

UCIA Meeting
April 29, 2010
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
International Affairs Office, Meeting Room A

Present:

Don Back, *Director, Language and Culture Institute*
Kim Beisecker, *Director, Cranwell International Center*
Jeremy Biletdeaux, *Assistant Program Director, Education Abroad*
Cynthia Bonner, *Chief of Staff and Director of Administration, Student Affairs*
John Browder, *Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, CAUS*
S.K. De Datta, *Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Director, OIRED*
Ana Dubnjakovic, *Performing Arts and Foreign Languages Librarian*
Reed Kennedy, *Instructor of Management, Director of International Programs,*
Pamplin College of Business
Marilynn King, *Senior Associate Director, University Scholarships and Financial Aid*
Matthew McMullen, *Program Director, Education Abroad*
Miriam Rich, *Communications Coordinator, OIRED*
Nicole Sanderlin, *Graduate Assistant, Outreach and International Affairs*
Richard Shryock, *Associate Professor and Department Chair, Foreign Languages and Literatures*
Alexandra Sommers, *Graduate Assistant, Outreach and International Affairs*
Jeanna Stewart, *Assistant Director of International Programs, College of Engineering*
Debra Stoudt, *Associate Dean for Academic Policies and Procedures, CLAHS*

Guests:

Stephen Capaldo, *University Legal Counsel*
Jeet Heda, *Avellar, Stone, Houston and Associates*
Humphrey Fellows:

Romina Avila Iturralde (*Panama*)
Salem Bin Talib (*Yemen*)
Nestor Kahoun (*Burkina Faso*)

1. Welcome, introductions, and approval of March minutes

John Browder called the meeting to order and asked participants to introduce themselves. There were no changes to the agenda; minutes from the March meeting had been distributed for review and were approved as submitted.

2. Education Abroad updates

a. Health insurance and health disclosure

Matthew McMullen introduced guests Stephen Capaldo and Jeet Heda, who were invited to the meeting to address issues regarding health insurance as it relates to student international travel. Steve Capaldo began the discussion by stating the university does not mandate that a student purchase health insurance prior to acceptance/admission; nor is it a requirement that a student purchase insurance to participate in a study abroad trip, although it can be obligatory for stays in certain countries such as long-term visitors to Schengen area countries. The importance of health insurance and the benefits that comprehensive coverage can provide, such as evacuation services, became apparent again during the recent volcanic eruptions in Iceland that caused extensive delays in travel. At this point the purchase of insurance still cannot be made mandatory; however, Mr. Capaldo suggested that it be encouraged and

that faculty program leaders strongly advise their students to purchase it. Dr. De Datta inquired as to the legality of requiring students to purchase the insurance. Mr. Capaldo replied that in the 1990s there was a push to make the insurance mandatory but ultimately no definitive action was taken, most likely due to concerns regarding its affordability. John Browder asked if fees covering the expenses of the insurance policies could be built into the cost structure of the program; Mr. Capaldo replied that such an action would depend on whether or not the additional cost would be prohibitive enough to discourage students from participating in study abroad programs. He reminded the group that currently there are students here at the university who do not have any type of insurance. Dr. De Datta asked who would be liable for expenses incurred in situations where there is no insurance coverage; Mr. Capaldo responded that it would be the student's responsibility to pay for the costs incurred. He added that often two insurance companies/policies try to recoup losses from one another, a process known as subrogation. Matt McMullen pointed out that many faculty program leaders have concerns that should something occur, they as the persons in charge would be required to foot the bill and assume liability for the situation and the expenses. Stephen stated that this is rare; Virginia Tech anticipates that program leaders would render whatever immediate aid is deemed necessary aid and it is reasonable to expect reimbursement for any costs. Dr. McMullen added that the new national health care legislation will likely make it a requirement for everyone to have insurance. Stephen replied that there are several challenges pending implementation of this bill, but if they are resolved it will change the issue completely.

Jeet Heda gave an overview of the services that insurance companies can provide with affordable coverage. He offered several scenarios of mishaps that can occur while on overseas trips and noted that most U.S. health insurance plans are not designed to work overseas. Other considerations include evacuation, repatriation of remains, changes to flight itineraries, or purchase of tickets for family members to travel to a disabled student. Stephen Capaldo noted that the cost could be incorporated into program expenses and students could have an opt-out provision. However, as a state agency, the contracting of these services would have to go through the procurement process via an RFP. Jeet noted that Old Dominion University has this program in place and is currently using Medex insurance to provide coverage for their students; the RFP was written to facilitate the 'rollover' of contractual services to other universities in the commonwealth. These companies have flexible options available for purchase for small groups and individuals. Dr. McMullen referred to the International Student Identity Card which does offer insurance coverage with its purchase; Jeet noted that it is basic/minimal coverage and the card itself recommends that the holder consider purchasing more comprehensive coverage. Don Back observed that Medex is the insurance service already in place through risk management; Dr. De Datta concurred that it is required on donor-funded projects and is chargeable to these specific projects. Jeet summarized his presentation by stating that the cost would only be an additional \$1 – 2 per day per student. Dr. Browder thanked him for the information and for his proffered availability for future consultation. Stephen will follow up with Old Dominion and Virginia Commonwealth Universities to see that services they have in place.

3. Humphrey Fellows update

Don Back announced that this is the third year the Virginia Tech Language and Culture Institute has hosted participants in the Humphrey Fellowship program. The visitors are mid-level professionals who come to the U.S. for intensive English language training, after which they pursue non-degree studies and related professional experiences at selected American universities. Don stated that this year there are 20 guests from 18 different countries visiting Blacksburg. Three of the Fellows had accompanied Don to the meeting; they introduced themselves and provided information about their backgrounds and interests. Invitations have been distributed for a reception to be held on May 3.

