

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO REVIEW INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

October 2020

Introduction

The University of Iowa (UI) Operations Manual requires regular reviews of university programs. In accordance with this operating procedure, interim Executive Vice President and Provost Kevin Kregel formed a committee to conduct a review of International Programs (IP) and charged it to carry out a focused review and prepare this report.

Review Committee Members

The Review Committee consisted of six members:

- Diane Rohlman, professor and endowed chair in rural safety and health, Occupational and Environmental Health, College of Public Health—Review Committee Chair
- Ramji Balakrishnan, Ernst and Young Professor of Accounting, Tippie College of Business
- Ana Merino, professor of Spanish, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Steven Levy, endowed professor of research, Department of Preventive and Community Dentistry, College of Dentistry and Dental Clinics
- Stephanie Fountain, assistant director, Global Internships, Tippie College of Business
- Hannah Buxbaum, vice president for international affairs, John E. Schiller Chair in Legal Ethics, professor of law, Indiana University—Bloomington—External Reviewer

Materials Consulted and Individuals/Groups Interviewed

The Review Committee received and reviewed the charge for the review, the 2019 IP self-study and the September 2020 update, the IP strategic plan, the IP international student recruitment plan, the 2015 IP program review, the SWOT analysis used as part of the IP strategic planning process, and the 2007 American Council on Education Internationalization Laboratory report.

The Committee also interviewed individuals from IP and related programs as well as University of Iowa leadership. Those interviewed and/or who provided feedback via email are listed in the Appendix.

Charge for Focused Review

The Review Committee was asked to evaluate IP on the following aspects of its work:

- I. Creation of pipelines to enhance our international reach and increase international enrollment
- II. Integration of internationalization into research and curriculum to advance our mission
- III. Opportunities to develop curricular global competencies
- IV. Strategic partnerships with those across campus, alumni, locally that can lead to positive accountability and assessment

- V. Determination of what type of bridge programs are needed to enhance international student success
- VI. Increased engagement with colleges, in particular in the health sciences

Introduction

This review takes place as IP is navigating a period of significant change. The office is under new leadership, with Russell Ganim appointed as associate provost and dean of International Programs effective January 1, 2020. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically disrupted not only international mobility but university operations as a whole. While this report does recognize and address the impact of these recent changes, its goal is to take a longer view of IP's programs and the challenges and opportunities facing the office.

Before turning to the individual components of the Review Committee's charge, we would like to highlight two cross-cutting challenges that IP confronts. First, in recent years the political climate at the national and state level has deteriorated the environment for international engagement in higher education. A series of changes to federal immigration policies has negatively affected the climate for current international students and scholars, and threatens UI's ability to successfully recruit new students. In addition, increased concern about intellectual property protection and foreign influence, particularly with respect to the U.S.-China relationship, has eroded federal support for various forms of engagement. These changes directly affect the UI's international student and scholar community, and indirectly affect IP staff, since the need to provide timely responses to such actions diverts resources from other initiatives.

Second, IP's efforts are hampered by limited resources. The office is funded in part by international student fees, which have declined as a result of declining enrollments. It is also supported by the Stanley–UI Foundation Support Organization (SUIFSO). However, that organization is in a period of transition and it is not clear if it will continue to support IP at current levels. As a result, IP will require additional sources of funding in order to maintain and increase study abroad and other experiential learning opportunities, support international faculty engagement, and advance other aspects of its mission.

The remainder of this report addresses each of the six items listed in the charge, although understanding that there is some overlap among them.

I. Creation of pipelines to enhance our international reach and increase international enrollment

Consistent with a nationwide trend, there has been a decline in international student enrollment at the UI, particularly from China. While primary responsibility for the recruitment and enrollment of international students lies with the UI Office of Admissions, IP is actively engaged in supporting and promoting their efforts. The offices have collaborated in the development of an "International Student Recruitment Plan" that has as its specific goal "to increase international enrollment by 20% over the next 2–3 years while concentrating efforts in China and India and expanding the UI's global recruitment efforts in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and the U.S./Iowa." This initiative highlights IP's efforts to increase geodiversity among UI students.

