

Minutes of the International Education Committee

February 15, 2013

Members present: Haile Canton, Lisa Ferrari, Matthew Ingalls, Diane Kelley, Allyson Lindsley, Donn Marshall, Stephanie Noss, Roy Robinson, Tanya Stambuk, Matt Warning, Peter Wimberger.

11:06am: Meeting commenced. An IEC member moved to approve minutes from last meeting; motion seconded and approved.

Wimberger noted that the new application format has led to some extra anxieties this semester.

Robinson briefly explained the process of how the student selection subcommittee decided on which students to cut. Those whose essays were not in order, who had problems with their GPAs, or who sought to study in two different countries over two semesters were often the ones to be cut or were asked to undertake their second-choice program.

This year, we had 93 applicants for the fall semester, and 126 applicants for the spring. Robinson said that we needed to cut 10 to 12 applicants.

Kelley explained that the process was not black and white and that each application received close personal scrutiny. Nine applicants submitted their applications in on time but were still cut for not meeting their program requirements.

Wimberger added that \$324,000 must be cut to be within budget. Also, students who were cut were quite far from meeting their program requirements – generally it was not a close call.

Robinson said that the process was “incredibly kind” in the end.

Wimberger proposed that in the future we will need a working committee to establish firm protocols for making student cuts.

At this point, Canton, our student representative, stepped out of the room, as we began to discuss questionable student applications by name (redacted here).

Robinson explained that a freshman applicant was cut, as this person will be able to apply again next year; that two other students are on probation until March and should be allowed to undertake their study abroad (the IEC agreed); that another student with a lower GPA was approved for a relatively expensive program although their second choice is for a less expensive SIT healthcare program which better accords with their career objectives; and that another student hoped to study in El Salvador but will be required to undertake their second choice program in Europe because the U.S. government has issued a travel warning against El Salvador.

Wimberger and Warning suggested that next year we look systematically at students' second choice programs to see how much money they might save Puget Sound and thereby allow us to accept more applications.

Wimberger noted the IEC's discussion with Lotus Perry concerning students who are majoring in programs that require study abroad: why do they need to go through the same application process as other students? Shouldn't they be given special consideration?

Kelley quickly reviewed which Foreign Language programs require student study-abroad.

Warning said that they should be put in the same applicant pool as everybody else.

Kelley said that her department (Foreign Languages) put much consideration into the academic justification for study-abroad. Majors that require study abroad should automatically be the most competitive candidates, so how could it be possible that they would be rejected?

Robinson replied that one point of the application essay is to get students to reflect upon the larger objectives of their study-abroad and see how it fits into their academic trajectory.

Kelley noted that, in light of these objectives, the application essay prompts should be tweaked, and a working group could help with this.

Lindsley replied that the point of the essays is to prepare students for their program applications, which often are similarly worded.

Wimberger said that Perry's argument is that foreign language faculty know their student majors already, and so why not save ourselves some work by considering them within a separate applicant pool?

Noss noted that guidelines for the essay prompts could help because many student applicants don't seem to read and reflect upon what is expected of them in their applications.

Wimberger added that, in light of the committee's goals, the student essays and faculty recommendation letters weren't terribly helpful.

Robinson replied that we can't make the application process itself too easy, as it currently requires some forethought which automatically weeds out those students who aren't serious.

Warning added information from current social science literature suggesting that most letters of recommendation are not accurate nor helpful. He suggested that we reconsider the format of our recommendation forms. Ingalls agreed.

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Wimberger said that all of these issues show the need for a working group to review the application process. He suggested that this group be comprised of members from outside the IEC in addition to IEC representatives.

Kelley and Wimberger began to propose names but the IEC realized quickly that we could not take a representative from every interest and language group as the working group would become too large.

Canton is asked if she thinks that the IEC needs a second student representative. She replied in the affirmative.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

Minutes submitted,

Matthew B. Ingalls