

USG Committee on International Students and Scholars
Minutes of April 14, 2006 Meeting
Macon State College

Meeting convened at 10:00 a.m.

Attendance:

Julio España (KSU), Debra Denzer (GPC), Marisa Foreman (UGA), Jalana Robinson (CSU), Jean Myers (Clayton State), Irina McCellan (VSU), Liz Travis (MGC), Sylvia Shortt (UWG), Kristin Etheridge (Univ. West Georgia), Ann Tallant (NGCSU), Libby Davis (GCSU), Dwight Call (GCSU), Sue Watson (USG OIE), Doug Podoll (GSU), Tanya Grubbs (GA Southern), G. Titi Oladunjoye (ASU), Aya Ogawa (Darton College), Caesar Perkowski (EGC), Jeanette Luster (AMC), Sabrina Stewart (AMC), David Starling (VSU), Gerald McIntosh (FVSU), Akanmu Adebayo (KSU)

Approval of last meeting's minutes

Dwight moved, Sylvia seconded. The minutes were approved.

Adebayo stated that the agenda puts the issue of health insurance last. This was so that the committee can address some of the other issues that we did not have time to address at our last meeting. Adebayo also thanked all members for their dedication. The committee's attention has been taken up by health insurance, which is only one part of our charge. He also conveyed the gratitude of the USG Office of International Education, including Rick and Sue, for the time and efforts of the committee.

Adebayo asked for a brief update on international events on USG campuses:

KSU- International student association banquet 7:00 p.m. All are invited.

UWG- students are busy planning a protest in front of the BOR office in Atlanta.

Albany State- Agreement just signed with Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria.

GPC- Recently held an immigration panel discussion; historical perspective as well as current issues with representatives.

Titi (Albany State) asks general question about why US students are not taking advantage of study abroad opportunities. Expense? Fear? Nothing new; reflective of American culture as a whole. Only 25% of American public has a passport; In Congress this is an even lower number. Language? Adebayo suggested that this issue might be a topic of discussion for the USG Study Abroad Committee. However, Debra (?) reminded members that the people on this committee do have a role due to the work we can do with international students to encourage US students to go abroad.

Agenda item #4 - NAFSA Collaborative Training Grant

Adebayo reported that Sheila is putting together the proposal as Ga Tech is the lead institution for the grant; 6 other USG institutions are also involved. These are Kennesaw, Albany, Georgia College, Darton, Fort Valley, and Georgia Perimeter College. The deadline is May 31st. The draft of the grant proposal will be sent out to the listserv for further suggestions. The USG proposal will be to have a series of train the trainer

workshops across the state and the workshops will be based a series of training manuals to be developed under the grant. The theme will be helping campuses understand international students. The theme would not include scholars for this particular grant, since their needs vary greatly from students' needs. If the USG receives the grant, we hope it will strengthen relationships between different colleges. There will be 3-4 train the trainer workshops and two representatives from each campus will attend. Once trained, these representatives will then hold training on their campuses for faculty, staff, and others.

Agenda item #5 - Harrington Award for Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Sue Watson stated that the award was created by the SCIE to honor Tracy Harrington, who while at Valdosta, was responsible for fostering collaboration between campuses in the USG system. Tracy's efforts ensured collaboration among USG institutions. They also ensured that a territorial, competitive culture was not fostered in the state. All nominations and questions about the award can be sent to Sue. A \$500 cash award will be given to the person who receives this award. Nominees can include a person, program, division or institution. The deadline for nominations is May 1st.

Agenda item #6 - Senate Bill 629

Sue stated that the State Assembly has veered away from the provision about denying (undocumented) students admission to USG schools. The tension around this bill has decreased significantly for now as USG institutions are no longer affected by the mandates of this bill.

Adebayo informed members that the Department of State website has useful resources that may help eliminate confusion on campuses about handling international student recruitment. Examples: Discussion of SSN number issuance. According to the DOS, a student should not be required to have an SSN to be enrolled at a campus in the US. Do not use the term "fall" and "spring" to describe semesters of study because many students come from countries that have no such seasons. Don't use the term "college" to describe university programs. Don't require high school GPA's for admission. There was discussion about the generated student ID numbers. Some USG campuses have already started to use this number in place of Social Security numbers. Adebayo will send a link to the article through e-mail.

A discussion ensued about of what to do for students when the local banks require a SSN. Some banks use the generated student ID number; but this poses a problem for institutions in urban centers. GPC had problems with a scholar and her ability to rent an apartment or open a bank account while awaiting issuance of the social security number. Darton College has solved this problem by issuing the students a letter stating they are not eligible to receive a Social Security number but that they are authorized to open accounts or rent an apartment; discussion ensued about whether the same letter will work for scholars. It was recognized that this problem varies on each campus and that if there were not the issue of insurance, we may have had more time to deal with such issues this year.

