

UCIA Meeting
September 30, 2010
8:00 – 9:30 a.m.
International Affairs Office, Meeting Room A

Present:

Don Back, *Director, Language and Culture Institute*
Lynda Bailey, *Assistant Registrar, Office of the University Registrar*
Mike Bertelsen, *Associate Director, OIRED*
Jeremy Biletdeaux, *Assistant Program Director, Education Abroad*
Cynthia Bonner, *Chief of Staff and Director of Administration, Student Affairs*
Laurie Brogdon, *Alumni Association, Office for Diversity and Inclusion*
S.K. De Datta, *Associate Vice President for International Affairs and Director, OIRED*
John Dooley, *Vice President, Outreach and International Affairs*
Reed Kennedy, *Instructor of Management, Director of International Programs,
Pamplin College of Business*
Paul Knox, *Office of the President*
Mary Marchant, *Professor, Agriculture and Applied Economics*
Jonathan Moore, *Graduate Student Association*
Nicole Sanderlin, *Director of International Programs, College of Engineering*
Richard Shryock, *Foreign Languages and Literatures*
Barry Simmons, *Director, Scholarships and Financial Aid*
Ken Smith, *Associate Provost for Resource Management and Planning*
Debra Stoudt, *Associate Dean for Academic Policies and Procedures, CLAHS*
Susan Sumner, *Academic Program, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences*

Guests:

Stephen Capaldo, *University Legal Counsel*
Frances Keene, *Director, Office of Student Conduct*
Jason Thweatt, *Advisor and Co-Chair, Undergraduate Honor System*
Delegation from the Technische Universität Darmstadt:

Prof. Dr. Marek Fuchs, *Professor of Sociology*
Prof. Dr. Britta Hufeisen, *Professor of German*
Prof. Dr. Ulrich Joost, *Professor of German*
Prof. Dr. Beate Kraus, *Professor of Sociology*
Prof. Alexandra Manzei, *Professor of Sociology*
Prof. Dr. Rudi Schmiede, *Dean of the School of Social Sciences and History and Professor
of Sociology*

1. Welcome, introductions, and approval of August minutes

Debra Stoudt called the meeting to order and asked participants to introduce themselves. Minutes from the August meeting had been distributed previously and were approved as submitted.

2. Education Abroad updates

a. Medical clearance form

Steve Capaldo presented an informed consent form that, in contrast to an earlier version of a medical clearance form, would be legally sufficient to protect the university, program leaders, and other students during study abroad trips. He cited a situation involving a University of Washington student

who traveled to Cuba, became ill, and is now suing the university. Dr. Stoudt asked if there had been any feedback from council members on the document; Mr. Capaldo replied that so far it had been discussed only among the sub-committee members (himself, Reed Kennedy, and Jeremy Billetdeaux). Reed Kennedy pointed out that this is a different type of document than the form that was discussed last spring, which sought to obtain permission from physicians and therapists but posed several issues that presented potential liabilities since Virginia Tech is not entitled to obtain certain information from the students. Jeremy Billetdeaux clarified that students may be denied participation if they do not sign the form; he discussed the second page that is program specific and can be modified by faculty leaders who can add relevant information regarding the planned trip. Dr. Stoudt asked if those details would pose any liability issues as well, since certain conditions may change at the last minute. Mr. Capaldo replied that the students are responsible for communicating with their advisors and should be aware that things can change suddenly. The first page of the consent form was designed to protect faculty from those unforeseen circumstances and to release them from liability. Dr. Dooley noted that the document seemed to be far short of what faculty had originally requested and asked if this was the best solution that could be offered. Mr. Capaldo replied that the implied consent form really is the best option and that the medical clearance form would actually present additional liabilities. Dr. Dooley stated that he has been told that such consent forms have limited value in court. Mr. Capaldo acknowledged that there is not 100% security but the form as written offers the most comprehensive protection available for faculty. These concerns had been brought up by Reed Kennedy during discussions and the consent form in its present state would be signed without duress or coercion. The form would be added to the current set of online forms and applications and would be due thirty days prior to departure. No implementation date has been discussed and no additional action or approval is necessary to implement its use; students would sign the form, program leaders would receive a copy, and the Education Abroad Office would retain the original. No additional signatures or review would be required. Jeremy Billetdeaux asked how this could be added to Presidential Policy 225, which serves as a guideline for administrative responsibilities in planning Education Abroad programs; Steven Capaldo stated that it could be separate from that policy. Jonathan Moore expressed concerns about the second page and how quality control for completion of that page would be monitored. Dr. De Datta cited incidents in which parents call high-level university administrative officials such as President Steger or Dr. Dooley with complaints as to how situations have been handled, even when students have signed waivers. Mr. Capaldo reminded the group that Virginia Tech personnel must have written releases from students giving their permission to discuss such matters with parents. Virginia Tech cannot guarantee that these programs can be 100% risk free; participation in these activities is voluntary and an honor. There is an inherent risk involved similar to that in boarding an airplane, and it is a personal decision made by the participants. Mr. Capaldo reaffirmed that the form as presented in today's meeting should protect the university and affiliated personnel to the greatest extent possible.

