

**International Students and Scholars Committee**  
**Meeting minutes, October 13, 2021**

Present: Dr. Veronika Pribyslavska (Chair and Secretary), Dr. Lonnie Williams, Dr. Amy Pearce, Ms. Courtney Sears, Dr. Cherisse R. Jones-Branch, Mr. Pradeep Mishra, Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran, Dr. Fen Yu, Dr. Warren Johnson, Dr. Hashim Ali, Ms. Mallory Yarborough

Meeting was called via Zoom at 3:00 PM.

First, the members of the committee introduced themselves. Then the need to change the list on the Astate website to reflect the current members and the need for a student representative were discussed.

The committee then discussed the current situation at A-State. Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran presented the International enrollments. The report from Dr. Sivakumaran is below:

1. In fall of 2016 we had approximately 950 international students
2. Fall of 2020 we had 467 (the decline was due to immigration policy during the Trump Administration)
3. Fall of 2021 we had 620 international students from 60 different countries.
5. In Mexico we had approximately 889 students in fall 2021
6. Our May 2021 graduation class was 35 and august was 20 at ASUCQ
7. December 2021 we will have another 35 students graduating there

The committee then discussed how the pandemic and the Trump administration reduced the international enrollment numbers last fall. This fall the numbers increased - incoming freshman, graduate level, online students, and transfer students. As of this semester, the international student body is represented by students from 33 different countries. It is expected to see an increase in enrollment in the future.

Dr. Warren Johnson raised a question about the obstacles that we face such as bureaucracy and pandemic issues, which resulted in cancelling trips. Another psychological / stress related issues that came with the pandemic, which was presented as anecdotal information from students complaining about online courses (“burnout”, not being able to experience the “American lifestyle”). Students were referred to the counseling services.

The committee then discussed how to serve our international students during the pandemic. One of the questions raised was procedures changes. Ms. Mallory Yarborough addressed this, talking about the immigration process challenges due to switching to online class delivery, specifically in the spring 2020 semester. Other items discussed were vaccination requirement, and as of now there are no requirements for COVID-19 vaccination during the admission process. However, students are still required to report COVID-19 related illnesses and testing and treatment at the campus health services. Financial barriers were the greatest issues during the pandemic. There is not a solution as there is no federal funding. However, there is a possibility of the student emergency funding.

The International food festival that took place on November 15 – 19 was modified from the “normal” due to COVID-19. The students were still be able to attend and participate but the food was be pre-boxed.

Dr. Hashim raised a question about what factors are affecting our recruitment attempts. Some of the factors that were discussed included location, admission requirements, work opportunities, and how students are perceived and treated (somewhat an issue of prejudice). However, the advantage of our university and community is affordability (such as housing, cost of living, and tuition). Dr. Fen Yu then mentioned that there are many job opportunities (computer science specifically) on campus, which is a positive. However, stipends are low and tuition waivers are not an option. One way to increase enrollment would be through external funding (grants) applied for by the faculty, who could then recruit students for GA positions.

The next issue that was discussed was international students after graduation. The committee talked about a career support. The majority of the support comes from the career services, but Ms. Mallory Yarborough helps with the immigration process (such as applying for OPT etc.). Then, Dr. Amy Pearce suggested Alumni association may be an outlet for international students. Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch suggested we could help students prepare for a job trough helping them make their resumes/CVs etc. This could be a collaboration between career services, international office, and graduate school, for instance.

Lastly, the relations between A-State Jonesboro campus and ASU-Campus Querétaro were discussed. Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran presented some numbers – 889 students, 12 degrees, 2 graduations. Due to COVID-19, the graduation ceremony was held in the summer, but it will be a spring graduation ceremony in the future. A future plan for the ASU-Campus Querétaro is to add more degrees. Dr. Thilla Sivakumaran then discussed some misnomers/misinformation about academic approval process in Mexico.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.