

International Education Council

Minutes of 16 January 2025

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate International Education Council was called to order at 3 p.m. on 16 January 2025, via Webex video conferencing by Bradford Dennis, chair.

Members in Attendance: Eric Archer, Bradford Dennis, Dyanne Foskey, Jessica Gladden (substitute for Shannon McMorro), Tarun Gupta, Lucius Hallett, Anne Kairu, Elena Lisovskaya, Michelle Metro-Roland, Joseph Milostan, Tamba Momoh, Anna Popkova, Reetha Raveendran, Yuanliang Sun, Abby Wang, Ying Zeng

Member Absent: John Cooper

Ex Officio in Attendance: Janet Hahn

Guest: Dr. Danyelle Gregory, Associate Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion

Quorum

A quorum was present with 17 members in attendance, of the nine needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

[MOTION] It was moved by Wang, seconded by Gupta, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Sun, seconded by Wang, to approve the 12 December 2024 minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Dennis postponed report to when IEC presents committee reports.

Ex Officio Hahn reported a brief update on the Undergraduate Studies Council (USC) discussion on experience-driven learning, including study abroad.

Reports of University Representatives

Zheng's report included the following insights:

1. Part of the Haenicke Institute for Global Education (HIGE) leadership team presented at the Academic Forum to inform the broader campus community of HIGE's role. Since last fall, HIGE has increased efforts to improve communication with students. HIGE members attended student meetings and meetings with International Student Council (ISC) leaders, and now have a bi-weekly meeting schedule.
2. Issues still exist with health insurance. At this point in the semester, not even half of the students have purchased health insurance. It is difficult to persuade students, and we might have to end up putting holds on their accounts again.
3. In December, Zheng traveled to Japan and China. One of the big issues was to connect with Beijing Language University as a long-term partner. Under the pressure of the State Department, WMU Office of Research and Innovation wanted to terminate the partnership. Zheng visited to get some understanding of the relationship. The meeting was good, but the result was not favorable. The partnership will be terminated on 30 June 2025. There will be no support for Chinese language programs. Zheng talked to 12 other potential partners and visited their campuses to see if WMU recruits students. A trip to Taiwan and Vietnam is scheduled in February.
4. The Associate Vice President search committee will meet in late February and will have updates then.

Gupta raised an issue with the insurance company and their lack of communication when students submit claims. GeoBlue is one company. Is there a possibility of having other insurance companies? Why is the partnership with Beijing Language University being terminated? Zheng replied that WMU did not have insurance for international students, but after several serious health issues, WMU was reminded of the need for students' health insurance. GeoBlue was chosen as the best option. Zheng replied regarding termination of the partnership with Beijing Language University was that the State Department thought the partnership was similar to the Confucius Institute.

Chair Dennis brought up the issue of rankings and asked how to improve WMU's ranking? Zeng reported that ranking impairs WMU when recruiting international students. HIGE may not be the perfect unit to work on ranking improvement. Markham or Institutional Effectiveness might be better suited and HIGE can certainly assist.

There was no representative from the Graduate Student Association to provide a report.

There was no representative from the Western Student Association to provide a report.

Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees

Gupta reported that the College of Engineering committee met on 9 January 2025. There was a conversation regarding insurance. Another issue was that prospective students had difficulty finding housing information on the WMU website, especially off-campus housing. A solution is needed. Metro-Rolland added that every semester, she encounters issues with lease signing. It would be beneficial to educate students on how housing works and the legal elements involved. Raveendran added that all aspects of housing are given to students during their matriculation, including on-campus housing. Off-campus housing is difficult when you provide information, you are "supporting" or "validating" that specific housing unit. But IEC can be a good resource for peer-to-peer sharing. A list can be provided, but not beyond that. Raveendran highlighted the need to understand the behavior and decision-making patterns of international students regarding housing.

Lisovskaya reported that the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) committee has not met since December, but a second one is coming up on 24 January. The meeting will focus on study abroad scholarships.

Gladden reported that the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) committee met on 9 January and discussed Netherland study abroad program and the new criteria for the lead person of the program. The committee worked on events for this semester. Study abroad will be showcased in March.

The Welcoming International Students committee has not met since November but will meet on 21 January. The Welcoming International Students survey group had a workshop on Qualtrics led by the data librarian Daria Orłowska. Forty-seven international students completed the campus climate survey. The Student Learning Outcomes working group is working on the shared Google doc on some language. Next meeting is on 23 January. The research group has not met since November, no updates.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Meeting with the Undergraduate Studies Council on 14 January included:

1. Definition of experience-driven learning MOA;
2. Explanation of the impact of Study Abroad and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and how both are 100% experience-driven learning;
3. Expanding the definition to include study abroad and COIL. Sun added that Diane Riggs and David Rudge will be on the subcommittee working on expanding the definition.

Milostan presented the study abroad credit and how it is different from how WMU manages other transfer credits. Archer asked about selecting courses that had an international dimension or focus. There was a

discussion on course designation as experience-based and how the global/international components associate.

Speakers

Dr. Gregory reported on the following:

1. Supports Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Dr. Candy McCorkle, planning and assessment for the VP;
2. Developed a framework to quantify the work while not losing the qualitative dimension
3. Working on an interactive dashboard for WMU;
4. In charge of creating an employee support program for employee compensation and will be launching this program for Staff Compensation System (SCS) employees who may be experiencing conflict at work, to help them navigate
5. The University Core retention team is creating sustainable strategies to continue to improve retention rates.
6. In charge of the academic and social engagement component, like holds.

Chair Dennis asked how IEC can collaborate with the DEI office. Dr. Gregory noted that WMU's domestic inclusion efforts are separate from those designed for international students and asked for suggestions from IEC on how to collaborate. There was discussion on the separation of domestic and international at WMU and the need to overcome this issue and create more collaboration.

Chair Dennis asked about the campus climate survey and student participation. Dr. Gregory responded that the response rate was low across the board and shared some of the general insights. Dr. Gregory expressed interest in comparing surveys and questions.

Chair Dennis raised the question of the Navigator network and the extent to which international students use it. The donor did not specify international efforts, and so the charge was given to the institution to focus on US-based students. No dedicated navigator for international students.

Dr. Gregory also discussed the issues with student holds and the ongoing efforts to address these issues.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Wang, seconded by Sun, to adjourn the meeting at 5:09 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The International Education Council will meet next on 20 February 2025 at 3 p.m. via Webex conferencing.

Approval

Submitted by Anna Popkova, Secretary

Minutes approved on 20 February 2025.