Global Steering Committee Minutes
November 13, 2014
1:30pm – 3pm
Alumni Center Boardroom

Members present:  David Abedon, Jenny Audette, Laura Beauvais, Sigrid Berka, Tom Boving, Dania Brandford-Calvo, Shaw Chen, Alicia Curtin, Norbert Hedderich, Kristin Johnson, Sarah Lopolito, Kathleen Maher, Kat Quina, Navinda Seeram, Nancy Stricklin

Members Not Present:  Bo Gillie, Haibo He, Maureen Moakley, Yang Shen, Nasser Zawia

Presenting to the Committee from Cambridge Education Group:  Steve Harvey, Managing Director;  Cherie Rowe, Vice President for Collaboration and Student Success;  Joe Arangio, Vice President of Development and Operations.

1) Cambridge Education Group (CEG) is an organization that has approached URI to propose creating a pathway program on campus.  They presented to the committee for most of the meeting.  The last half hour was a debriefing of the members regarding the presentation.  A general background and summary follows:

Pathway Programs background
US Colleges have increasingly turned to outside companies for help in recruiting international students.  There is a growing popularity of Pathways programs, which are a hybrid of credit-bearing coursework and academic English instruction. Most in the US are not more than 5 years old.  Pathway programs are a model that has been adapted from Australia and the UK, where pathway or “foundation year” programs are much more prevalent.

Pathway programs vary from one to the other.  In most pathway programs:

1) Students enroll who have academic entrance requirements determined by the university, but lower English ability.
2) English ability has to be close to required minimum standard.
3) Credit bearing courses, which already exist at the university, are offered to the students and are taught by the university’s existing pool of full-time or adjunct faculty.
4) Courses are designed only for these students.  Support is given to instructor to design the curriculum to meet the needs of the students without watering down the content.
5) Students are provided close support and advising by Pathway team advisors on campus.

Primary Purpose:  to bring more international students to campus but to give them the best opportunity to succeed.  They would have a team of advisors working with them closely.

Examples of other universities using pathway programs:

INTO University Partnerships
Oregon State, Colorado State and University of Southern Florida
Shorelight Education
University of Central Florida and University of Kansas

Study Group
University of Vermont, University of Maine, UMass Boston, Dartmouth and Lowell

Kaplan
Northeastern University and PACE

Cambridge Education Group is a company based in England, which since 1952 “has been delivering the highest quality academic, creative and English Language programs, preparing thousands of students to progress onto the world’s leading universities.” CEG is proposing a pathway program for URI, referred to as ONCampus Rhode Island. CEG has just begun establishing programs in the US about 2 years ago. They sought out URI after doing a lot of research. They "chose" URI for this program because of many factors, which include our wide range of program offerings, a good location between Boston and New York with access to transportation, a safe campus, a good size and good rankings for many of our programs. They seem to feel very confident that they can market URI successfully.

A few key points about CEG:

1) CEG has 140 staff members throughout the world, who are based “in market” and they will represent URI to the prospective students. Last year they visited 110 countries.
2) CEG would hire a Center Director and a team of about 3 people to work on campus at URI.
3) TOEFL requirement for all students admitted to CEG Pathway Program would be about 60-70 minimum. URI would determine the admission criteria for CEG Pathway.
4) There would be two entries per year. September and January.
5) CEG envisions beginning with 25 students. They see this growing quickly. Their motto is to “start small, execute well, add on..”
6) Cost of set-up to URI is zero dollars.
7) First year of Pathway program, student pays CEG directly. Details of this would be worked out with URI. URI would be getting fees for student services, housing, dining, etc. URI would not get any tuition dollars this first year. Per CEG, “The financial benefit of the partnership is not the 1st year; it is the next three years of tuition coming in.” CEG said they charge an amount for the first year that is comparable to what the student will have to pay in year two to URI (total of tuition, room, board and fees), so that there is not a huge difference to the student’s family.
8) SUNY has just signed on with CEG and is beginning a “hub and spoke” model. Students will all go to one SUNY campus as part of the CEG program, and then they will go to any SUNY campus to matriculate.
9) URI would have a “Stand Alone” CEG Pathway program. This would be the first one in the US. Students would come to URI for the Pathway Program the first year, and then matriculate to URI for the next three years.
10) Target date to begin would be Fall 2015 or Spring 2016
Feedback from Global Steering Committee members:

Positive

Additional compensation for lecturers or faculty – a good thing!

Some faculty think it would be fun to teach this group of students.

If we want to increase the number of international students at URI, this is a good way to go.

This group brings a comprehensive package of academic, cross-cultural and economic benefit.

This group can bring better diversity to URI – diversity within the international student population.

CEG has a long term interest in URI, which is a good thing for us.

Members prefer CEG to the use of agents for recruitment. CEG has their own agents and URI does not have to deal with them directly.

Using CEG’s 140 staff members, who visited 110 countries last year, URI would get great international visibility without having to send our own staff. (We have one staff member who recruits for URI!) All of this is at no cost to URI.

CEG wants to work with URI as a partner to help us achieve our international ambitions. They do not come in and tell us what to do.

CEG feels they can only be successful by gaining and maintaining the trust of the faculty. Without the trust of faculty, this program will not succeed.

CEG wants their students to be successful academically, linguistically, culturally, socially, emotionally. They provide a team on campus to monitor students’ attendance and academic status. They provide workshops on topics such as study skills and cross-cultural adjustment. They pre-test for Math and English skills.

Concerns

Board of Higher Education concern – if students are taking a course for credit, taught by a URI faculty/lecturer, but not paying money to URI, paying CEG instead. Is this a problem?

Adjunct faculty/per course lecturers – bound by a limit of number of credits they can teach because of the Affordable Care Act. If they are paid by outside firm (CEG), this would be ok. If they are paid by URI, through CEG, might be a problem because they will go over their limit.
Sometimes full-time faculty are told by chairs that they cannot teach certain classes, because they have to teach the ones needed by the department. Will this be a problem?

If, in fact, they could bring up to 1000 students to URI, we have to be prepared. Housing issues very important to deal with ahead of time. We need international student advisors on URI staff (not just CEG staff) to work with them when they transition out of CEG into URI. Need help with visa preparation, but CEG said they would pay for that. URI would have to be fully prepared for this.

How would CEG interact with the ACE English Language Institute that already exists at URI? Per CEG, they are “fishing in different pools” and they use the concept of “additionality” - adding to, as opposed to taking away from, what is already working.

Next steps:

The Provost had requested that the Global Steering Committee weigh in on this proposal. After discussion, the Committee supported the proposed program and recommended that URI continue to pursue a partnership with CEG for ONCampus Rhode Island. Extensive and comprehensive planning of curriculum, admissions, contract issues, space issues, accommodations, and resources will be required.