

**MINUTES**  
**International Students and Scholars Committee**  
**4 October 2018**

Present: Dr. Warren Johnson (Chair and Secretary), Ms. Nikki Adams, Dr. Robert Bradley, Mr. Christopher Boothman (proxy for Ms. Tracy Finch), Dr. Gauri Guha, Dr. Derek Jenkins, Mr. Samuel Noi, Dr. Thillainatarajan Sivakumaran, Mr. Atin Suri, Dr. Evelyn Taylor, Ms. Shannon Wess, Ms. Victoria Williams, Ms. Qianqian Yu

Absent: Ms. Anukrit Chapagain, Dr. Lynita Cooksey, Dr. Maurice Gipson, Dr. Mihir, Dr. Karen Wheeler

Visitor: Ms. Mallory Yarbrough (International Student Services)

Dr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm and asked each member of the committee to introduce himself or herself. He then gave the floor to Dr. Sivakumaran to give an update on activities in his area.

Various faculty and staff are potentially going abroad. A new agreement with a Japanese institution will allow for expanded faculty research opportunities. The Study Abroad office sent 132 students last year (20 on exchanges, 112 on faculty programs). Upcoming faculty-led programs, which are the focus of the Study Abroad office, include trips to Costa Rica, Japan, Senegal, and elsewhere. Finance and Administration is working to keep costs down for these programs, which normally have a 10% surcharge, and efforts are being made to make more scholarships for study abroad available.

International student enrollment at A-State declined by 5% this year. (The drop on the national level is 3.7%.) Scholarships for undergraduate international students are being offered to attempt to attract more students. These scholarships, which pay \$3,000 per year, require a 3.25 GPA initially and 3.5 GPA after the first year. The obstacles to recruiting more international students vary by country of origin: for India, the chief impediment is money; for China, the major problem is the level of English proficiency. The tightening of requirements for getting an H1B visa, allowing graduates to work in the USA after college, has meant that many students have chosen to study in other locales, such as Canada or Australia. Efforts have been made [following a discussion of the topic at the ISSC meeting of 25 April 2018] to assist students with their English, including the work of Dr. Airek Beauchamp of the Dept. of English, Philosophy, and World Languages, who is coordinating some tutoring in writing for A-State Online Services.

Dr. Guha asked if faculty-led programs are designed by Global Engagement and Outreach or by faculty. Dr. Sivakumaran replied that they are faculty initiatives, but his office works to keep costs down. Normally these programs use a limited number of approved third-party providers or are created in cooperation with partner institutions. One of those trip organizers, ESF, is more expensive because it provides a guide, but is used by Honors because its scholarships help offset the increased cost. Dr. Guha noted that the Griffin College of Business formerly had a number

of programs that were discontinued or discouraged by the administration. Dr. Sivakumaran said that indeed, the May interim programs were placed on hold because of concerns about the very short timeframe of those trips, but that Ms. Jeanne d'Arc Gomis, Director of Study Abroad and International Partnerships, has reached out to colleges regarding study abroad, and faculty can approach her with ideas. Dr. Guhu noted that his college formerly had a service-learning program in Ecuador; Dr. Sivakumaran said he is open to anything that is academically sound and safe.

Ms. Yu asked about international students studying abroad through A-State. Dr. Sivakumaran replied that some 95% of those studying abroad are domestic students, although there have been international students who have gone to Spain (Huelva), South Korea, and Japan. Ms. Yu also asked about plan to increase the intake of international students. Dr. Sivakumaran said that the best approach is through the 2+2 partnerships, such as in Clinical Lab Sciences, since it is easier for students to get visas if they participate in such a program and these programs create a consistent pipeline. (Graduates of those programs receive in-state tuition, which helps encourage them to stay for a graduate degree.) Other impediments, besides finances and the need for English proficiency that work against attracting international students to A-State, are that the university is not ranked highly enough and that it is located outside of a large metropolitan area. International Student Services attempts to make the campus welcoming and culturally sensitive to international students through events such as one for Halloween or the International Food Festival, and has in recent years added a retention specialist and an activities coordinator to its staff. One potential growth area is through online programs.

Mr. Noi asked about programs in Africa. Dr. Sivakumaran mentioned the university's partnership in South Africa and talked about the faculty-led program to Senegal. The Study Abroad office is looking to expand its programs in Africa. A-State has five agents on the continent.

Ms. Yu asked about A-State's presence in China. Dr. Sivakumaran said that the university has four or five agents there. (It has proven advisable to work with a limited number of agents, around 45-50, who are productive in recruiting students and not just trying to make money off of them.) A-State checks on those students who transfer out, and last year the first-year retention rate of 76% mirrored that of domestic students. (Some students transfer out because they had no intention of staying in the first place, but used A-State to get a visa, and others prefer a larger city, where there are more employment opportunities and ethnic communities, or where the students may have family connections.)

Mr. Suri asked about incentives to retain graduate students. Dr. Sivakumaran said that a retention scholarship would be hard to market, and difficult to justify since a similar scholarship is not available to domestic graduate students.

Dr. Johnson asked whether there are difficulties in attracting students to the 2+2 programs, which exist only for a few degrees and which necessarily are tightly structured. Dr. Sivakumaran said there is not a problem attracting students to these programs, but in setting them up, since the department involved in a potential new program would need to review syllabi to establish course equivalencies, and departments are sometimes very slow to respond, with the result that in the

meantime the partner institution may lose interest. Some partner schools will adopt A-State curricula for some of their courses to facilitate their inclusion within a 2+2 agreement. In general, it is more difficult to set up these arrangements in STEM fields. Dr. Guha noted that the review of syllabi can take time because the process is not as simple as it might appear. It seems that some departments or colleges have their own requirements that hinder the development of such programs. Dr. Sivakumaran stated that he does not want to drag people into partnership arrangements if they do not want them.

Mr. Suri noted the problem that many international students do not willingly mingle with those outside of their national group, and lauded the efforts of Dr. Guha to encourage intercultural interaction through requiring international and domestic students to work together on projects. Dr. Sivakumaran agreed that many international students have trouble going outside of their comfort zone, and the best one can do is provide opportunities for contacts across cultural boundaries. Dr. Taylor suggested that Social Work could host a mixer to help integrate its international students, and Dr. Guha suggested service learning projects bringing together students from different backgrounds could be useful.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.