

UCIA Meeting
January 14, 2010
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
International Affairs Office, Meeting Room A

Present:

Jerry Berkley-Coats, *Assistant Director for International Support Services, OIRED*
Jeremy Billetdeaux, *Assistant Program Director, Education Abroad*
Cynthia Bonner, *Chief of Staff and Director of Administration, Student Affairs*
Laurie Brogdon, *Director of Multicultural Alumni Programs, Alumni Relations*
John Browder, *Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, College of Architecture and Urban Studies*
S.K. De Datta, *Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Director, OIRED*
Ana Dubnjakovic, *Performing Arts and Foreign Languages Librarian*
Julie Ingram, *Applicant Eligibility Coordinator, Scholarships and Financial Aid*
Frances Keene, *Director of Judicial Affairs, Office of Student Conduct*
Reed Kennedy, *Instructor of Management and Director of International Programs,*
Pamplin College of Business
Matthew McMullen, *Program Director, Education Abroad*
Miriam Rich, *Communications Coordinator, OIRED*
Nicole Sanderlin, *Graduate Assistant, Outreach and International Affairs*
Rohsaan Settle, *Associate Director of Judicial Affairs, Office of Student Conduct*
Jeanna Stewart, *Assistant Director of International Programs, College of Engineers*
Debra Stoudt, *Associate Dean for Academic Policies and Procedures, CLAHS*

1. Welcome and introductions

Chair John Browder called the meeting to order and asked attendees to introduce themselves. He noted that the agenda and the minutes had previously been distributed via email and asked if there were any changes to those documents. There were none, and he declared them approved.

2. Education Abroad updates

Matt McMullen asked Cynthia Bonner to begin this segment of the meeting by bringing the group up to date on proposed revisions to the university alcohol policy. Cynthia introduced Frances Keene and Rohsaan Settle from the Office of Student Conduct, who had been consulted regarding the suggested changes. Cynthia noted that there were two points to be addressed; the first issue concerns the policy revisions for actual university-sponsored events. She noted that Steven Capaldo in University Counsel had assisted with rewriting of the policy and that personnel from Student Affairs had cleared a draft of the proposed changes. The other issue is that of student conduct; specifically, what they can or cannot do on their own time and whether they should follow the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the laws of the country they are visiting, and the faculty role in these situations. Frances Keene pointed out the changes that would be made to the policy, which would be approved by Sherwood Wilson, as well as to the Hokie Handbook; she advised that implementation of those changes would then make the issue not one of whether or not students were engaging in the consumption of alcohol but rather their subsequent behavior. She suggested that student affairs can always be contacted for guidance on the matter, but faculty should be assured that they are not expected to monitor or control student behavior. Ms. Keene also reminded them that the policies are driven by suggestions. Dr. De Datta noted that the language made unclear references to regional centers and international centers and asked if the wording could be changed to be consistent and to differentiate between the regional centers throughout Virginia and international centers in other countries, such as CESA and Punta Cana.

Dr. Browder asked if the proposed changes were adequate to address chronic student alcohol consumption problems such as those reported at CESA; Matt McMullen replied that these changes are most applicable to the faculty-led programs. Reed Kennedy asked for additional clarification on the problem of how the policy would be applied to underage students who drinking during their free time; Ms. Keene stated that there is nothing specific in the regulations about this. Reed commented that there is a misperception that faculty are responsible for policing the actions of the students. She noted that during the seven years she has worked in the office of student conduct, referrals from overseas were related to disruptive behavior and not specifically to drinking and added that these policies are geared towards life in Blacksburg. She commented that it would be difficult to explain to students why they were permitted to consume in one location but not in another, and emphasized that the policy seeks to promote overall responsible behavior. Cynthia Bonner added that the suggested changes to the policy very clearly indicate that they apply only to university events and Matt McMullen concurred that faculty should understand they are responsible during official events. Ms. Keene concluded by stating that she would make the suggested changes and forward them to Cynthia for her review; they would then be sent to Sherwood Wilson for his approval and finally to Ed Spencer for inclusion in the student handbook. Cynthia recommended that the council members take the information back to their groups for feedback, with the goal of implementing changes and having them in place prior to the summer sessions. She also inquired if there were other groups to whom these edits should be presented, but the consensus was that the information has been widely and adequately shared.