b. Health insurance

The sub-committee (Jeremy Billetdeaux, Stephen Capaldo, and Reed Kennedy) has also been researching options for health insurance for study abroad participants. A copy of the contract used by Old Dominion University had been provided for review by UCIA members. This contract had been obtained through a competitive RFP procedure that ensured the best value was obtained, and a comprehensive, short term insurance policy on which the Virginia Tech students can piggyback can therefore be offered without having to redo the bidding process. Jeremy Billetdeaux had spoken with Steve Bell, the international programs director at ODU, and cited several differences between programs managed by the institutions. ODU has no semester long programs, for example; another such consideration is varying health insurance requirements of different countries such as those in Switzerland that have affected students attending CESA. However, these are relatively minor details that

can be negotiated with the insurance company. The costs for this insurance would be built into the program fees, with an opt-out clause available for students who do have adequate coverage with existing policies. CMI is aligned with Medex, with whom Virginia Tech already has a contract; that contract is set to run out next year and may have to be re-negotiated, but overall there is a high level of satisfaction with their services. Steven Capaldo noted that in years past the Virginia attorney general had thought this coverage was neither feasible nor legal, but ODU has been able to require this. Jeremy Billetdeaux stated that the additional cost would be approximately \$45 per month; there is no specific definition of short term but the policy can be written to constitute an entire semester. The sample policy provided would not be applicable to the particular requirements of Switzerland but would work for students at Punta Cana. Mike Bertelsen asked if the insurance would cover local costs or if students would pick up the expenses and then be reimbursed. Jeremy answered that in most cases students would be reimbursed, although there are some countries where the costs would be taken care of immediately. Other provisions available include relocating sick or injured students moving back to the U.S., bringing parents overseas, and expatriation of remains. The particular policy shown has been tailored to ODU's needs and can be modified to address Virginia Tech's requirements.

Jonathan Moore noted the two documents discussed are critical in protecting both the students and the university, but he expressed concerns that students should be able to provide some feedback. Steven Capaldo mentioned the office of Student Legal Resources as a source for additional information and assistance. Cynthia Bonner agreed that this could be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Student Affairs Commission. Dr. De Datta suggested that action on this topic could be deferred to the next meeting but urged that it should be taken care of as soon as possible. Reed Kennedy added that the forms could be sent forward to the colleges for their review and approval as well. Dr. Stoudt asked that the two issues be divided and dealt with separately, with a definitive vote delayed until the next meeting. Dr. Dooley clarified that the delay is an opportunity for faculty and students to provide additional feedback and noted that the health insurance paperwork was not a Virginia Tech form but rather an outline of a concept to endorse/support before moving forward with the idea. He also expressed concerns that participation in study abroad experience is being perceived as a privilege and emphasized the importance of referring to it as an added value experience, stating that he wants not only to make this opportunity available not merely to an elite few but also to increase the options to as many students as possible. The council voted to defer action on both documents until the following month, pending feedback from students and faculty regarding the respective issues.

Jeremy Billetdeaux reported that the Education Abroad fair was held Wednesday, September 22 on the Drillfield and attracted as many as 5,000 students. There were several new programs represented at the fair, including a spring break trip to Ireland, an Arabic calligraphy course in Egypt, and a business course in Costa Rica. Additionally, Virginia Tech alumnus Robert Fried has started his own language school in China in conjunction with several community partners. Jeremy mentioned several scholarships available as well, such as those sponsored by the ACC, OIRED, the Phi Beta Delta international honor society, and a CESA needs-based housing scholarship; applications for all of these are due by October 22. The Education Abroad office also staffed an admissions open house for visiting high school seniors. It has been a busy semester so far and the staff is actively seeking to put out the word regarding opportunities.

Dr. De Datta also updated the group on the progress of the selection of the new Education Abroad program director. Telephone interviews with candidates are being conducted today; finalists will be selected from among them to be invited to visit the campus for face-to-face interviews.

