

Committee on International Students and Scholars (CISS)

September 21th, 2018 Minutes

Middle Georgia State University, Macon, GA. | 12:30pm, Rm. 212

Chair: Brett Reichert- Georgia State University - Atlanta

Vice Chair: Vacant

Member at Large: Veronique Barnes, Georgia State University - Perimeter College

Member at Large: Jason Wynn, Georgia College and State University

In attendance: 21

Albany State University – Nneka Nora Osakwe

Atlanta Metropolitan State College – Stephanie Ricks & Leander Singletary

Augusta University – Beverly M. Tarver

Clayton State University – Ryan Packard

Columbus State University – Janet Crane

Georgia College & State University – Jason Wynn & Susie Ramage

Georgia Gwinnett College – Funwi Ayuninjam

Georgia Institute of Technology – Chase Harvey

Georgia Southern University – Tanya Brakhage & Audrey Faulkner

Georgia State University – Brett Reichert & Veronique Barnes

Kennesaw State University – Aleksandra Ninoma Parris, Kathryn Miles, Lissa Small

Savannah State University – Benn Bongu???

University of Georgia – Ashley Johnson

Valdosta State University – David Starling

University System of Georgia – Tammy Rosner

CALL TO ORDER, 12:30PM - Brett Reichert

Brett introduced the 2 Georgia assigned SEVP Field Representatives, Rebecca Andre & Holly Williams, as guest speakers. They gave a short presentation with Q/A.

- Change of email addresses: Defunct email addresses. New email sevp@ice.dhs.gov /subject line – school name dash school code dash reason
- New ability to upload evidence directly to SEVIS – can directly upload evidence into application – you must have an explanatory statement if asked. It will get kicked back if you don't have it.

Fee Increases

- Proposed rule to increase fees. Public comment closed on September 17.
- We are proposing to add new fees and raise existing fees to fund department and technology (SEVIS system). I-901 fee goes up for both F and J. New fee introduced for recertification – every two years \$1000+. Applying for initial certification – increase in fee from \$1700 to \$3000. If campus moves or if you add a campus, there will be a \$655 fee. This also applies if you add a campus (per campus).
- Currently, cannot add a campus during recertification. Removal of a campus is free. This is something we will have to put in our budgets.

- Decision will likely come late 2018 or by early 2019.

Change of Status

Persons can no longer stay in the United States on an expired visa while pending change of status. This rule took place August 8. (e.g. A “B” visitor would have to change status) Dependents need to change status before they turn 21. With new rule in place, dependents need to change status earlier as it is taking ~14 months. Always good to advise those changing status to talk to an immigration attorney.

Unlawful Presence

Unlawful presence begins to accrue (new) as soon as they fail to maintain status or record termination.

Two versions of policy issued:

- a. First version – had student violated status prior to new policy it would be retroactive.
- b. Revised policy – as long as they timely applied for reinstatement, the unlawful presence is put on pause after receipt is issued to student.

We should read the unlawful presence memo on the USCIS website per Rebecca Andre & Holly Williams.

CBP – Campus Sentinel

Department of homeland Security agents come to schools and talk to their Police and DSO’s about what tools are in place. A Dept. of Homeland Security agent may reach out or not prior to campus visit.

There will be a webinar (studyinthestates.dhs.gov – search webinars) on Thursday, Sept. 27th at 2 pm. Regarding DHS collaboration with agent partners.

Project Shield America

To focus on export control of sensitive intellectual property. More info to come.

END OF SEVP PRESENTATION – SEVP Representatives were thanked, then departed the CISS meeting.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES, 1:00PM

- Brett Reichert called for a motion to approve from the floor. The Minutes were approved.

UPDATES FROM USG OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION – Tammy Rosner

- There are few updates. Academic & Student Affairs Handbook. The BOR is taking out anything more policy driven and we will put guidance into the handbook instead.
- Sprintax – In the next week or two Tammy will send out a message or two about it. She will ask how many codes we would like and order in bulk. After receiving numbers, the rate will be negotiated. Tammy will put a deadline in email and let schools know the rate
- Unlawful Presence – There are many valuable resources regarding policy. Call Tammy if you do not understand; she will explain it in detail. As DSOs we could be at fault if we make errors.

- Subject to the bar – if you accrue 3 – 6 months of unlawful presence, you could be barred for a period of time from the U.S. If 12 months or more of unlawful presence, you can be indefinitely barred from the U.S. if trying to use any status.
 - International Activities Report and Advice – Recommend that PDSOs and ROs at minimum complete this on a tri-annual basis. We should do it at least every three years.
 - Please participate in and complete the Open Doors Report.
 - Create policies regarding (documented) scenarios for international students.
 - Maintain contact with SEVP. Ensure continuity if staff changes (have plan if you are the only DSO, etc.)
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VOTING - Brett Reichert

- Changes to CISS Bylaws – Brett called for a move to approve changes and they were 2nded at 1:23 p.m.
- The CISS then voted in favor of Jason Wynn taking the CISS Vice Chair position.
- Next this vacated the member-at-large position. Brett opened the floor for nominations and clarified based on bylaws that this person would need to be from the category of “state college or university.” A nomination for Janet Crane of Columbus State University was made and she accepted and was voted in unanimously.
- CISS voted to edit 5.03 D – change “or” to “and”.
- Beverly Tarver mentioned that we complete proper voting to approve changes to the bylaws. Changes to bylaws were then voted on and approved. As well, we will keep the wording of 5.03 using OR as we discussed.

INFORMAL ENROLLMENT TRENDS - FALL 2018

Increase in Visa Denials or RFE’s?

- Valdosta State: English Language Program enrollment down. Likely reasons are Saudi Scholarships decreased, Chinese student visa denials, and Brazil program changes; overall enrollment numbers impacted by fewer students from IEP. Had applications from 40 students from same region in India – visas were denied.
- Albany State: Nigeria visa denials up; decrease in enrollment due to visa denials. Student from Morocco F-1 visas denied, and B-2 visa was also cancelled; Unknown if it was with or without prejudice.
- Georgia Gwinnett: No major enrollment issues. Most IEP students are from S. Korea and Vietnam.
- Augusta University: Scholar numbers dropped due to FLSA – less funding available

RFE issues:

- GA Tech received an RFE for an H filing requesting all pay stubs, all employment history – very specific information requested.
- Augusta University – RFEs with unusual evidence requests
- GA Tech – USCIS misinterpreting the rules for CPT; counting part time as full-time error. As a result of this, they are listing every single employer and specifying if it was PT or FT under the current SEVS number.
- There was also a tax filing inquiry pertaining to having filed the 8843.

Tammy said it's very important to share these unusual RFE cases because it is a good way to learn about changes in what USCIS expects and what to include with filings.

Refugee Cap reduced to 45K from 110K:

- Tammy: Fewer than previous years being let in, and numbers will decrease as cap decreases.

CISS PROJECTS

- Best practices for cost of living and best practices for OPO are in progress.

CONFERENCE UPDATES

- Upcoming conferences highlighted (see agenda). The new GILC chair is Brandy Rivera from West Georgia. GILC has a new location this year, fees will remain the same.

VACANCIES

- Albany State – International Student and Scholar position
- Georgia Gwinnett - International Student and Scholar position and Study Abroad positions
- GA Tech – new director starts on October 1 and other vacancies will be filled after that.

The CISS meeting adjourned at 1:52pm