

USG Study Abroad Committee Meeting

April 9, 2010

Georgia College Macon Center at 433 Cherry Street
Room 314

Attendance: Philip Szmedra (GSWSU), Jeffrey Palis (GA Southern), Holly Carter (ASU), Whitney Strickler (VSU), Baogang Guo (DSC), Adrienne Langston (GPC), Kasee Laster (UGA), Kathryn Puskarz (UGA), Jill Schulze (GSC), Matt Harrell (Board of Regents), Lorie Paulez (GA Tech), Summer Eglinski (KSU), Dawn Foster (GSU), Cele Blair (Clayton State), Daniela Martinez(NGCSU), Dlynn Williams (NGCSU)

Minutes

The study abroad committee meeting was called to order at 10:07am.

I. Nominations and elections of new officers and executive committee

- Candidates for Chair:
 - Jose Da Cruz
 - John Parkerson
 - Tracy Harrington
 - Bill Schaniel
- Candidates for Vice Chair:
 - Jose Da Cruz
 - Becky Da Cruz
 - Liz Havey
- Candidates for Secretary:
 - Whitney Strickler
- Candidates for At-Large:
 - Daniel Jansen
 - Ulf Kirchdorfer
 - Jeff Palis

The following individuals were elected: Tracy Harrington (chair), Liz Havey (vice-chair), Whitney Strickler (secretary), Daniel Jansen (at-large) and Ulf Kirchdorfer (at-large).

II. Approval of the Minutes

- Motion to approve minutes by Holly Carter; motion seconded
Approved

III. Discussion of the Auditor and Subcommittee suggestions for Best Practices - Matt Harrell

- Subcommittee recommendations provided by David Starling (VSU), Holly Carter (ASU), and Emmanuel Naniuzeyi (SSU).
- **Issue I:** Faculty to student ratio
 - **Current Structures:** Two of the three schools had a 10:1 faculty-student ratio on faculty-led programs, while the other had a 7:1 ratio on faculty-led programs.
 - **Recommended Structure:** The subcommittee recommends that a 10:1 ratio for faculty-led programs be instituted, acknowledging that fluctuations are sometimes required.
 - It is a recommendation based on logistics, but only should be implemented as long as you are being financially responsible.
 - This is intended for financial and security purposes.
 - **Rationale:** This recommendation is made to allow faculty members the maximum opportunity to recruit students for their program and still maintain some level of summer salary. If universities are willing to invest in summer salaries with fewer than 10 students, this may ultimately provide a more personal experience for students
 - **Kasee Laster** – “We do not feel comfortable putting a recommendation on the faculty-to-student ratio from the BOR, because it should be the provost prerogative to decide this ratio. We always have a back up person—generally a PHD student to help the faculty run the program.”
 - **Matt Harrell**– “This is just a recommendation, and it was based on other national standards for risk and financial management points of view. We understand that there are 35 different institutions that have different sizes, and we understand that the recommendation will be used as a benchmark.”
 - **Holly Carter** – “When we had the audit, we supported every recommendation with slight changes to adapt to our structure.”

Can we leave the ratio number out entirely?

- **Matt Harrell**– “If we do this, we are back to square one. This is a recommendation, and this is why the number is there.”
- **Baogung Guo** – “This ratio could be used against faculty members to hurt their pay or stipend.”

Ratio should be the benchmark instead of a solid and fast rule.

- What are the next steps after this recommendation is sent?

- We do not know where they are going to be published, or if the BOR is going to send it in an official document to the schools.
- The final recommendation would read:

“The subcommittee recommends for risk management purposes and personal safety to a 10-1 ratio for faculty-led programs acknowledging that fluctuations are sometimes required.

- **Issue II:** Record retention policies

- **Current Structures:** Augusta State maintains students applications and waivers for 7 years after the return of the program, Valdosta State kept the records for 7 years also, and Savannah State did not have a written policy on the matter.
- **Recommended Structure:** The subcommittee recommends that student information (such as program applications) and waivers be kept for 7 years from the return of the program.
- **Rationale:** This policy is clearly defined by the Board of Regents in the Records Management information which can be found at

<http://www.usg.edu/usgweb/busserv/>

Special Academic Programs Records Explanation: This series documents the administrative activities of special academic programs serving and aiding institution students. Programs documented by this series range from special requirement and certification programs to programs aimed at assisting and encouraging target groups of institution students.

Retention: Permanent for policy and program planning and development documentation and reports; 7 years for all other records.

- We came up with this policy because some institutions were not keeping records properly. We need some type of record of the program approvals either electronic or paper format.
- All program applications should be kept at the study abroad office (in student records).
- The final recommendation would read:

“The subcommittee recommends that program proposals and budgets can be readily accessible by the international education office.

