

Minutes of the October 9, 2008 Meeting of the International Education Committee

Committee Members Present: Tristan Burger (student representative), Lynnette Claire, Lisa Ferrari (Associate Dean), Mark Harpring, Diane Kelley, John Lear, Donn Marshall (Associate Dean of Students), Jannie Meisberger (Director, International Programs), Jan Moore (Study Abroad Advisor, International Programs), Mei Rose, Peter Wimberger

Chair John Lear convened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. He reviewed the agenda and the committee approved the last meeting's minutes. John reminded the committee that as agreed last meeting we will cancel the next scheduled meeting on October 23 to allow for program review subcommittee meetings. Two past reports (Asia and Africa/Middle East) were circulated as examples of past reports. Dave Baalam had submitted the final report of Oceana/Australia/New Zealand to the Senate and to the committee. Jannie has requested an electronic copy to circulate.

Jannie requested a few minutes at the end of the meeting to briefly discuss the American Heritage ILACA program change.

GPA discussion:

The committee unanimously approved raising the ILACA Granada pre-departure GPA to 3.0 as proposed by Mark Harpring with support of Spanish section. Puget Sound was the only Northwest university participating in the program without that requirement.

It was agreed that the committee would not recommend unilaterally raising the GPA of study abroad programs sponsored by UPS faculty such as the Dijon and Pac Rim programs without the approval of the faculty in those areas.

Lynnette said she understood the SAWG perspective and reasoning for raising the GPA. This is a merit-based way of limiting number of students going abroad and thereby containing costs. It also provides an incentive to students to work hard to get the 3.0. As the report from Nick Kontogeorgopolous and the Student Life committee indicated, many students plan on going abroad before they arrive at Puget Sound. However, Lynnette said she is uncomfortable with the 3.0 requirement without an appeals process.

Jan indicates that yes, in principal, it is important to be in good standing before going abroad and requiring a 3.0 is one way to do it and cut costs. But a 3.0 would cut very few students out of the abroad group this fall. There are 12 students on "approved" programs, and only 3 had a GPA under a 3.0 (2.96, 2.88, 2.94) with an average GPA of 3.22. There are 86 students on "partner" programs this fall, and only 6 were under a 3.0 (2.75, 2.85, 2.90, 2.85, 2.64, 2.73) with an average GPA of 3.59. On the "sponsored" Pac Rim program, there are 24 students and of these 4 have a GPA under 3.0 (2.86, 2.97, 2.92, 2.45). The average GPA of all students studying abroad this semester is 3.22. Ultimately, a 3.0 requirement would have only jeopardized 13 out of 122 students studying abroad this semester. Not much cost savings would occur with this requirement.

Lisa presented a table of the average predeparture GPA since spring 1999 (see below). These do not include the Pacific Rim students because of the registrar's database structure. In the past 10 years, there have been 2098 students studying abroad. 334 of these had a GPA of less than 3.0 (15.9%), noting that they may have a lower GPA when they depart than when they apply. The high GPAs are surprising, but the students also may self-select as low GPAs might not apply.

Fall 2008*	98	3.43
Spring 2008	130	3.35
Fall 2007	125	3.32
Spring 2007	149	3.34
Fall 2006	102	3.35
Spring 2006	140	3.35
Fall 2005*	93	3.34
Spring 2005	109	3.34
Fall 2004	105	3.33
Spring 2004	139	3.31
Fall 2003	92	3.32
Spring 2003	129	3.32
Fall 2002*	77	3.31
Spring 2002	90	3.25
Fall 2001	91	3.37
Spring 2001	110	3.24
Fall 2000	73	3.26
Spring 2000	86	3.27
Fall 1999*	67	3.32
Spring 1999	91	3.23

3.32

*PAC RIM students not included.

Mark indicated that he was on SAWG, but joined the committee late. He is not clear why these changes are recommended. We are not going to save a lot of money by implementing this recommendation.

Lisa also joined SAWG late. She understands two reasons behind the recommendation. One is financial – the implementation of the 3.0 requirement might contain future costs more than cut costs now. It is projected that many more students will want to go abroad in the future. The other reason is not in the SAWG report, but she finds motivating students to get the 3.0 is part of their rigorous education and a reward for working hard.

Lynette reiterated the need for a process of appeal.

Diane agreed. She pointed out that there may be majors in, for example, foreign languages for whom study abroad is a key component of their education. A 3.0 requirement should not shut them out of this experience.

Jannie indicated that a 3.0 requirement would tidy it up so it would be clear to the students rather than referring to specific program descriptions.

Jan pointed out that some programs require a 3.0 in the language.