IP is also exploring ways to expand specific recruitment efforts, including through government-sponsored student programs. However, to carry out these initiatives IP may need additional administrative staff. Such programs include work to:

- Complete an agreement with Oman (currently in progress) for regular enrollment of qualified students on Oman scholarships at an agreed tuition cost.
- Create a designated staff position to follow all government scholarship programs to ensure the UI is on the approved lists, attend recruitment fairs where scholarship students attend (primarily the Middle East), make regular embassy visits, and reach out to companies who may want to sponsor students.
- Consider creating a transfer student scholarship for American Degree Transfer Program (ADTP) students in Malaysia.
- Consider offering a few select full scholarships to gain the top students in a country and promote their success to encourage more applicants to consider the UI.
- Feature presentations by faculty to build name recognition for the UI.

Dual-degree programs (undergraduate-to-graduate [U2G], 2 years + 1 year, 3+1) with foreign partner institutions, which reduce the total cost of obtaining a UI degree, may also create pipelines for international student enrollment. Such programs are likely to be most effective if they build on strong faculty collaborations, but IP can play an instrumental role in developing the necessary partnership agreements. In addition, as IP staff become aware of particular interests of the UI's foreign partners, they can bring potential opportunities to the attention of the relevant UI faculty and departments for further development.

An additional area for improvement is to increase the percentage of admitted students who ultimately enroll at the UI. For example, in 2020 the UI admitted over 800 beginning international students (from over 1,800 applications), but enrolled only 69. In 2019 the UI admitted over 1,100 students (from over 2,700 applications), and enrolled 162. In a climate of declining applications, as well as competition from other universities that may be more highly ranked or offer more financial assistance, it is particularly important to improve yield rates. The Office of Admissions cited the need for full-tuition scholarships to recruit top students as well as scholarships for transfer students. IP has reached out to the Center for Advancement to engage UI alumni overseas in "yield events" and other pre-matriculation activities overseas. Other efforts include the use of student ambassadors to reach out to admitted students. There is also an opportunity to work more closely with the Office of Strategic Communications to develop targeted recruitment materials for these specific audiences.

With current and anticipated future restrictions on travel, IP should continue its efforts to work with the Office of Admissions in online recruiting activities, including participation in virtual admissions fairs for international students. International students are an important presence in the University of Iowa community.

II. Integration of internationalization into research and curriculum to advance our mission

In general, because the academic departments are responsible for research and curriculum, it is important for IP to cultivate strong relationships with content experts within the colleges to support internationalization initiatives. Although it was indicated in the interviews that IP is

helpful when faculty seek out IP's help, there appears to be room for IP to be more proactive in initiating new partnerships and promoting the incorporation of global content into the curriculum. Along those lines, IP indicated that they attempt to match researchers who want to start new programs with people from other countries who are working in that area. Here, a review of faculty research and coursework to identify internationally engaged faculty members would be helpful. In addition, the Campus Internationalization Dashboard, which utilizes data from MAUI, the UI HR system, InCites, and the UI Study Abroad database, was mentioned as one way to facilitate the creation of new partnerships. The Dashboard was developed under previous IP leadership, although due to some faculty concerns regarding data privacy, it has not yet been implemented. Current IP leadership is trying to find ways to make the Dashboard more useful.

It was recognized during interviews that Associate Provost Ganim has been proactive in reaching out to different colleges and units since taking on that role January 1. Those meetings have been primarily at the dean and associate dean level, and over time should be expanded to other constituencies. Department executive officers (DEOs), faculty engaged in international activities, and the staff who support these activities can make IP aware of potential opportunities and provide feedback on how IP staff can support these activities. As one dean said, "Colleges are always doing things well, so reach out to us. Learn more about what we do well and improve on it."

One major way in which IP contributes to the internationalization of the curriculum is by increasing opportunities for students to study abroad. As mentioned in the introduction, this endeavor requires increased funding, since financial need is a perennial obstacle for many students who seek to study abroad. IP is working with the Center for Advancement to identify alumni who participated in study abroad programs as a possible source of philanthropy in support of these activities.

Increasing study abroad opportunities also requires close collaboration with faculty, particularly with respect to faculty-led study abroad courses, which often build on in-country relationships established by the instructors themselves. IP's role in the past has been to support the academic and travel logistics for these courses (e.g., arranging visas, creating international alliances). However, faculty mentioned that they would like more input on arranging travel and other logistics for these trips. While some faculty reported that at times they felt that IP had created barriers to these trips that made it difficult for them, others seemed to welcome indications of a growing "customer service" orientation in IP.

In the short term, in light of COVID-related travel restrictions, IP has turned attention to virtual study abroad opportunities, as well as virtual international internships, where students serve as interns via teleconferencing and other computer applications. This work might serve as a model for additional post-COVID efforts to assist faculty in integrating virtual global content into their curricula and promoting virtual research activities.

