college’s chief diversity officer, returned from an ACE Bridging the Gap Symposium in 2008 determined to find new ways to change the face of the college and encourage more students to encounter and reflect upon cultural differences. They came up with a Global
This is a really good community. People are really nice and welcoming, the professors remember your name and their office is always open.

Engagement Initiative that included the creation of a residential Global Village that features an intercultural floor for a mix of international and domestic students within a larger dorm.

Clarissa Diniz, a pre-med student from Recife, Brazil, said it was “really cool” living there as a freshman. She stayed on as a resident adviser for sophomore year. Diniz, daughter of two math professors, has a brother who graduated from UCLA, but was happy with her small town choice. “This is a really good community. People are really nice and welcoming, the professors remember your name and their office is always open.”

Also as part of the Global Village, several small houses on campuses are being turned into Spanish, French, and German houses where students live together to improve their language skills. Sophomore Rebekah Sheeler from Boyertown, Pennsylvania, was programming coordinator for the newly opened Spanish House in 2011–12. “The other students call me the Morm,” laughed Sheeler, who was drawn to Juniata to play field hockey but dropped the sport after a year in part to pursue international education interests. She combined classes and an internship in Orizaba, Mexico, in summer 2011, spent fall 2011 at a university in Quito, Ecuador, and will intern at a wildlife reserve in Peru in spring 2013.

A THIRST FOR LANGUAGES WITHOUT A REQUIREMENT

Juniata has no language requirement beyond two years in high school for admission. The college jettisoned a stronger requirement in the 1970s, and an effort in 1996 to reinstate it fell a few votes short. But Professor of Spanish Henry Thurston-Griswold said, “When I came in 1992, we averaged 50 students per semester taking Spanish. Now we have more than triple that number.” Juniata is home to the much-honored Language in Motion program, which deploys international
students and study abroad returnees to local K-12 classrooms where they present language lessons and cultural activities. Language in Motion, led by Deborah Roney, has taken root at 13 other colleges and universities.

Juniata offers French, German, and Russian as well as Spanish and two years of Chinese. "The difficulty with languages other than Spanish is we're basically one-person programs," said Michael Henderson, chair of world languages and associate professor of French. "Obviously offering an upper division course in French critical theory is not a good idea.... My main motivation is to get students in my classes to study abroad."

In the 1980s Juniata exchanged as many as 20 science majors each year with the Catholic University of Lille in France and the University of Marburg in Germany. Chemistry Professor Ruth Reed, a former Fulbright scholar in Germany, championed the exchanges, which later dropped off. She saw one downside to sending so many Juniata students to Lille and Marburg. "If you send too many, then you defeat the purpose. You have this little clique that doesn't integrate. We can be too successful," said the retiring chemistry professor.

While Reed's passion came early, Gerald Kruse, a professor of math and computer science, was farther along in his career when he had a
serendipitous meeting with Thomas Weik, a computer science professor at Juniata partner Muenster University of Applied Sciences in Germany. They wound up swapping homes and classes for fall 2006. "It was just a fantastic experience. I went over as a passive supporter (of education abroad) and came back as a very active promoter," said Kruse, who now serves on Juniata's International Education Committee.

AN ENGAGED FACULTY AND TWO ADVISERS
Almost half the class of 2011 studied abroad, many on the 20 education abroad courses led by Juniata professors. Juniata has exchange partners in 19 countries. "Our success at this didn't start at the top," said Provost James Lasko. "Faculty who had international contacts were largely responsible for this exchange model. Sometimes administrators just have to know when to get out of the way and give your people a little latitude to run with a good idea." Cushman, the dean of international education and associate professor of German, said, "Faculty involvement and engagement really are the heart of our international programs. Faculty members go above and beyond. Every time my office takes a step, it's in conjunction with faculty."

Juniata has 102 full-time and 48 part-time faculty, and each student has two academic advisers, one for their Program of Emphasis (POE)—Juniata's interdisciplinary alternative to majors—and another from a second discipline to offer a different perspective. The advice includes strong encouragement to study abroad.

Most students choose straightforward business, science, and humanities concentrations, but three in 10 chart new pathways to their bachelor's degrees.

Brianne Rowan, 22, from Port Townsend, Washington, fashioned her POE around global health issues. She spent three summers doing volunteer work in Thailand with a humanitarian group from her hometown, spent junior year abroad in Lille, France, and twice went on two-week service trips with Juniata's Habitat for Humanity chapter to build homes for the poor in Yerevan, Armenia, and in El Salvador.

Megan Russell, 22, a senior from Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, and a Habitat for Humanity leader, learned on Nagengast's 2011 trip to The Gambia that "things do not always go as planned. Sometimes a pipe breaks in your room or scorpions are chasing you around, but it's all part of the experience." The aspiring physical therapist came back from Gambia and organized a fundraiser to buy solar panels for a rural hospital.

GROWING PAINS AND ESSAYS ON THE RADIO
There have been growing pains with the rapid climb in international enrollments, especially the spurt in the number of students from China. History professor David Sowell, a former international education director, said, "Our big challenge now is how do we integrate them? We have the Global Village; we have lots and lots of student groups. How do we use programming and those groups to draw students into that intercultural exchange?"

Doug Stiffler, an associate professor of history and East Asia specialist, sees that already happening. When Stiffler and spouse Jingxia Yang, now the Chinese language instructor, came to Juniata in 2002, "there was one student from mainland China and a handful of ethnic Chinese students. It was a pretty homogenous place, albeit with a
great commitment to international education,” said Stiffler. “Over five or six years, we saw that number change to 50 Chinese students. For us, it’s a wonderful thing.”

The influx has boosted enrollments in Juniata’s Intensive English Program. Instructor Gretchen Ketner, a National Public Radio fan, found an unusual way to help students hone writing skills and adjust to U.S. college life. She assigned them to write “This I Believe” essays for the Penn State public radio station, WPSU. Nearly a dozen have gotten on the air.

Separately, Stiffler did an on-air interview for that station’s “StoryCorps” broadcast with a freshman from Chengdu, China, who wrote in Ketner’s class about his admiration for Lin Zhao, a student leader in Beijing during the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956 when Mao Zedong briefly encouraged citizens to speak freely. She was imprisoned in 1960, but wrote about freedom and democracy in her letters and diary—some in her own blood—until her execution in 1968. “She’s a real hero,” the business student told Stiffler. “Our government and our school never talk about this. I want to learn something about America. I want to teach people what is liberty, what is freedom, what we can do in this special time.”

Kati Csoman, assistant dean of international education, said that in addition to the regular orientation, all new international students can join the U.S. freshman in “Inbound” retreats built around such activities as backpacking, hiking, cooking, the arts and exploring spirituality, pop culture, and other topics. The students choose from more than 30 tracks. Two peer leaders assisted by faculty or staff shepherd the new students in groups of 10 through the three-day experience. “The idea is to bring together students across their interests, but then also help them make friendships and learn about the college,” said Csoman.