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International Programs minutes 01/30/2014

International Programs Committee

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International Programs Committee meeting minutes [approved April 3, 2014]

January 30, 2014, 12-1pm, Moccasin Flower Room

Present: Marynel Ryan Van Zee (Faculty, chair), Sarah Buchanan (Faculty), Ed Brands (Faculty), Jimmy Schryver (Faculty), Chlene Anderson (P&A), Pilar Eble (ex-officio, Assistant Director of International Student Programs), Zehua/Jack Zhang (Student), Alexander Kachan (Student)

Absent: Sarah Ashkar (Study Abroad Advisor), Molly Donovan (Student) Michael Peters (Student), Irene Maloney (USA)

I.

Pilar Eble offered a report from the committee chairs' meeting, which she attended on behalf of IPC. The meeting was devoted mainly to the planning committee's report on the review of the strategic plan. Faculty Development is seeking ideas for Faculty Development day for Fall Semester 2014 – Siobhan Bremer is the contact.

II.

Another issue raised at the committee chairs meeting was the Student Services Committee's evaluation of a commercial-free tobacco and smoking ban on campus. After a lively discussion, it was agreed that the chair would draft an email to Student Services on behalf of IPC, based on our concern that the policy might affect international students disproportionately. The text of the email approved by members of the committee and sent on January 31, follows:

Dear Members of the Student Services Committee,

I write on behalf of the International Programs Committee. In our meeting of January 30, we discussed the proposed tobacco-free campus policy with some concern. We would like to be assured that the Student Services Committee is showing the appropriate amount of cultural sensitivity in its deliberation of a policy that might affect international students disproportionately and respectfully request that the committee consult with the International Students Association before making a final recommendation on this proposal.

III.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to Pilar Eble's presentation on a variety of topics related to international student enrollment and experience at UMM.

(1) Pilar described two separate meetings, one with the Scholastic Committee in which admission standards were a matter of discussion and one with Chancellor Johnson and Bryan Hermann to evaluate the first, full, four-year cohort of Chinese students.

(2) Pilar described the SUFE curriculum for the first year and the process through which students take the English language proficiency exam, the fall-off after the exam in English usage, and that English is not a requirement between exam and arrival in US.

A new SUFE preparation curriculum begins in 2014: Intro to economics [not a direct equivalent] that will allow us to see their records earlier and whether they're coming (many are repeating the direct equivalent classes, regardless, so this will help that problem); calculus will still be required the first year; English will still *not* be required in the Spring Semester [English there is for test prep; it's not an ESL class; it's run by SUFE]; one additional class is an American Studies class, also 3 cr, taught in English [but there's Chinese used in the classroom regularly.] The teacher of the American Studies class does have a good command of English but the students' English is not strong enough to create an immersion environment in the classroom.

(3) On the subject of English proficiency exam scores: 7/26 of our last cohort would not have been accepted if we had a higher score requirement. Pilar reminded us that testing in English is different from living in English and studying in English. The scores can be understood like this: The 6.5 IELTS requirement that Scholastic would like to enforce is the equivalent of a 79 TOEFL score; we currently require a 5.5 score ['barely functional in English' score according to the IELTS test statements].

(4) A lively discussion ensued on the following topics:

Would raising the score mean more students would arrive with true proficiency?

What message are we sending if we require only a 5.5 and suggest to students that they are ready to study here?

Students take ESL and writing their first semester at UMM, but usually stop thereafter [despite credit and other incentives]

Should we reinstate the FL requirement for these students, which is waived on the principle that they speak more than one language, and require them to take English or test out of it?

Some issues we have been facing at UMM were discussed:

20-30% of cohorts not 'doing okay;' 10-20% doing quite well, in terms of GPA.

Students take classes in which they can do well rather than classes that make sense; students take classes S/N without thinking about the future, and whether they make sense in order [prereqs after reqs, etc.].

An important cultural difference was noted by Zehua Zhang: the transcript is not so important in China. The diploma is important – the classes are irrelevant [the school name, the diploma are what matter]

The faculty members on the committee pointed out that language is significant to the experiences these students can have here/the quality of their educational experience/whether we are doing them a disservice.

Pilar noted that SUFE needs to be consulted on all this; they know who is prepared to come and who is not.

One faculty member mentioned that she suspects that students who are doing well are carrying the other students, via providing information and guidance – this burdens the students who do well on the IELTS exam, as well [may diminish their experience].

Biggest issue = motivation; some students do well and some do not.

Predictor of success seems to be how many credits are taken at SUFE/they can take up to 17 cr in preparation at SUFE and those students who do, succeed at UMM.

We receive very little info from SUFE. We don't know if students complete the classes and we don't necessarily see grades. Zehua Zhang noted that students are allowed to re-take classes when they get here – they know this and they don't apply themselves at SUFE during the period after the English test.

Our agreement was just re-written. Pilar also talks to SUFE about how students are doing. Bart got a lot of resistance from SUFE when he wanted more than one class required; they worry about their reputation, though, and they don't want to send 'bad' students here.

III.

Pilar will be meeting with Bart, Pieranna, and Viktor regarding the Confucius Institute. Pieranna also suggested there may be someone who can teach Chinese available.

Minutes submitted by Marynel Ryan Van Zee