

**Committee on International Students and Scholars (CISS)**

**January 26, 2018 Minutes – Prepared by Veronique Barnes**

**Middle Georgia State University, Macon, GA. | 12:00pm, PSC Rm. 212**

**Chair:** Brett Reichert- Georgia State University - Downtown

**Vice Chair:** Marisa Atencio, Georgia Institute of Technology

**Member at Large:** Veronique Barnes, Georgia State University - Perimeter College

**Member at Large:** Jason Wynn, Georgia College and State University

**Attendees:**

Albany State – Sue Ann Balch

Armstrong State University - Dorothee Mertz-Weigel

Augusta University - LD Newman

Columbus State University – Janet Crane

Georgia College and State University – Calandra Wright

Georgia Gwinnett College – Funwi Ayuninjam

Georgia Institute of Technology – Charlene Graham

Georgia Southern University – Tanya Brakhage

Georgia Southwestern State University – John Fox

Georgia State University – Veronique Barnes and Brett Reichert

University of Georgia – Linnea Tighe

University of North Georgia – Lise Lange

Valdosta State University – Danielle Bacud

University System of Georgia- Tammy Rosner

**Call to Order & Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes - Brett Reichert**

- a. Call to Order - 1:04 pm
- b. Previous meeting approved.

**Old Business - none**

**New Business**

**1. USG OIE Update, Tammy Rosner, Director**

- a. English language proficiency update: There is a change to tests accepted. Schools can no longer accept the paper version of TOEFL because changes in the test scoring do not concord anymore. There is not a final score for the paper TOEFL, so do not accept TOEFL paper-based tests marked “revised paper delivered test”. This information is updated on the USG website. Call Tammy with any issues about what can be accepted.
- b. Effective in summer 2018 midterm: All schools are required to enter the specific English Language proficiency test and score for academic data collection in Banner. Tammy will pull data in 1-1.5 years to determine which test are used the most and scores. Data will help determine future test minimums.

There are codes to track everything related to English proficiency, including exemptions such as if student is coming from a USG campus-based ESL program, if a waiver was granted and the

reason. There is a code to identify each way English proficiency is met and it is entered in Banner on SOATEST. Some schools created cross-walks for this change. There is a business practice manual in GA Best that outlines this process. Tammy asked to make sure test scores are entered.

- c. Student Affairs Handbook 3.2.6. - Freshman Admission - subsection Special Admission, and includes International Student Admissions. Section 3.2.6 still implies that there is an FI and TI admit code. Last fall 4 people signed up to be on this committee. Tammy will arrange a WebEx to start discussion about how FI codes and other codes are being used. Need to reach consensus about how codes should be used for international students. Sue Ann joined the committee.
- d. Sprintax Update: Everyone should have received codes and marketing materials. Jennifer Gallagher is leaving mid-February. Neil Duffy will be new contact person and he will be at GAIE and at Dr. Podoll's tax session. Tammy will send out Neil Duffy's contact information.
- e. Tax Reform package changes impacts international athletes on scholarship. They lost personal exemption. Tammy provided a related handout from NAFSA. UGA is working on a plan to address this and Tammy will share UGA's plan when she gets it.

Tammy provided handouts for the dates Dr. Podoll's tax sessions.

## **2. Department of State Updated Travel Alert System**

Brett - the Department of State updated its travel advisory rating system to a 4-level color coded system. Link at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

It includes potential impact on study abroad and international student and scholars who travel for vacation, visa renewal, etc. Informing your campus stakeholders may help mitigate related travel challenges.

## **3. Enrollment Trends and Issue at your campus.**

Brett - for the first time in 12 years international enrollment in the US has decreased.

- a. 2017 Open Doors: Nationwide NEW enrollment - 3.3% (-2.9% UG; -1.3% Grad; -8.8% Non-Degree) but overall enrollment + 5.3% due to considerable growth in OPT students
- b. Spring 2018 vs. Spring 2017:  
GSU overall enrollment up over last fall, but spring 2018 significant decrease over 2017 in undergraduate and graduate new arrivals. May be attributed to it being spring semester which fluctuates.

H1B Specialty Worker program reforms have been proposed. The number of RFE's increased 20 – 41%; the approval rates dropped from 92 to 84 %. This is likely because the rules already in place are being applied with more scrutiny. Brett suggested that if you get an H1B RFE, provide an abundance of evidence that the petition is valid. College and Universities are exempt from HIB cap, but graduating students and OPT STEM students are impacted because they want to work at for-profits that are subject to the cap. Tammy added there are many problems with level 1 wages. Sue Ann reported extreme scrutiny of labor certification in the beginning of Obama administration.