III. Opportunities to develop curricular global competencies

As noted in the section above, each academic department is responsible for its curriculum; likewise, each individual faculty member is responsible for course outcomes. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for IP to be more proactive in course development—for instance, by assisting with the development of global competency inventories and specific materials (e.g., case studies), and by helping departments sequence international elements in their programs of study.

One example of progress in this direction is IP's MAPS web pages (Major Advising Pages; (<https://international.uiowa.edu/study-abroad/programs/major-advising>)), which were created to show undergraduate students how study abroad could fit into their courses of study. There was a recommendation to review these pages annually and to update them in order to maintain them as a useful resource. Another recommendation was to develop short-term trips, such as the India Winterim program, that are more convenient for students and may fit better with their plans of study. Again, the success of these initiatives will depend on strong individual and institutional relationships with faculty.

As mentioned by Associate Provost Ganim, IP plans to explore the development of “badges” or other credentials around global competencies that could be included on student diplomas. In addition, IP has taken the lead to identify more courses with global content in different departments and has incorporated them as part of its former IP major and minor, i.e., the International Studies major and minor, now housed in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

IV. Strategic partnerships with those across campus, alumni, locally and globally that can lead to positive accountability and assessment

IP, particularly under the leadership of Associate Provost Ganim, has begun to build strategic partnerships across campus. Specifically, these include collaborations with the Office of Admissions (to develop the International Student Recruitment Plan) and with the Center for Advancement (to engage alumni in recruitment and financial support of IP programs). IP has also worked with the dean of students to support international students during their transition to the UI, and to help them during times of crisis. Their response to the current pandemic is an example of their outreach to these students. Additionally, representatives from the colleges serve on the Faculty Advisory Council and provide input on IP activities. Efforts have been made to reach out to colleges to learn more about their specific international programs and activities. The Campus Internationalization Dashboard (mentioned above under II) is being developed to assist with connecting parties interested in developing research collaborations.

Although many efforts are underway, it is important to assess the implementation and outcomes from these efforts. Specific metrics should be used to assess the success of the efforts. This information can be used in future strategic planning to assist with resource allocations. For example, specific fundraising targets could be established with the Center for Advancement as part of an operating plan. Similarly, international student enrollment targets should be established with the Office of Admissions, as a basis for the regular evaluation of recruitment efforts. Assessment of IP's interactions with collegiate programs and the support they provide to these programs will determine if the needs of the collegiate programs are being met. The IP Faculty Advisory Council should assist with the development of these metrics.

V. Determination of what type of bridge programs are needed to enhance international student success

Now, more than ever, there is a need to support international students at the UI. Racial and xenophobic tensions are currently high and may remain high. Threats to international students are palpable, and the environment is highly stressful. This situation has not only hurt recruitment but has also impacted current students by creating an environment of insecurity.

Supporting international students has been a primary activity of IP. In addition to the student ambassador program that reaches out to admitted students, IP has developed “buddy programs” to pair international students with domestic students when they arrive on campus. IP has also developed programs, such as Life in Iowa, that help students transition to the campus and the community. More recently, they have worked with the UI Counseling Service to develop additional programs supporting international students during this time of upheaval. IP took the lead and continues to lead on communicating with and reaching out to international students frequently during the COVID pandemic, being available to them, and responding to questions as different federal regulations were put in place regarding travel and visa requirements and limitations. This frequent communication was considered valuable by the students. Even prior to the COVID pandemic, IP has played a significant role in helping other UI programs and international students with visa and immigration issues.

One opportunity may be to work more with the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Many international students are enrolled in these programs and ESL can serve as a point of contact for communication. Using different communication messages across campus can also support international students. For example, taking ESL courses is not a negative – these students are building second (and maybe third) language skills. Reducing the stigma around learning English can enhance the experiences of these students. (The director of admissions noted, however, the possible negative impact of ESL requirements on recruitment and enrollment of international students.) There is also a need to educate students on requirements for liberal arts institutions, for example, making students aware that, in addition to taking computer science or engineering courses, there are general education requirements. Programs should also target intercultural communication, such as helping students understand U.S. classrooms and professors’ expectations, managing conversations, and dealing with misinterpretations. This knowledge is not only important to international students, but also to first-generation college students who may not have experience with higher education institutions. Using the newly-formed College Success for International Students course (CLAS:1650), which was developed with input from International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), the Academic Advising Center, and CLAS, is one way to identify and address specific issues that students experience. Creating more realistic expectations among international students will enhance their success.

