University Council for International Affairs (UCIA)
April 6, 2006
325 Burruss Hall
10:30 – 12:00 noon

Present:

Andrew Becker, Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
Jeremy Billetdeaux, Senior Coordinator for Education Abroad
Cynthia Bonner, VP Student Affairs
Ron Daniel, Program Director, CESA and Associate Provost
Jack Davis, Chair of UCIA, College of Architecture and Urban Studies
Steve Duke, Assistant Program Director, Education Abroad
Gene Egger, Professor/Director Special Programs Architecture
Monika Gibson, Director of Student Services, Graduate School Student Services
Nancy Gruber, Controller's Office
Valerie Hardcastle, Professor and Head/STS; Associate Dean/CLAHS
Tom Kaloupek, Controller's Office
Tamara Kennelly, Library Systems
Chad Miller, Econ. Dev. Specialist/International Programs, Economic Development
Sedki Riad, Professor, Electrical Engineering
Tarun Sen, Associate Dean, College of Business
Judith Shrum, Associate Professor, Foreign Languages
Richard Shryock, Assoc. Professor, Foreign Languages and Literature
Barry Simmons, Director, Scholarships & Financial Aid
Nammalwar Sriranganathan, Professor, Biomedical Science
Roger Thomas, Purchasing

Welcome:

1) Jack Davis welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from March 2, 2006 had
been previously distributed electronically. These **minutes were approved**.

Information Items:

1) Steven Duke distributed the third draft of the **ACC International Scholars Program,
Scholarship Application for Education Abroad programs occurring in Fall 2006 or
Academic Year 2006-2007**. The scholarships will be merit based only; not need based.

2) Barry Simmons suggested the form be edited to include a bullet stating: "To encourage
students from diverse backgrounds to participate in study abroad programs." Other UCIA
committee members also encouraged changing the bullet which currently states
"Complete transcripts of post-secondary work" to "Unofficial or official transcripts of

post-secondary work." The committee agreed to approve the form pending these clarifications.

3) Jack Davis introduced guests Tom Kaloupek and Nancy Gruber from the Controller's Office and Roger Thomas from Purchasing. They were asked to address the concerns regarding the **$50,000 rule pertaining to travel related to education abroad programs**. Currently, if the cost of a trip runs over that amount then the travel agency making the arrangements needs to be approved by the state of Virginia. An open bid is offered for travel agencies to bid on the contract. Some faculty members feel the bidding process is an additional burden when they have specific foreign agencies they wish to work with based on productive past collaborations. Faculty members desire for some travel agencies to be grandfathered in to an "approved list" so that the bidding process does not need to take place.

4) Tom Kaloupek summed up the state's reasoning for the current process: **risk management.** Some faculty members were using alternate methods (such as the internet) to find travel agencies which offered attractive prices. However, what occurred was that these agencies often were not capable of providing the services and level of safety which both Virginia Tech and the state of Virginia seek to guarantee through the bidding and approval process. Legally, the Controller's Office does not have the authority to override the **state mandated bid and approval process.** To ease the burden on faculty member, they are able to use the **"sole source" option**. This form is available on the Purchasing Office website (http://www.purch.vt.edu/html.docs/ss.html) and offers faculty members the chance to explain why they need to use a specific travel agency. If they are approved then the open bidding can be avoided.

Members from the Controller's Office attempted to include steps of re-structuring into their procurement regulations to allow for more flexibility. The suggested changes will be voted on by the General Assembly on Monday the 10th of April at 5:00 PM. If the suggested changes pass, then the guests would be glad to return to a UCIA meeting and discuss the subsequent changes.

5) Jack Davis discussed the concerns faculty members have regarding the **Travel Cards**, **Purchase Cards**, and the **$5,000 cap on MasterCards**. Not every group leader has access to both cards; and some have run into situations where they needed to use their MasterCard or own credit cards, making them personally responsible for the amounts spent.

