

UCIA Meeting
November 13, 2008 11:00-12:00
International Affairs Office, Meeting Room A

Present

Don Back, *Director, English Language Institute*
Jeremy Billetdeaux, *Assistant Program Director for Education Abroad, OIRE*
Cynthia Bonner, *Chief of Staff and Director of Administration, Student Affairs*
John Browder, *Associate Dean, College of Architecture and Urban Studies*
John Crunkilton, *Associate Director for Academic Programs, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences*
S.K. De Datta, *Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Director, OIRE*
John Dooley, *Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs*
Monika Gibson, *Director of Student Services, Graduate School Student Services*
Tom Hammett, *Professor, College of Natural Resources*
Paul Hover, *Library Technical Services*
Matthew McMullen, *Program Director, Education Abroad, OIRE*
Carrie Miller, *Associate Director for Operations, Financial Aid Administration*
Belinda Pauley, *Assistant to the Director, Cranwell International Center*
Miriam Rich, *Communications Coordinator, OIRE*
Nicole Sanderlin, *Graduate Assistant, Outreach and International Affairs*
Richard Shryock, *Department Chair, Foreign Languages and Literatures*
Nammalwar Sriranganathan, *Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine*

Action items:

- Members needed to serve on selection committee for Alumni Awards for Excellence in International Education, Outreach, and Research

1. Welcome and introductions

The meeting was called to order by UCIA vice chair John Browder, who noted that the minutes from the October 9 meeting had been submitted electronically for review. Miriam Rich suggested that in the future a list of action items be included with the minutes. Given that there were no corrections to be made, the minutes were approved, as well as the agenda.

2. Education Abroad issues: Matthew McMullen, Jeremy Billetdeaux

Dr. Matthew McMullen, the new Program Director for Education Abroad, was introduced to the council by Dr. S.K. De Datta, who remarked that Education Abroad has become a high priority within the university. Considerable growth has taken place in the number of participants as well as the destinations and the quality of the programs offered. To keep pace with this expansion, last year the Education Abroad department moved to the International Affairs Office to provide a more spacious work area for staff and their clients, the positions held by Dr. McMullen and Jeremy Billetdeaux have been upgraded two levels, and a program coordinator, Mary Ogburn, has been hired for the department.

Dr. McMullen stated that his first priority had been the revision of the student liability form. Working with legal counsel, he has consolidated the previous waivers and forms into a single document. The

updated form now offers better liability protection for the faculty members who are leading programs abroad; additionally, it addresses not only health issues for participants but the code of conduct and students' responsibilities in a variety of situations.

A discussion over the content of the form was initiated. Dr. Crunkilton commented that although he liked the document, he wondered if the wording regarding risks and dangers might deter students from participating in programs and suggested that these statements be reviewed during pre-departure briefings so as to 'cushion the blow.' John Dooley felt that the form did not emphasize clearly enough the fact that Virginia Tech policies supersede any local policies, citing as an example the continued issue of underage students drinking while attending CESA programs. Dr. De Datta agreed that the pre-departure briefing would be a good opportunity to clarify the intent of this form as a means of ensuring a positive experience for all students and to explain in writing what will happen if this agreement is violated.

In response to a question from Don Back, Dr. McMullen stated that he would like to have the form available for the pre-departure sessions that are being held the week of November 17 – 21. He added that the form does not contain information about what might happen when faculty intervene on a student's behalf in an emergency situation in other countries; however, there are 'Good Samaritan' laws in place in the state of Virginia that extend to any situation anywhere in the world. Dr. McMullen also stated that it is the responsibility of the faculty to be as informed as possible regarding regulations of each country and to share that information with the students. The consensus of the group was that the form was acceptable for immediate distribution and minor changes and adjustments could be made later. Dr. Dooley suggested incorporating the Virginia Tech Principles of Community and the Honor Code into the document as well. A motion was then made by Richard Shryock and seconded by Paul Hover to accept the student liability form as amended. A brief discussion followed regarding the definitions of 'Education Abroad' and the delineation between its various offerings including student exchanges, faculty-led programs, service-learning programs, and credit-bearing programs prior to the unanimous passing of the motion.

Jeremy Billetdeaux distributed copies of the flyer for International Education week, which lists different activities and events taking place on the campus. He will also share this information with the group via e-mail. He noted that, along with the Council of International Student Organizations, the Education Abroad office will be hosting a bilateral exchange fair at the Graduate Life Center to highlight the partnerships between Virginia Tech and more than 70 universities. Dr. McMullen added that they had recently also had a 'family day' event for Education Abroad and the resulting crowd was standing room only; the interest in Education Abroad activities extends to parents as well as students.

Dr. De Datta mentioned that he had just returned from the NASULGC annual meeting in Chicago, where William H. Danforth, chancellor emeritus of Washington University of St. Louis, delivered an address on international agriculture issues; Dr. De Datta suggested that he would be an excellent choice for a speaker at an international education week event if given sufficient notice. Several other council members also shared updates of activities and events taking place within their organizations and departments. Monika Gibson showed a sampling of the photos taken by international graduate students which will be on display at the Graduate Life Center for International Education Week. Richard Shryock commented that on November 15 the Lyric Theater in downtown Blacksburg will be showing the last film in the series of the Japanese Film Festival; private funding received for this event enabled the films to be shown for an admission price of \$1. Tom Hammett stated that the College of Natural

Resources will also be sponsoring a study abroad fair to recruit students for their various program offerings.

Dr. McMullen also spoke about the recent ACCIAC convention, which he attended along with Jeremy Billetdeaux and other faculty members from Virginia Tech. Caroline Rude of Virginia Tech's English department spoke on her collaboration with institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Jeremy also mentioned a Eurasian program organized by Florida State University which will take place at Koç University near Istanbul, Turkey. The keynote speaker for the conference was Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of the U.S. House of Representatives, the ranking member of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee; among the topics addressed was the possibility of reestablishing exchange programs with Cuba.

- Housing needs for international visitors – John Dooley

Dr. Dooley reported that UCIA representatives have provided him information regarding the number of international visitors housed at Virginia Tech in order to consider the possibility of opening an international house. The numbers were not as high as anticipated; without adding the considerable needs of the English Language Institute, it appears that a 10 – 12 room facility would be adequate to handle demand. Such accommodations are prevalent on many campuses and they add much to the flavor of the university as well as to the experience of the international visitors. Dr. Dooley will continue to pursue this idea.

- Alumni Awards for Excellence in International Education, Outreach, and Research – John Dooley

The Special Events department of University Relations has requested that they receive notification and names of all award winners by March 1. Submission of awards packets should take place by January 30 and in order to give the selection committee adequate time to review the nominations; therefore, the call for nominations should soon go out with a follow-up reminder sent after the holidays. Dr. Dooley suggested that it would be a good idea to work with the honorifics committee in order to obtain as many nominations as possible, noting that with impending budget cuts, the \$2,000 stipend is especially attractive. It will be necessary to appoint a selection committee; anyone interested in serving on this committee should contact John Browder.

Jeremy Billetdeaux remarked that the students have returned from the first fall semester program at Punta Cana and had a very positive and successful experience. There will be an event to showcase their experiences at Torgersen Hall on Friday, November 14.

Nammalwar Sriranganathan stated that the veterinary medicine school recently had six students working and studying for one month in Chennai, India on a clinical clerkship. Their work was linked to projects in a national forest; among the highlights of their visit was doing a post-op on a cougar to research information related to new diseases and bio-terrorism.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56.