Global Steering Committee (GSC) Minutes
October 15, 2020
1:30pm – 3pm

Members present: Gifty Ako-Adounvo, Sigrid Berka, Tom Boving, Shaw Chen, Karen de Bruin, Donna Gamache-Griffith, Bo Gillie, Rabia Hos, Tom Hospod, Kristin Johnson, Diane Martins, Princess Metuge, Frankie Minor, Cara Mitnick, Brietta Oakes, Nancy Stricklin

Members Not Present: Nicole Asal, Bill Gordon, Kathleen Maher, Rosaria Pisa, Elin Torell

Agenda Item #1
International Education Week/Study Abroad Fair – November 2020
Shelley O’Connor, International Student Programs Coordinator, swoconnor@uri.edu
Michelle Carrara, International Education Advisor, michelle_carrara@uri.edu

Presenters gave information and details about this year’s virtual IEW and Study Abroad Fair. IEW dates are November 16-20th. The URI Virtual Study Abroad Fair will take part during these dates. Virtual sessions are spread throughout the week, rather than one set period of 3 hours as in the past. Third-party program providers will be hosting events. If any faculty or staff member wants to host an event, contact the organizers at the emails above. All committee members were sent further information, including a draft of a schedule, after the meeting. The sessions will be hosted on a Zoom platform that the organizers are setting up for the hosts.

Agenda Item #2
Study Abroad Spring 2021

a. The official decision for spring 2021 has been made - all programs that require international travel for URI students are cancelled. Summer 2021 - still no decision. Will be made by Feb. 1st. Decision for fall 2021 will be made by May 1. The URI Office of International Education (OIE) is still proceeding to work with students for summer/fall 2021 as if international travel will be an option. However, it is still very unpredictable and students are being told to be flexible and have a back-up plan in case international travel is not allowed. There is a website for URI study abroad at https://web.uri.edu/global/study-abroad/COVID-19/ with up-to-date information. Some visa offices around the world are slowly opening and the US Passport agency is beginning to process more requests.

There are incoming international students planning to enroll on campus for spring 2021. OIE is working with them now to register, etc., but recommending the students have a back-up plan in case they are not able to get a visa to attend in person.

b. The question of whether a student can petition to travel internationally to a destination that is Level 1 or 2 by State Department standards was discussed. (Per URI’s Travel Policy, students cannot travel to any country in Level 3 or above.) Taiwan, at Level 2, is in this category. A Chinese IBP student is interested in going in spring 2021. Chinese Flagship students are waiting for the Defense Language and National Security Office to make a decision on travel to Taiwan.
and other countries. URI will follow their guidance. Gifty explained the International Travel Review Committee petition process for students, faculty and staff.

c. Virtual Opportunities for spring 2021

- Chinese Flagship students are engaging in some virtual engagement with partners in China.
- OIE is pursuing virtual opportunities for students to take courses or do internships. Preference is full-time, due to issues of financial aid, etc. They are promoting a typical full semester online with a partner for a full semester worth of credit.
- Collaborative Online International Learning, known as COIL, is being undertaken by many peer universities. There are a variety of models to pursue. The goal is to create an opportunity for students in the US and students at a partner international university to attend classes together virtually, do projects/research together, and learn from each other. URI is beginning to explore COIL options.

**Agenda Item #3**

**Department of Homeland Security – Proposed Rule on Duration of Status**

Gifty gave a comprehensive overview of a new policy that was recently proposed by the Department of Homeland Security. It was published on September 25th and is not a final rule yet. Currently when an F or J status student gets an I-20 or a DS-2019 for a visa, they are able to arrive in the US and are not given a specific date of expiration. Rather, they are given a Duration of Status on their visa. That means they can stay until their program is complete, as long as the university supports the request to stay beyond the 4 year for undergraduate or 2-4 year for Master’s/PhD. In the new ruling, there would be an exact expiration date and the student would need to apply to Homeland Security for an extension. Cost of this application is about $475 USD. In addition, if a student is from a country on a new list, which includes most countries in Africa and others that are considered “high overstay rate” countries, they will ONLY get a 2 year visa. The results of this new ruling will discourage international students from coming to the US for a degree. Also, if an institution is not using E-Verify for all employees, their students will only be given a 2 year visa. (URI does not use for all employees.)

The public comment time ends on October 26th. Gifty is working on a draft for URI’s official response and is conferring with institutions, national organizations and legal experts across the country. This is not an executive order, but rather it is a policy change, which affects how the courts can/will handle it. Gifty will share a comment link to the committee members.

**Agenda Item #4**

**Global Mobility Travel Grants for 2021**

Gifty gave an update on the Global Mobility Travel Grants. The URI budget is “sobering” and, therefore, the funds for these grants have not been loaded into the accounts yet. URI is still waiting for state budget allocations and may not get this until January 2021. Enrollment and retention information will be more forthcoming in January as well. Therefore, these grants are currently on HOLD.
Because of COVID-19, travel was suspended and collaborations between TUBS and TUDA were postponed. However, these funds should not be affected by the state budget, as they are Carnegie funds. Sigrid will follow up with the partners on a new round of applications. Target for these is November 2020.

**Agenda Item #5**

**Global Options/Certificate – Student credential of global curriculum**

Gifty introduced an item for future discussion. How do we ensure that students develop global competency, particularly in the COVID era, in their curriculum? At her previous institution, Ohio State, they developed a Global Option, which is a curriculum enhancement program. It does not add time to a degree. Students earn a credential which would be noted on their transcripts. Given the current situation with lack of student mobility abroad, the “time is right” to pursue other ways to develop students’ global competency. This type of option is accessible for all students, not dependent upon having the money to study abroad. Next steps include:

- Global Steering Committee discusses and prepares proposal
- Each college would need to get involved
- Curriculum options identified
- Establishment of a timeline

This topic will be taken up at the next meeting.

**Further Updates**

**Graduate School International Recruitment**

Bo Gillie has begun to participate in some graduate school recruitment activities. This is the first time URI has had dedicated involvement in this area. Many contacts were received and the Dean of the Graduate School will be sending an email out to all of them. Popular areas of interest included engineering (recognizing that URI has limited spots for grad students), with particularly strong interest in computer science. Also interest in biological and environmental sciences. The Graduate School may reach out to academic areas for assistance in communicating to prospective students.

**Housing**

Frankie Minor gave an update on the current housing situation, quarantining, isolation, etc. All students are being asked to leave URI housing on November 25th. They recognize that some students, particularly international students, may have no place to go. These students will have to pre-identify and Housing will try to accommodate. Details are being worked out.

Spring 2021 housing availability still unpredictable. Usually they lose 10%. However, there are students who deferred housing from fall to spring. Not sure how many will return from fall to spring. All triples have been eliminated. Also, URI has contracted with local hotels for quarantine space. They may continue to do so. They will most likely not have students living in a hotel (Holiday Inn) in spring as
overflow from residence halls, as they are doing this fall. Currently, the Fairfield Marriott has had not only students from on-campus residence halls who are isolating, but also students who are not residing on campus (down the line residents) staying for 14 days in the hotel and getting meals from Dining Services. All of these students are not charged any additional fees. Housing is certainly being challenged financially by this semester.

Students who return to campus from US hotspots or from international locations for spring 2021 will have to arrive 14 days before the semester begins in order to quarantine. Details of where are still not confirmed.