Agenda item #7 - Mini-grants for the sharing of international scholars

The funds have not been used for this year. There was \$1500 total allocated and we had hoped to be able to issue 2-3 grants of \$200-300. Adebayo felt that he did not want the committee to allow the money go to waste and not be utilized; the funds will go back to the USG's OIE budget if it is not used. Adebayo asked the committee members whether they felt the money was valuable and whether it was simply a matter of the committee members just not having time to get to use the money this year.

Feedback from (GPC) indicated that if there was a list of scholars at each institution provided, then it may be easier to know how to utilize the funding. A suggestion was made to have someone from each campus who was hosting an international scholar to send a message to the listserv to let the rest of the committee know. Sue reminded the committee that there is no good mechanism for collecting the data about each visiting scholar throughout the USG. If each campus communicates better with Sue or the committee as a whole then she can let others know about international visiting scholars on the individual campuses.

Agenda item #8 - Residency Committee update

The new proposed policy process will hopefully be approved in May 2006 by the Board of Regents but will not go into effect until August 2007. People were interested to know what will be done in the interim knowing the reality that each campus residency officer seems to treat international student residency differently (H, L, TN etc...). A new memo will be sent to institutions to try to clarify in-state tuition issues and provide guidance and to better explain to each campus that the process is being revised.

The USG residency committee is trying to classify the H1B visa holders under waivers instead of erroneous classification as in-state residents. It doesn't make sense that an international who is not a resident of the US can be a resident of the state of Georgia for tuition purposes. The term "legal non-citizens" threw up a red flag and the committee was fearful that the state legislature would perceive that the USG was giving benefits of in-state tuition rates to illegal or other immigrants.

Residency workshops should be held in May/June to help clarify the new policy and new tuition differential waivers. Once the H1B clarification memo is completed it will be sent to the BOR legal affairs officers to be reviewed, discussed, etc. Sue will send the draft out to all CISS committee members to ensure that it is. The committee had a brief discussion of Banner and where the residency codes are listed and what they are. The new waivers which include the international students who can be considered for in-state tuition will be called "Economic Advantage Waivers". H, L, R etc. may be eligible to get this type of waiver. Julio was concerned about this coming out of his 2% waiver allocation for superior international and out-of-state students. The Economic Advantage Waiver will not be taken out of the 2% and it will not be specially designated for non-citizens.

Agenda item #9 - Update on GAIE conference

There will be no port-of-entry visit to the ATL airport as originally anticipated. The GAIE conference will take place the last Friday in July (July 28, 2006). Richard will need to send updates about location, etc. through the listserv.

Agenda item #10 - The CISS Workshops and Training

All committee workshops will be postponed until next academic year.

Other training

Doug- NAFSA will hold admissions credentials training at GSU's campus on Thursday July 13th & 14th. The NAFSA PDP (Professional Development Program) Workshops have been renamed CEP workshops- Continuing Education Program. F-1 - the First Step workshop will be held on Saturday July 15th. Other NAFSA workshops include the pre-conference workshops in Charlotte on November 10-11 at the Weston Hotel Charlotte. The NAFSA Region VII pre-conference workshops will also include F-1 2nd step, J-1 advanced, study abroad, and processes moving international faculty to permanent resident workshop. The NFL schedule indicates that there is a game in the middle in of the conference. Doug advised conference attendees that if people do not book early, they will probably not get a room. A block of rooms will be set aside for NAFSA so people should secure their reservations before the block expires.

Agenda item #11 - i-student advisor.com

Adebayo stated that i-studentadvisor.com is a recruitment tool similar to Hobson's, but their Web site contains more information. Adebayo met with a representative. Their site is appealing to the eye on the computer. The OIE office asked if there was a way to determine how often a person visited the site and what pages they were visiting and for how long. No further consideration of advertising with istudentadvisor.com will be done until the "counter" issue is taken care of. Those who use Hobson's and other recruitment tools are to also evaluate the effectiveness of these services.

BREAK

11:00 Meeting resumes.

Agenda item #12 - Health Insurance

Adebayo thanked those that did everything they could to represent international students in the health insurance palaver. He stated that a lot of information about the new BOR mandatory plan was sent out on the listserv. Doug Podoll, as the sole committee member representing international student concerns and others have been "bruised" by this process. Each of us has experienced differing degrees of conflict on our campuses concerning the new policy. He concluded that it is important to proceed from that perspective: that both the process and the product were wrong.

Adebayo further reported that he and 4 others met last week with Tonya Lam (Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Services) and Frank Butler (Assistant Vice Chancellor for Faculty, Academic and Student Affairs) from the BOR to discuss the new policy. Items

discussed at the meeting included the Pearce & Pearce waiver process—a draft of which had been circulated earlier to committee members by Doug Podoll for comments.

Adebayo also reported that the bursars from across the state institutions met sometime during the same week. Each campus should be in contact with their bursar's office to outline the procedure to make this insurance administration process work. Even with the best insurance policy, there are always questions about procedural changes. Drop off date, automatic enrollment, etc...