F-1/J-1 categories feedback? None

Brett - any additional feedback about enrollment trends? Danielle (Valdosta State) concurred with enrollment trend report; Sue Ann (Albany State) reported 3 of 5 visa applications rejected (2 Nigeria, 1 Morocco), John Fox (Ga Southwestern) reported only one of two students issued an I-20 came in.

Brett - if a student's visa application is rejected they are supposed to receive written explanation of the denial reason. GSU tries to work with students to defer admissions if they wish to attend a future term. Generally the denial reason code is 214.b which addresses failure to establish permanent ties to the home country. Tammy - these codes are on the Department of State website or in the Foreign Advisors Manual. Denial reasons are usually 214.b - intent and 222.g.

Sue Ann - more students on her campus are having financial difficulty. Brett mentioned economic hardship employment and offered that as a possible option for students facing financial hardship.

#### **4. 2018 Open Doors Census for Fall 2017 Enrollment**

Due March 1, 2018. Brett provided handout and stated that IIE also provided this information.

Brett - Open Doors is an official census of our international student population about who we are educating on our campus and who we send abroad. Report is shared with all levels of government, governors, agencies, Chambers of Commerce, legislators, etc. The report is free to complete on-line.

#### **5. Review Changes to By-Laws**

Brett - This exercise was led by SCIE chair. In Article 5, section A changes were made and approved. The changes streamline the purpose of the CISS committee and Study Abroad Committee, and the language mirrors each and better defines the membership and meeting policy. Tammy – we need to look at our bylaws. CISS has its own bylaws which were last approved in 2010. Need to update and reflect our work and scope. Brett will send bylaws along with minutes. Attendees agreed that executive committee will review and present list of edits to members at the fall meeting. Some edits include making Tammy an ex-officio member and changing “2 and 4 year institutions” to “comprehensive regional institutions”.

#### **6. DDS Update: GA ID and DACA Eligibility**

At last meeting, the DDS issue was that DDS suddenly stopped renewing driver's licenses for non-citizens if their visa had expired. Many USG students & scholars across the state were impacted. Brett contacted DDS and they provided a document entitled *Secure Driver's License and ID* which is a DDS chart of approved documents. The document says applicants must have valid visa, which was the cause of the problem, even though this was not a new or updated document. Private sector foreign nationals as well advocacy may have helped bring about change. Last week DDS confirmed the language won't change, but DDS will allow a waiver of the “valid visa required” language, even though it's fundamentally incorrect and misleading.

Brett asked about DACA student- will DDS accept the DACA EAD? DDS replied generically that if the customer provides a document on the list (referenced above), they will be assisted. The memo confirmed that the “valid visa” language is waived. If an individual cannot present a document from

the list, they will not be able to get a GA Driver's License. Therefore, those with DACA protection are ineligible for DL's in Georgia.

Sue Ann – Does DDS asks for a DSO letter of student good standing. Janet reported that in Columbus, the DDS expects a letter from DSO when reviewing international student DL requests. Brett indicated this not the practice in the Atlanta area, so this represents inconsistent practice at DDS. Brett will inform of any updates from DDS that he receives.

Tammy – suggested that maybe the state's Amazon bid will help resolve some of these issues.

Brett – suggested that one of the biggest threats to that or any other major corporate bids in GA might be the proposed change in the state constitution to make English the Official language of Georgia and would codify an unwelcoming agenda that is without merit. If you are interested in learning about it or advocacy for or against, look up: SR 587

Jason has one IREX student this semester. Jason - IREX is an organization that falls under the State Department's Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs. They sponsor students to come to the US on J visas, and the DSO is in Washington, DC. Jason is expected to help IREX students apply for SSN, but they have no job on campus. Tammy - J visa students and scholars are eligible for SSN number without a job, eligibility for SS number is incidental to their J status regardless of job.

## 7. Two CISS Projects to Consider

### a. Best Practices for Cost of Living Expenses with initial I-20.

- When & How to update based on local area costs

Brett - There is no uniform way in which USG campuses look at the cost of living listed in initial I-20's. GSU's cost of living had not been updated in 10 years and GSU had to figure out how to justify a significant cost of living increase. Because it impacts how grad students and GRA's get funded, this cannot not be an independent ISSS decision and must go through many levels to be approved at GSU, for example. CISS committee can help develop Best Practices document for campuses that want to update the cost of living. Guidance can include list of issues, topics, conversations, stakeholders, frequency of update, etc.