Matt McMullen continued the update by mentioning an area studies session scheduled for February 2 that will provide information about courses and available study abroad opportunities focused on particular regions of the world. An email will be forthcoming with more details. He also stated that several meetings have taken place with the aim of putting more quality control into the creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Student Exchange Agreements (SEAs). Currently there are dozens of them in existence at Virginia Tech; it would be beneficial to look at those affiliations with top institutions worldwide and solidify the partnerships with them. Matt clarified that an MOU is necessary before creating an SEA. Jerry Berkley-Coats from the Office of International Support Services briefed the council members on the current status of the MOUs, stating that there are more than 200 institutions currently listed in a database which had been set up at the request of Dr. De Datta. However, many of these are merely a courtesy to groups of international visitors. Dr. Berkley-Coats noted that Virginia Tech currently has fewer than ten MOUs with the top 200 institutions in the world as ranked by the US News and World Report and encouraged faculty to look carefully at the quality of the universities before engaging in the process of an MOU. He noted that new procedures will entail college deans reviewing and signing off before the documents come to OIRED for Dr. De Datta's signature. As mentioned earlier, many of the MOUs are merely ceremonial and involve visiting delegations, often headed by the president or chancellor of a foreign institution, who wish to meet with the president. These meetings are still important for maintaining good relations, but there should be a clear distinction between active and inactive MOUs and inactive ones will no longer be included in the MOU database. There are also new regulations in place by the USAID, which provides a large source of funding for many of the university's research projects, which could also impact the process of creating the MOUs. Most of the MOUs in the future will also be dual-language; the sponsoring department will be responsible for having the translation certified as a true copy. Dr. Browder noted that there were no institutions from Latin America or Africa on the list that Dr. Berkley-Coats had shared. Matt McMullen replied that individual colleges and programs within institutions may be renowned for their work and that reputation would also be a consideration; the scrutiny and quality control would be at the college level. Jeremy Billetdeaux added that this system of ranking has nothing to do with receiving or sending students on exchange programs. Dr. De Datta suggested that the list be reviewed as well, commenting

that the University of Edinburgh is on the list but the school has a reputation for relatively low standards of admission.

3. Visiting Scholar Guest House Task Group

Dr. Browder stated that last year a discussion had begun about obtaining a residential property to be used for guests. Dr. Dooley had updated him that they had been close to buying one before but not successful. He would like to have an advisory group to assist with this and asked for volunteers to serve with Don Back, who had already been contacted and asked to assist with this project. Reed Kennedy, Debra Stoudt, and Jeremy Biletdeaux all agreed to serve on this committee.

4. Nomination of UCIA vice-chair

Dr. De Datta nominated Debra Stoudt to serve as the vice-chair of the UCIA. This would entail chairing the meetings in Dr. Browder's absence, but would not automatically mean she would become the chair the following year. Miriam Rich seconded the nomination; it was approved unanimously.

5. Update on international activities

John Browder provided this month's update on the international activities of CAUS. His request for updates generated interest in starting an active database within the college. The information he collected is not based from MOUs but rather from individual relationships established and developed by faculty with different universities around the world. Likewise, the information was provided by the associate dean for research (Bob Schubert), who has a good deal of institutional memory, as well as Jan Holt and Gene Egger. The resulting tables of information were then sent out as a draft to CAUS faculty for their review.

The College of Engineering will provide the next update.

6. Informational items

Dr. De Datta mentioned the earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12 and the resulting concern and interest in that country. He reported that there were VT faculty present in the country who had left Port-Au-Prince only twenty minutes prior to the quake. The group is driving to the Dominican Republic and will be arriving back in Blacksburg this evening. Dr. De Datta has raised this with Dr. Dooley and posed the question to council members: should there be some mechanism in place to inform the university when faculty travel to foreign countries in order to be able to track them when such incidents occur? John Browder noted that it would be difficult to differentiate between official travel and more casual trips that still are linked to the academic community intellectually. The group consensus was that it would be difficult to try to collect these itineraries and would also possibly be perceived as impinging on individual freedom.

There were no further items to discuss and the meeting was adjourned at 3:07 p.m.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, February 25, from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. at the International Affairs Offices.