Global Steering Committee (GSC) Minutes
March 5, 2020
1:30pm – 3pm

Members present: Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Nicole Asal, Sigrid Berka, Tom Boving, Shaw Chen, Karen de Bruin, Donna Gamache-Griffith, Bo Gillie, Rabia Hos, Kristin Johnson, Kathleen Maher, Diane Martins, Princess Metuge, Nancy Stricklin, Elin Torell

Members Not Present: Bill Gordon, Tom Hospod, Frankie Minor, Cara Mitnick, Brietta Oakes, Rosaria Pisa

1) URI’s Initiatives in the Philippines

In October 2019, a URI delegation was led by Vice Provost for Global Initiatives, Gifty Ako-Adounvo, as a follow up to President Dooley’s March 2019 outreach to three universities in the Philippines. URI has partnerships with these universities resulting from a URI USAID project, Fish Right, which focuses on sustainable practices in fisheries. This USAID project is coordinated and implemented by the URI Coastal Resource Center at URI’s Graduate School of Oceanography. USAID supports URI’s efforts in capacity building and engaging with universities in the Philippines. The intention of this URI delegation was to explore additional areas of mutual interest that would result in joint collaboration opportunities for faculty and students. The URI delegation met with the president or chancellor at each university, as well as with administrators, deans and faculty from colleges of arts and sciences, business, education, pharmacy, nursing, health sciences, fisheries and ocean sciences, and environmental sciences. Also, the URI delegation met with staff in the Fish Right offices in Manila, toured the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Research Facility in Iloilo, and met with Fish Right staff at their new building at the Iloilo fish landing port.

URI’s continued and expanded engagement in the Philippines is an institutional priority for President Dooley. Follow up opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Sending URI faculty member to speak at the World Expert Lecture Series at UP Diliman.
- Inviting a UP faculty member to be a URI Distinguished International Scholar.
- Guiding Silliman University on their Marine Biology program.
- Sending faculty to teach summer 2020 at Silliman University.
- Providing opportunities for UP faculty to come to URI for a PhD.
- Setting up trainings for UP staff at URI’s Coastal Resource Center.
- Sending Dean of Education at URI to UP Visayas to collaborate with the Division of Profession Education.
- Bringing faculty from UP and Silliman to URI for short-term projects.

2) Update on Corona/COVID-19 virus at URI

An administrative team at URI has been meeting and communicating on a regular basis to review policies, procedures and planning for the campus community regarding the virus. A draft is being finalized regarding a Business Preparedness Plan, which would be followed depending upon the nature
of the risk, particularly if this reaches a pandemic stage. Gifty Ako-Adounvo is on this team and communication is almost 24/7 at this time.

Updates include:
- URI follows the recommendation of the State Department, CDC and World Health Organization in making determinations on what to do with students studying abroad.
- URI has already brought home all students studying or interning in China.
- At this time, URI is in the process of bringing home all students studying or interning in Italy. There is a waiver being finalized in URI’s legal office that will be required for students to sign if they decide, on their own, to not return. URI is in “uncharted territory,” as are most institutions, in this new arena.
- For students who are leaving an internship abroad, URI has tried to find them local or on-campus opportunities.
- No decision at this time for students in other countries around the world. Serious discussion of what to recommend for students in certain parts of France took place. Recommendation made to consider having a policy for “hot spots” in certain countries, rather than looking at the country as a whole. The more guidance the university can give to faculty and students, the better.
- Students in the National Student Exchange program in the US have not yet been affected.
- RI Governor made an announcement today that all RI schools should suspend international travel anywhere. This topic in discussion with URI senior leadership team.
- URI is proceeding with most summer travel programs for students. This could change due to new circumstances.
- Consider setting up a plan where all faculty would be required to report their travel to URI.
- Set up a relationship with a Travel Clinic to gain their expertise in world-wide infectious illnesses.
- Suggestion that URI should send a message to all students abroad to consider preparing for possible return to the US. Recommend to them to stay local, stay away from large groups.
- International Travel Insurance most likely will not cover costs incurred by having to return back to the US.

3) Faculty Mobility Grants

Due to the Corona virus, many faculty members who received awards to travel in spring or summer may have to cancel their plans. Gifty will be sending out an email to all recipients in the near future to request an update. If the faculty member has to cancel, those funds will need to be returned to the Global Fund for use elsewhere, as they must be spent before June 30, 2020. Gifty will need to know by the beginning of May. Suggestion was made to allocate some of these returned funds to students who incur costs, when having to return to the US unexpectedly due to the virus.

Short’s Travel books all international flights. In the past, they have allowed a credit and it was used after the fiscal year ended. This needs further exploration as an option for faculty who received funding to travel.

Gifty shared that in the future the Faculty Mobility Grants will be offered over a longer period of time, so that faculty can consider traveling well before spring and summer.
4) United Nations Sustainable Developmental Goals

One of the UN Sustainable Development Goals focuses on Climate Change. In the world of international education, travel is central to the work. Faculty, staff, and students contribute to carbon emissions by the amount of travel undertaken annually. This increases the climate change challenges of the world.

Gifty explained that the Provost has inquired whether the Global Steering Committee could explore ways to do some carbon off-setting. This topic was introduced, but not discussed, due to lack of time at the end of the meeting. It will be added to a future agenda.