The outcome of the meeting with Tanya/Frank: The meeting on Tuesday with BOR reps. did not go as well as our representatives wanted but Tanya & Frank commented on how well the meeting went and how important it was that they were able to hear directly from the international student committee representatives. Those who met with them proposed a separate, new bid for international students for the fall 2007 year. We already have a draft of an RFP from last year's failed bid process. We just need to revise that draft and move forward from there. The committee then reviewed the 6 adverse effects of the new insurance policy and the potential solutions with Tonya and Frank and discussed options for next year

The eventual goal of the BOR is to insure every student in the USG system in the "near" future. Members mentioned that the whole process is questionable due to Corlis taking the stance she has to require insurance for international students and graduate students in such a decentralized system. Sylvia reminded the committee that they need to keep reminding Frank/Tonya about the international student insurance problems and the resolution we hope to reach for next year.

Doug told the committee that the new Chancellor is currently visiting all campuses and has expressed interest in addressing students' issues immediately. So it seems that the Chancellor is interested in addressing student needs above all else. Doug suggested that at each campus visit, that international students be in attendance. Doug also mentioned that the 3 research institutions are doing different things re: subsidizing the cost of the insurance for graduate assistants. UGA is subsidizing the cost of the policy approximately 50%, GSU is subsidizing 30%, and GA Tech is providing no subsidy; 2500 students at Tech combined with all small school students can make a difference in getting the attention focused on international student insurance.

Aya asked whether international students contact the chancellor directly. Her supervisor told her to make sure other campuses are doing this before she gave the go-ahead to her students. Members remarked that the GILC listserv has been flooded with petitions and communications between students and schools. GILC listserv is serving as a venue for communication about this issue.

Pearce & Pearce will visit UGA on April 18th & 19th and will hold an open forum on Wednesday, April 18th at 7:30 pm in the Student Learning Center. This might be a good opportunity for international students to let their views about the policy be known.

A discussion about waivers ensued, and committee members wondered if it was possible that those who meet qualifications of Table B will not all have to go through the on-line waiver process. The committee recalled Pearce & Pearce's promise to allow campuses to submit the names of students that meet the waiver criteria, and to have such students automatically waive out. There were questions on DOS, USAID programs, etc... Will they be automatically waived by their campuses? The group plans with employers are up in the air. Will they have to meet minimum requirements? The bursar's office may be the liaison to send this "waiver list" of students who meet these Table B requirements.

At the waiver meeting at Georgia Tech, Tonya was asked why an association or individual plan could not be used, and she answered that it was because the students can just "drop" the individual plan and there would be no way for campuses to track this.

Adebayo advised members that if they have students on their campuses who are able/willing to voice their feelings and mobilize, great, but at the very least they should be communicating their displeasure with the process and current policy. He reminded members that we should not let one institution be the only one voicing their displeasure; dissatisfaction should come from across the board if it is there.

The committee was reminded that members need to ask their Bursars' offices to confirm what was discussed in last week's meeting of Student Affairs officers.

A draft brochure from Pearce & Pearce was disseminated and committee members were asked to look it over. Julio suggested that what we should try to do is get an insurance plan for internationals that is better than what they have now.

Adebayo reiterated that this is our intent, to take the plan with Pearce and Pearce and make a subgroup of policy users that is more beneficial to international students. We do not have the authority to separate entirely from P&P because of the contract, but we can ensure that there is a sub group for international students that provides better coverage geared toward an international student's needs.

Sylvia indicated that the BOR is concerned about how the students feel. This will really hurt our retention of international students if it is perceived that the USG does not care about international students' needs or concerns.

Adebayo then reminded the committee that we need to focus on what will happen to all students when they drop off the current HTH plan. By July 31, 2006 all insurance coverage with HTH, TW Lord, etc. will end. HTH will be glad to continue the policy for students who will be on OPT. They have increased their benefits to match the \$500,000 maximum per injury and will offer plans to all students at scholars at a graded rate system by age. Contact HTH for more information.

A FAQ list will be created to help have consistent and accurate insurance answers.

Doug mentioned that Georgia State students who are sponsored by their home government (including insurance coverage) will be advised to bring proof of insurance to orientation so that the student can be put on the waiver list for the Bursar's office. The committee should put together a minimum standard for the students so if they come with insurance as a part of their sponsorship (Sweden, Germany, etc...) they can be eligible to waive out. The committee can look at the HTH/T.W. Lord policy minimums as a baseline. This means that we will go back to a system of evaluating insurance and then creating a list of students qualified for the waiver.

Sylvia, Richard, Libby, Titi, Dwight, Richard, Doug, Adebayo, and any others will work together to look at a insurance sub-group to be proposed in the 2006-2007 year to get a bid ready. Doug informed the committee that he has the old bid information but needs some time to gather the materials. The bid writing itself is not an issue. The big hurdle is the political "garbage" that needs to be addressed at each level to make any of this move forward.

Adjournment

At 12:01 Doug moved to adjourn and it was seconded. The meeting adjourned. There was no date planned for the next meeting—Adebayo said this will be communicated through the listserv.

Submitted by Marisa Foreman