Going back to Mark's point, Peter does not see any explicit reason to raise the GPA to go abroad in the SAWG report, only implicit reasons: to reduce the number of students going abroad. He had several problems with this:

1. Is it our place to reduce the number of students going abroad to save the University money? Our question should be academics. Study abroad is an integral component in our mission statement, not a privilege. Raising the GPA to study abroad to reduce the numbers of students is a poor thing to do given the mission of the University.
2. Peter also pointed out the question of equity. Some majors have lower GPAs than others, making it harder for some students with certain majors to go abroad. Randy Nelson indicates there is no data on students who don't go abroad because of their GPA.
3. Diversity is also a consideration. Lower income families, ethnic groups may have different GPAs. The achievement gap might make it harder for some students to go abroad based on GPA.
4. Peter also wondered if students would take "easier" classes to artificially boost their GPA.

Ultimately, Peter did not find the SAWG reasoning to reduce the GPA convincing. But he would argue that we could set the GPA for our Partner programs.

Donn agreed that GPA is problematic for the reasons given by Peter. The SAWG intent was to give a message that the University is going to have to find a way to limit the numbers of students going abroad. Are there academically meaningful ways to do this? GPA is a suggestion. Are there others?

Lynnette said that Peter's question was whether we should have any GPA minimum given his arguments, but we do need to set the minimum somewhere, and the same questions would apply.

Peter argued that the question should be one answered by the Administration, not by Faculty. In our majors we have GPA minimums just like in our study abroad programs. What if we had to cut the numbers of students in a certain major because it was an expensive major? It's a bad idea for faculty to enforce this. It should be an administrative decision.

Lisa posed the question about just how study abroad is part of the university mission. "Global consciousness," is in our mission statement, but study abroad is not the only expression of that. This right to a "globally aware" education can be satisfied in other ways (coursework, visitors, short-term experiences, internships, etc). Satisfying the right to a "global experience" through study abroad may be a privilege, and not necessarily a right that all students should have.

Cuts are coming. This is not all good, but writing is on the wall. The University is going to be paring back these programs. If the Administration wants this kind of change, faculty can't not be a part of it. Faculty have a responsibility to students to do this in a pedagogically responsible way... as much as possible. Otherwise we run the risk that the least expensive and least bureaucratic programs stay while others go.

John indicated that raising the GPA is the SAWG recommendation he is most inclined to support. In his experience directing in Granada and Oaxaca, students with the lower GPAs generally have less language ability and less motivation. At the same time, he is concerned about students who come here for a program such as the Pac Rim program and then find out they are ineligible because of their GPA. If we raise the bar, we might spend lots of time dealing with appeals. Also, he is concerned about the SAWG recommendation to favor the cheaper (no financial aid) summer programs by allowing a lower GPA requirement, undoing what we did 12 years ago when we eliminated summer abroad programs.

Jannie said that summer programs have the same GPA requirement, but the cost of the programs is in the SAWG report. They used to have to pay for UPS summer tuition. The change that was made and approved was how students pay for it.

John called for no vote on this at the present meeting. He suggested putting off this discussion in favor of finishing the program reviews, which we plan to do this semester.

Mark asked if we could invite a SAWG member to explain some of the questions we have regarding cost. For instance, making all programs partner programs will cost more, so why would we do that.

John said that this, along with the GPA discussion, should wait until next semester so we can focus on program reviews. Suggested that the subcommittees look at the program reviews circulated and note that faculty whose majors were impacted by any proposed cuts were consulted for input.

Tristan wanted to know if talking to students was valid. Yes. She also inquired as to the confidentiality of our discussions, and the committee agreed that the general gist of our conversation was not confidential, but the specifics are.

Jannie then told the committee about a program change regarding ILACA London and Granada. AHA, which managed ILACA London, was absorbed into the University of Oregon. Effective 2009, AHA will still run ILACA London as program provider but ILACA London will be managed by the University of Oregon. Puget Sound faculty will no longer be able to be visiting faculty in London on the ILACA program. Willamette will manage Granada, which has very healthy enrollment. London had seen a big drop in enrollment despite outstanding quality of the program. Ultimately, Lynnette clarified, on the ground nothing has changed but we have a non-liberal arts university managing the program, no minimum number of students we have to send and no visiting faculty

position. Jannie drafted a paragraph to alert faculty as to this change, and Lisa's office will announce this.

Program reviews will commence with the November 6th meeting. We will dedicate one meeting to each area of consideration in order to finish by the end of the semester. Programs in the Americas will be discussed Nov 6, UK on Nov 20 and Europe on Dec 4.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diane Kelley