

**MINUTES**  
**International Students and Scholars Committee**  
**26 September 2019**

Present: Dr. Warren Johnson (Chair and Secretary), Dr. Gauri Guha, Dr. Jill Simons (Proxy for Dr. Utter), Mr. Atin Suri, Ms. Dominique White

Absent: Ms. Nikki Adams, Mr. Reed Blalock, Dr. Robert Bradley, Ms. Mariana Cisneros, Mr. Adrian Everett, Dr. Maurice Gipson, Dr. Derek Jenkins, Mr. Deepk Rapaka, Dr. Thillainatarajan Sivakumaran, Dr. Alan Utter, Dr. Karen Wheeler

Visitor: Ms. Mallory Yarbrough

Dr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm. The original agenda had included a report from Dr. Sivakumaran, Executive Director of the Division of Global Strategies and Outreach, on recent initiatives in that area. Ms. Yarbrough informed the committee, however, that Dr. Sivakumaran had been called to another meeting and would not be available. Dr. Johnson then moved to other items that the committee wished to discuss.

The central issue that emerged from the discussion is the challenge of integrating international students into the campus and local communities. This difficulty has been a recurrent topic facing the committee over the past several years. Ms. Yarbrough mentioned that she would like to get more faculty involved to help engage international students. The Office of International Student Services (ISS, now under the umbrella of International Programs, of which Ms. Yarbrough is Director) has a faculty advisory committee, but vacant positions and poor communication seem to be hindering its effectiveness. Her office has made various attempts to facilitate interaction between international and domestic students, but has met with problems, including with its “buddy” program. The annual international dinner is one example of how ISS has tried to promote contacts between international students and the community. Dr. Guha suggested working with residents of the Jonesboro area who are of international origin, but Ms. Yarbrough noted the difficulty in identifying appropriate individuals. Mr. Suri highlighted the efforts of Dr. Guha and other faculty to pair international and domestic students on projects, and encouraged other instructors to do the same. Dr. Guha observed that there is a problem with a lack of interest in internationalization on the campus. He suggested more fun activities, particularly just before classes start, to engage international students. Dr. Simons noted that the administration is looking at expanding its New Student Orientation events to include more information about the campus rather than simply to get the students registered. Ms. Yarbrough listed some positive initiatives that ISS has in place to help incoming international students, including laundry baskets full of household items (supplied by community partners) and SIM cards given to incoming students upon arrival. ISS, in addition to its formal duties in the areas of immigration documentation, insurance, etc., coordinates programming for international students as well as retention efforts. From time to time, it sends out recruiters, although it does not have a staff member at the moment dedicated to that task. Dr. Guha suggested using international faculty from the areas targeted for recruitment in order to benefit from their knowledge of the local

languages and cultures. He also suggested using contact information from the Alumni Office to send out a regular newsletter to international graduates on what is happening on campus and having recruitment meetings abroad with alumni, since they can be helpful in recommending A-State to prospective international students. The English Language Academy (ESL program) has currently about 30 students, a number that is smaller than is desirable but improved somewhat from the past. Although outgoing study abroad is not formally within the charge of this committee, Ms. Yarbrough (who now also oversees that function since the departure of the previous Study Abroad Director) noted that we continue to send students out both on our bilateral and consortium agreements and on our short-term, faculty-led programs. The Study Abroad Fair is being reconfigured. The committee suggested promoting study abroad through FYE classes and the expanded NSO sessions that Dr. Simons mentioned.

Dr. Sivakumaran will be invited back to give his report later this semester. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.