3. International Guest Housing

Don Back distributed results of a survey that sought to identify needs for international guest housing. Dr. Dooley and Ray Smoot have been working with a prospective donor who has a ~~an 186 three bedrooms-~~ unit property near Nellie's Cave Park that he ~~would like is considering to giveing~~ to the university. Dr. Dooley added that the building would be turned over to the Foundation and a strategy would be worked out to arrive at the desired price point. Several colleges already have apartments leased for long-term visiting scholars and they would be welcome to participate in this venture as well. Possible business plans include a time share management model between departments. There are a wide variety of facilities available near campus but most require longer term leases, and many of the hotels are sold out during football game weekends. Dr. De Datta cited the University Club as an ideal model for housing due to its location, accessibility, and affordability.

4. Student Conduct on Study Abroad Programs

Frances Keene, Director of Student Conduct, had circulated a memorandum with background information regarding the topic of student conduct during study abroad programs. Incidents had taken place earlier in the semester that were inconsistent with student conduct guidelines. Several of the students involved in the subsequent judicial review process had had prior incidents which now put their student status at risk. These incidents highlighted the need to implement the good practice of requiring disclosure in order to give program leaders some prior knowledge of potential behavioral issues, similar to any other issue such as medical or academic conditions. This process has been approved by Kay Heidbreder in legal counsel and other groups have employed it, e.g., as background checks run on Board of Visitor candidates and homecoming court members. Ms. Keene commented that it would be recommended that a student with a prior violation not be allowed to participate in a study abroad venture. Dr. Paul Knox added that ultimately it would be the academic leaders' decision but he endorses such an action. Ms. Keene continued by saying she had met with CESA program leaders for upcoming semesters, all of whom wished they had had these conversations sooner. Students must be made aware that their behavior may have consequences that subsequently affect and limit their choices. Ms. Keene observed that applicants for resident advisors are rejected if they have prior offenses and program leaders are certainly within their rights to prevent a student from participating in a study abroad program. Dr. Dooley emphasized the value of this resource of which faculty previously were unaware as a means of program management and counseling intervention; it can serve as a data point and can be used to plan more effectively. He suggested this not be seen as a clear line drawn but as an action that can be taken in the best interest of the full group; he reminded the council members that the actions of one student can affect everyone in the program. Ms. Keene explained the differences between some of the sanctions stated (probation, deferred suspension), and noted that students sometimes offer behavior-based personal information such as disclosures of mental illness; these data may be in the files but they are not extremely detailed. Jason Thweatt, representing the undergraduate honors system, added that the study abroad opportunities are a privilege and not a right; students overseas are representing the university and their behavior warrants a high level of diligence. Ms. Keene discussed possible methods of delivering the necessary information that could be worked out with the Education Abroad office. Stephen Capaldo mentioned that he has had several discussions with Wanda Dean, the university registrar; conduct record sharing would best be handled through the Education Abroad office directly rather than through the individual program leaders. Each office would then be empowered to make its own decision based on the policy that was determined. Dr. Dooley suggested that the concept of allowing the student conduct records to be reviewed be endorsed and brought to a discussion again at the next meeting. Dr. Stoudt asked for a show of endorsement that the application be accepted; council members were unanimous in their support.

5. UCIA bylaws

John Dooley had located a copy of the bylaws and made several edits; the resulting version was sent to council members for their review. Any comments or corrections can be forwarded to Debra Stoudt or to Betty Watts; the subsequent revisions will be discussed during next month's meeting.

6. Delegation from the Technische Universität Darmstadt

A delegation of visiting professors and faculty from the Technische Universität Darmstadt were present as guests at the meeting. Virginia Tech has had a long-standing collaboration with the institution that is strong and growing. Dr. Rudi Schmiede, Dean of the School of Social Sciences and History and Professor of Sociology, said a few words on behalf of the group and expressed his interest in intensifying cooperative research and teaching opportunities between the two institutions.

7. Informational items

Dr. De Datta announced that OIRED has won a \$28 million dollar grant to revamp the agricultural curriculum in the higher education system of Senegal.

Mike Bertelsen mentioned that the OIRED small grants program is about to begin its fall cycle; the deadline for applications will be Nov. 15 and publicity will be forthcoming.

John Dooley announced the three-day "Local Food, Global Hunger" event sponsored by the Center for Student Engagement and Community Partnerships (September 30 – October 2), to include a day of service packing more than 1 million meals to be shipped to Haiti. Additionally, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark will be visiting campus on October 28; his granddaughter is a Virginia Tech student who facilitated the visit.

Debra Stoudt announced the first in the CLAHS "Islamic Worlds" lecture series will take place on Wednesday, October 6, at 7 p.m. in Torgersen. The event is posted on the Virginia Tech calendar of events.

8. Other items

There were no other items to discuss and the meeting was adjourned at 9:25.

9. Next meeting: Monday, October 25 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.