Suggestions – use the poverty level for the county where school is located as one benchmark (Sue Ann), Brett – other resources which have good bench marks are - Financial Aid Office, Chambers of Commerce, Realtor Associations, etc. Brett suggested a survey on campuses that could be the basis for the document. Input from half of the 26 current institution could yield a good mix of urban, rural, small, large schools. Can include both I-20 and DS 2019. Tammy can help facilitate getting the survey done. Survey will be shared with Brett and/or Tammy for review before sending it out, and they will also help publicize the survey to schools for their completion.

**Sub Committee formed:** Dorothee Mertz-Weigel (Consolidated GA Southern), Sue Ann Balch.

Tammy – USG schools in metro often have students living with family, being savvy with money, and living on less than what they show financially is a factor. In rural cities students' budget may depend more closely on amount listed on I-20.

Jason - I-20 costs are represented differently by schools. Some base cost on 12 hours and some others are lower. Should the cost be based on the average number of hours a student and not just the minimum?

Tammy - based on the USG Momentum Year to start in the fall, freshmen will be expected by the USG to complete 30 hours in the first year, regardless of USCIS minimum requirements. Schools should align the estimated cost based on that.

Sue Ann, ASU updates tuition cost every year as tuition increases every year. Tammy clarified that schools are updating tuition changes every year; this is about cost of living.

Sue Ann - would also contact apartment complexes where students live to find out their charges. Brett recommended that suggestion be added to the document the committee will be working on.

#### **b. Best Practices for OPO / Small Offices in Transition**

- Essential to-do's, SEVIS, Continuity of support, Checklist to Prepare for DSO Gap

Brett - This document is needed to help with transition and with gap between when a DSO vacates a position and new DSO comes in or when someone has many different roles. This guidance would include essential information about what a DSO must do each semester and to maintain compliance with SEVIS and would help mitigate work stoppage during transition.

Tammy reiterated the importance of having this document to help administrators who immediately have to become a DSO, could share the document with a VPAA to let them know what they should be doing while they have no DSO.

Guidance should not only include how to set up an office but also how it should continue when the person in the position leaves. Linnea Tighe - office memo from her predecessor helped her transition and she has worked on updating it with a grad student. Funwi - wants to join the committee because of his strong commitment to helping provide this continuity. Brett said this is a potential future conference presentation too at state or regional level. Sue Ann - regardless of reason for leaving the institution we have an ethical responsibility to the students to help them maintain status; she experienced going into a position where half the students were out of status.

**Sub Committee formed:** Sue Ann, Lise Lange (West GA), Funwi (GA Gwinnett), Brett Reichert.

### **8. Upcoming Conferences**

- a. 1st ever [Government Voices Webinar: Exploring the International Student Life Cycle](#) on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018, from 2 to 3 p.m. EST.

Free webinar. limited to 1000 participants, and conversation will be about intra-agency cooperation about the life cycle of an international student.

- b. GAIE, Winter 2018, 1/31 – 2/2, 2018; GAIE is looking for imminent future leadership. Announcements may be made at the conference about the future direction of GAIE.
- c. USCIS -hosting an engagement on STEM OPT and Form I-765 on Feb. 13, TBD – Brett will include this information with minutes
- d. NAFSA Advocacy Day, March 19-20, 2018, Washington, D.C.
- e. GILC, April 13-15, 2018, Eatonton, GA. GILC was consolidated on some level with GAIE but leadership is different.
- f. Region VII, Memphis, TN, Nov. 10-14<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Survey soliciting interest in workshops. Please respond.
- g. NAFSA, Philadelphia, PA, May 27-June 1, 2018
- h. Other opportunities? If we think of anything else later, email Brett and he'll add to minutes.

## **9. Other issues / job announcements / Next Meeting**

### **a. Other Issues:**

How many schools are in recertification? Several people commented on the lengthy wait. Brett said that a new DSO can be added during a period of recertification, but you have to request to unlock your I-17 record to enter the new credentials. Brett suggested calling SEVP Field Rep for challenges with this process. Tanya suggested using specific terminology “unlock I-17”

Brett - Prepare your OPT applicants that it may take longer than 90 days. On the front end of OPT process –if USCIS receives the application more than 90 days before the date on the I-20, the application will be denied with no refund. Brett suggested educating students not to send in their OPT applications before 90 days. GSU issues the OPT I-20 no more than 94 days in advance and strongly warns applicants not to submit early.

### **b. Job Announcements:**

GA Southern University, Statesboro – DSO/International Student Coordinator  
 GA Gwinnett College– International Student and Scholar Specialist  
 GA Southern University, Statesboro - International Admissions/Recruiter

Brett - job postings can be made to the GAIE website, but send email to Brett to put in Regional NAFSA Newsletter, and SCIE.

### **c. Next meeting will be on Sept. 21, 2018**

**Meeting Adjourned at 2:15 PM**