Another approach is to provide intercultural training for teaching assistants and orientation leaders to prepare them for more successful interactions with international students. More broadly, there is a need for training and awareness among domestic students, faculty, and staff about implicit bias. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives have been focused on implicit bias against domestic students. DEI efforts should also address implicit bias against international students.

VI. Increased engagement with colleges, in particular in the health sciences

Several colleges have strong global programs of their own, and these tend to operate autonomously. For such programs, IP typically plays a service role, e.g., assisting with travel, insurance, visas, and State Department alerts. Some colleges might be open to more collaboration; others want to keep their programs more in-house and use IP as a service unit. As mentioned above, Associate Provost Ganim has been meeting with various colleges and programs. In addition to these meetings, IP should review collegiate strategic plans to create a university-wide sense of how colleges are internationalizing their curricula, supporting international students, and developing research programs. This information could be used to identify common goals across colleges that IP can address.

IP should take the lead on bringing colleges and departments together for research and educational activities. If an opportunity to involve cross-college collaboration appears, then IP should take an active lead on convening people (instead of just supporting the efforts of other departments). Thus, the opportunity exists for IP to proactively promote and establish collaborations in order to move beyond a service role toward leading initiatives related to both research and curriculum.

There are many great international outreach and engagement efforts going on across the university, but there is no centralized, ready data source for people to learn about it. As mentioned in part II above, IP's Dashboard is an example of a way to stimulate, encourage, and implement these collaborations by making information more easily available.

Most of IP's efforts that were discussed during Review Committee meetings seemed targeted toward undergraduate students. Learning more about ongoing opportunities for international learning, teaching, and research in colleges with graduate and professional students, and how IP can support these activities, would be beneficial.

Conclusion

The ultimate success of IP's initiatives will be determined in part by factors outside IP's control, including the political climate, alleviation of financial pressures, and resolution of the COVID pandemic. However, it became clear through this review that IP has already begun strategic planning to address these challenges. The committee recognizes in particular the work IP has done to pivot quickly to virtual opportunities for students and faculty, and recommends further efforts to develop this expertise among IP staff.

With new leadership under Associate Provost Ganim, it is an ideal time for IP to review what it is doing and to plan for the future. The office is aware of many of the areas for improvement and opportunities discussed in this report, and is motivated to build strong collaborations across campus. The initial steps that have been taken—the framework for an enhanced recruitment plan, working more closely with the Center for Advancement, and increased attention to “customer service”—have been viewed positively at all levels. IP is well-positioned to take on the additional role of a thought leader on campus, and a convener of faculty and programs.

Global engagement in research and learning is perhaps more important now than ever before. IP's leadership in advancing global initiatives at the UI will contribute to the university's success.

END OF REPORT

Appendix. Individuals Interviewed by the Review Committee

- Russell Ganim, associate provost and dean of International Programs
- IP Faculty Advisory Council – Ken Brown, Daniel Caplan, Cynthia Chou, Dimy Doresca, Gigi Durham, Nicole Grosland, Kelly Kadera, Doug Lee, Gary Milavetz, Anita Nicholson, Corinne Peek-Asa, Angie Reams, Ann Ricketts, Amanda Thein, Adrien Wing, Barry Thomas, Pete Snyder
- Faculty from Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS) – Jin Feng
- International Programs Leadership Team – Doug Lee, Joan Kjaer, Liz Wildenberg de Hernandez, Autumn Tallman, Sarolta Peterson, Amy Welter, Michael Bortscheller, Amy Brewster
- Angie Reams, associate vice president and dean of students
- UI Deans – Daniel Clay, John Culshaw, Russell Ganim, Brooks Jackson, David Johnsen, John Keller, Amy Kristof-Brown, Donald Letendre, Harriet Nembhard, Edith Parker, Sara Sanders, Tanya Uden-Holman, Kevin Washburn, and Julie Zerwic
- Jeaneane Beck, assistant vice president for external relations
- Bob Walker, lecturer, Tippie College of Business
- International Student Advisory Board – Mishma Nixon and Redwan Bin Abdul Baten
- Becky Hanson, associate director, International Outreach & Recruitment
- Jeff Liebermann, executive director of development, University of Iowa Center for Advancement
- Melissa Meisterheim, director, English as a Second Language