6) Nancy Gruber responded to the MasterCard concerns first. There is a $5,000 spending limit on the cards. However, this limit can be raised if the faculty member issues a **request for an amount increase**. It is up to the faculty member to submit this request, once the appeal is in, she can generally change the limit within an hour of discussing it with a MasterCard service specialist. She recommended that faculty members take this step before they leave for the trip in order to prevent any delays in receiving funding if a problem were to arise during travel. She also recommended that each faculty member speak with a MasterCard customer service agent before traveling abroad. They should

inform the agent that they will be overseas and therefore incurring charges from foreign locations. This will prevent MasterCard from blocking charges to their account; that sometimes occurs due to a safety feature set up in the system which blocks access to an account when charges deviating from a customer's normal spending habits occur.

7) Gene Egger pointed out that another important reason for **using established local travel agencies** is that they act as back up for faculty members in the event of an emergency. Department cards are blocked for specific types of charges which need to be made on the Travel cards. For example, you can not bill car rentals, hotel reservations, etc to them. However, they do allow for airline ticket purchases. If faculty members prefer, they can charge items to their personal credit cards and be reimbursed, rather than use the Travel card. Local travel agencies can help faculty members with these preparations and scout out the best process to help keep the arrangements within budget allotments.

8) Tom Kaloupek asked the committee members to remember that his office wants contracted agreements with travel agencies. There is no travel agency "approved list." They are **either under contract, used through the sole sourcing agreement, or are not valid.** The agencies can get certified by the state of Virginia at no extra cost to the company. There is a state procurement system; transaction fees are associated with the business flows. However, due to the lengthy forms involved many smaller travel agencies do not wish to be bothered with listing themselves in the system.

9) Steven Duke distributed the March 7 revised version of the **Health Insurance Certificate form**. It has been approved by Fred Weaver and Steven asked the committee members to pay particular attention to the sentences: "I understand that, in most cases, I will need to pay in person for medical care provided overseas and submit a claim for reimbursement to my insurance company. If any medical expenses are incurred on my behalf by Virginia Tech, I agree to reimburse those expenses." The sentences was modified to include the recommendation of the UCIA committee made during the March 7th meeting to highlight that the responsibility for insurance rests with the students and not Virginia Tech or the faculty members leading the education abroad program. This covers faculty incurred costs when faculty act on behalf of the university to cover fees in emergency situations.

10) Sedki Riad and Barry Simmons requested further alterations to the phrase so that it reads: "I understand that *where my insurance is not accepted* I will need to pay *at the time of service* for medical care provided overseas and submit a claim for reimbursement to my insurance company. If any medical expenses are incurred on my behalf by Virginia Tech, I agree to reimburse those expenses." [Italics used to emphasize suggested changes and will not be used in the official form.]

11) Tarun Sen said that the **forms used for education abroad trips need to be consolidated into one package**. Auditing committees have pointed out that there is an inconsistency in the forms being issued to students. Jack Davis stated that this is an appropriate topic for UCIA to adopt starting next September.

12) Steven Duke said that the current form, once the suggestion from Barry and Sedki is included, must go into affect at least for the summer. He then directed everyone's attention to the **last paragraph** on the second side of the handout which states: "Virginia Tech students who fail to comply with this policy may face the following consequences: *Having a hold placed on their student records   *Loss of access to transfer credit * Reduced support from Education Abroad advising staff." Steven feels uncomfortable with the policing statement.

13) Tarun Sen suggested **including the Code of Conduct into the form** in order to point out that students are expected to behave overseas with the same respect and maturity which is required of them on the Virginia Tech campus.

14) Steven Duke brought up that there is a **problem when it comes to enforcing these regulations**.

15) Jack Davis stated that this issue also needs to be a **September item for the committee to address**.

16) Steven Duke issued two handouts concerning the new Education Abroad Banner codes. A meeting will be held April 26th from 1:00 – 2:30 in the Student Services Building for people to come and discuss the codes. He invited the committee members to attend.

17) Jack Davis suggested that the **guests be invited back in September** to address the changes which have occurred regarding the MasterCard, Travel card, Department card, and to address any other issues the committee whishes to bring to their attention. On behalf of John Dooley (who was absent due to traveling with SK De Datta in India) Jack distributed two handouts about the President's **National Security Language Initiative (NSLI)** run by the U.S. Department of Education's as part of their No Child Left Behind initiative.

Meeting adjourned 12:05