“The subcommittee recommends that student records be maintained for at least 7 years. When records are no longer needed to be maintained they are destroyed according to BOR policy.”

- **Issue III:** Frequency of review of program expenditures and revenues.

- **Current Structures:** Savannah State receives account statement from the finance office by the end of every month and reviews the deposits and expenses on a monthly basis. Faculty who travel abroad must submit a travel authorization form and all faculties' expenses are covered by the General Funds account, not the agency account. The agency account covers expenses for students. At the end of the trip, the faculty must submit his/her expenses report and must keep all receipts. Valdosta State reviews expenditures and revenue on a monthly basis. Augusta State reviews the revenue from each program monthly. ASU reconciles all of the study abroad agency accounts on a monthly basis, so each month there is a perfect balance between the business office report (IRIS) and the study abroad office report in Quickbooks. If there is an error found, we report the error to be fixed. Expenditures are reviewed in two ways: when a faculty member requests to spend money for their trip, we have a signature process, so the payment is initiated by the faculty member and then sent to the senior administrator. The expense must be in the budget. If it is not, or it is significantly higher than budgeted, a memo explaining the expense must come with the request. This way, all expenditures match the budget. Once a trip returns, ASU has a trip recap form where the faculty director must account for all of the money spent and how it was spent and look for budget deviations. If there are deviations, they must be explained or accounted for in future budgets.
- **Recommended Structures:** The subcommittee recommends that all agency accounts are reconciled on a monthly basis. This will allow for all income to be accounted for and all expenses to be accounted for as well. This monthly reconciliation should be a formal process and should have a signature form that shows proper audit standards are in place.
- **Rationale:** A monthly reconciliation of accounts will allow the study abroad office or director to find mistakes quickly and make corrections. It will also allow for expenditures to be accounted for, showing that the money collected was used for proper purposes.
- Once you start collecting money and once the program ends, the money should be reconciled. If an agency account is inactive for 18 months, the money will be rolled over to the state.
- The final recommendation would read:

“The subcommittee recommends that agency accounts should be reconciled within a reasonable amount of time, but not to exceed 6 months after the end of the study abroad program.”

- There was a majority vote to approve the best practices recommendations as they stand today. GPC was the only institution that did not agree with the recommendations.

11:30 Lunch break

IV. Overview of CISI services presently available through the security rider

- **Background:** CISI insurance is the current insurance carrier, but the contract is about to expire. We will talk about the different carriers that were presented at the meeting with the BOR. We will start with a presentation about the current services provided by CISI and then move on to the other carriers, such as HTH Worldwide, Tommy Lord, and Medex.
- **CISI services**
 - On the web: Red24 security information provides access to country specific information in regards to security.
 - Please be aware of the services CISI is already providing. Students pay their invoices and get reimbursed by CISI.
- **HTH services**
 - HTH pays to the hospitals directly, although it is not available in all countries. There is a network of mental health specialists for the students to get in touch with before their departure to set up an appointment.
 - There is also a database for drug equivalents, so students can search if their prescription is available or not.
- **MEDEX**
 - They are one integrated unit for their insurance services, security and medical.
 - They also have a network of physicians around the world that speak English.
 - There is a 24-hour call center with multilingual staff members to help them on ground. Travel security managers will track data from travel agent to track your travel.
- **TW Lord & Associates**
 - They presented their services as well but did not provide a Power Point presentation or website or materials for us to show you.
 - Their services were mainly medical.
 - TW Lord was not sure if he could handle insuring schools at different levels, due to the risk involved in insuring the entire system.
 - However, UGA and GA Tech provided testimonies for TW Lord's services. It is a local company that has been around for a while, and GA Tech, UGA, and Kenessaw use its services.
- **Discussion of pros and cons:**

- As more issues come up with student mental health and instability abroad, we need to be prepared and rely on our insurance company. It is common in the marketplace that companies provide medical and security benefits as well as services and training for their clients.
- Most people did not know that CISI offered all these services and had access to the on-line portal.
- As a system, we have risk management all over the board, and because of this we need to have some other liability protection. This is where the insurance provider comes in. Please analyze these services and providers to see which one you would like. The insurance subcommittee will probably have to work over the summer to make a decision because CISI will expire in August.
- Trip cancellation/interruption insurance: policies tend to be ambiguous with MEDEX and HTH, but it is available at a cost. The insurance subcommittee will need to investigate this further.
- The next step of this process will be to analyze the specific policy proposals for all insurance providers, and it will be up to the subcommittee to make a decision. Committee members are Cele Blair (Clayton State) , Neal McCrillis (Columbus State) , and Holly Carter (Augusta State), Tracy Harrington (Bainbridge-Chair of the SAC), Dawn Foster (Georgia State)

2:00 pm Meeting ended