4. International guest housing task force update

Don Back distributed a copy of the survey that the task force has created to get a more accurate assessment of the guest housing needs of different departments. The survey can provide additional details as to the nature and type of facilities to be procured. Don encouraged everyone to participate in this survey; results of last year's informal polling of colleges offered some basic information but the results were not tabulated nor were they comprehensive. Kim Beisecker observed that timing could be problematic; there are surges in guests' arrival schedules that coincide with the start of the spring and fall semesters whereas other times of the year are much more constant. She also pointed out that researchers and students may not mix well together. Currently, international visitors stay at a variety of facilities including bed and breakfasts, inexpensive local hotels, Extended Stay in Christiansburg, or with someone in their sponsoring department. Don explained that the questions were based on a model provided that sought to offer reasonably priced accommodations with a pleasant and comfortable ambiance. The Graduate Life Center currently charges students \$200 - \$300 per week; purchasing a property or having one donated would offer more affordable options. Dr. De Datta noted that John Dooley has been negotiating with a donor to obtain a set of six three-room apartments that could accommodate a total of 18 guests. Don Back responded that the information provided is based on this model. The specific property being considered is located off South Main Street near Nellie's Cave Park; it is on a bus line and is close to and convenient to shopping. Virginia Tech will furnish the apartments and provide amenities. An important consideration is that the facilities do not compete with local businesses; the goal is not to provide lodging for short-term stays of two – three nights but to offer accommodations for a semester-long stay that will also help build a sense of community for the visitors. Kim Beisecker raised some concerns based on her experiences with seeking short-term housing for international guests; she noted that it is sometimes difficult to obtain leases with a commitment of less than one year. She also asked what the cost estimates were based on, as the \$400 price range did not seem realistic. Don Back clarified that the costs had been calculated to include cleaning, refurbishing, etc. but agreed that the lowest price range mentioned on the survey could be taken out; he asked if there were any other observations. Dr. De Datta agreed that Kim may have a good point and suggested that there should be some cushion built into the cost estimates to allow for an occupancy rate of less than 100%. Don replied that this had been taken into consideration when pricing the models. One of the prime objectives is to be able to offer a welcoming atmosphere for the visitors. Kim also asked if an external manager would be in charge of the property and commented that her experience with local property managers and landlords is that they are often less than sympathetic and understanding in their dealings with international tenants and the cultural differences presented. Don replied that there will be some form of administration from the university, with a resident office on site and site visits. Kim emphasized the need to take the many different lifestyles into consideration when dealing with the international visitors and cautioned that there are significant daily problems when helping them adapt to life in the U.S.

5. Global Education certificate

Alexandra Sommers presented information on the research that has been done towards implementation of the International Certificate in Global Competency for undergraduates. Three different models have been proposed, based on best practices of other institutions; the certificate could prove to be an especially attractive option for students in engineering and science degrees. The proposed model would require a study abroad component, foreign language proficiency, and a senior thesis/capstone project that would incorporate all the student's international experiences. Matt McMullen added that a 'Global Issues' course would also be required. The basic questions he put

forward to the council were the importance with which this certificate is perceived, how it compares to the international studies minor, and how to go forward with the project. Dr. De Datta asked how the certificate would fit into the curriculum and whether or not it would extend a student's time of study. Dr. McMullen replied that it is the role of the colleges to make it fit in; there would be basic components set from a higher level of university administration and colleges would have ownership to make those components fit into their curriculum requirements and offerings for any specific degree. Alexandra added that this would be offered to freshmen so they could tailor their course selections accordingly. There would likely be a few additional courses necessary as well as language proficiency exams. John Browder noted that the university earth sustainability undergraduate core program might be one model for a global issues program. The major problem for architecture and engineering students is schedule conflicts that prevent their participation in this program. Kim Beisecker commented that the proposed certificate should perhaps consider rethinking the Education Abroad component as several ACC schools do not require this for their certificates. She also commented that there should be options available for international undergraduate students who would likely not be able to participate in a study abroad component. Richard Shryock asked if this could be re-sold as a concentration rather than a certificate. Alexandra replied that this could be possible as some schools already have this in place. Dr. De Datta observed that U.S. students are far behind the rest of the world regarding fluency in foreign languages and commended the efforts to establish this program. He asked what the council could do to help work this through the university. Dr. Browder suggested that perhaps a subcommittee should be formed to reflect on this. Richard Shryock asked that representatives from Foreign Languages and Literature be included on this committee. Dr. Browder replied that they indeed would be part of the group, and that the representatives should come from the associate dean level. A subcommittee will be convened in the fall.

6. International research resource page

Alexandra Sommers distributed a prototype of the proposed international research resource page. Visitors to the page could click on a specific country shown on a world or regional map and information regarding all MOUs, Education Abroad programs, research project, and alumni could be accessed. Nicole Sanderlin asked for feedback on how this can be feasible and how the data could be collected on an ongoing basis, as well as if the page would be of value to faculty. Miriam Rich replied that it is a useful and valuable resource, but acknowledged that it would be hard to collect the data. Dr. Browder suggested that initially the information be compiled from the college updates that have been presented during the past year at UCIA meetings. Alexandra and Nicole agreed that after inaugurating the page, they can then strategize how to institutionalize this resource and keep the information non-static.

7. Informational items

Dr. De Datta announced that campus maps are being updated to show both the International Affairs Offices and the Outreach and International Affairs buildings.

There were no further items to discuss and the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

8. Next meeting: Thursday, May 27 (2:00 – 3:30 p.m.)