
**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of 26 February 2026 Meeting**

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate International Education Council was called to order at 3:05 p.m. on 26 February 2026, via Webex by Anna Popkova, secretary.

Members Present: Stephen Covell, Aishi Dhar Puja, Dyanne Foskey, Tarun Gupta, Vanessa Hills, Anne Kairu, Shannon McMorrow, Michelle Metro-Roland, Anna Popkova, Patricia Villalobos Echeverria (substitute for Yuanliang Sun)

Members Absent: Bradford Dennis, Lucius Hallett, Elena Lisovskaya, Rosemary Max, Joseph Milostan, Nayab Tufail, Xiaodan Wang, Tate Wierda

Advisory Members Present: Brian Childs

Advisory Member Absent: Reetha Raveendran

Ex Officio Present: Wanda Hadley

Quorum

A quorum was present with 11 members in attendance, of the 10 needed to establish quorum.

Agenda

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Hadley, seconded by Foskey, to approve the 15 January 2026 minutes as presented. With one abstention the motion carried.

Reports of Officers

Due to Chair Dennis' absence no report was provided.

Ex Officio Hadley did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Childs provided the Haenicke Institute for Global Education report which included:

- Updates on personnel, indicating active searches for positions within International Student and Scholar Services, including the Director of International Admissions and Recruiting and an additional staff position.
- Childs and Raveendran are developing a three-year recruitment plan aimed at increasing international student enrollment. The plan is expected to be presented to academic colleges within the next month, with an emphasis on collaborative recruitment strategies.
- Proposed federal rule that could limit the duration of time international students are permitted to remain in the United States. While currently under consideration, the proposal may be announced in March. The proposed change would shift from a duration based on student status to a fixed four-year limit, which may contribute to a potential chilling effect on international student recruitment.
- In response to an inquiry from Gupta regarding enrollment declines, Childs reported that India remains the primary country of origin; however, there has been a notable decrease in enrollment over the past few years. Contributing factors may include uncertainty surrounding Optional Practical Training policies, broader perceptions of unwelcomeness in the United States, and the impact of travel restrictions. It was noted that the decline at WMU appears slightly greater than at some peer institutions, though the underlying causes remain unclear.

Puja did not provide the Graduate Student Association report.

Due to Wierda's absence no Western Student Association report was provided.

Due to Tufail's absence no International Student Council report was provided.

Reports of Councils/Committees Standing Committee(s)

College-Level International Committee Reports:

- Gupta (Engineering): Reported that the committee met on 12 February and discussed the development of new study abroad courses within the college. Follow-up discussion also addressed ongoing transportation challenges experienced by international students.
- Villalobos Echeverria (Fine Arts): Provided an update on Erasmus+ initiatives within the college, including collaborative efforts with Milostan.
- McMarrow (Health and Human Services): Reported an upcoming virtual panel scheduled for 2 April from 10 to 11:30 a.m., titled "Spotlight on CHHS Fulbright Research from India, Taiwan, and Uganda." Additionally, two study abroad scholarships will be offered for the first time.
- Popkova (Arts and Sciences): Reported that the committee met on 17 February. Discussion included updates from the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, including the three-year international student enrollment plan. The committee explored strategies to sustain and expand international education across the college, noting existing global engagement. One proposed approach involves committee representatives attending department meetings to provide updates on international education initiatives.

Additional discussion addressed declines in institutional rankings, particularly Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) rankings in East Asia. It was noted that improving rankings will require sustained, long-term efforts. Childs indicated that current capacity within the HIGE is limited and referenced a previously existing rankings-focused committee. The impact of rankings on eligibility for certain scholarships was also discussed. Comparative ranking systems, such as India's National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), were noted. IEC members discussed potential ways to support improvement efforts, including formal expressions of faculty support. It was noted that rankings have declined from approximately 1,000 to 1,200 in 2022 to 1,200 to 1,400 currently. Follow-up discussion will be on the next IEC meeting agenda.

Secretary Popkova provided the Working Groups report, which included announcement of a new International Students group that met to discuss transportation and coordination with the College of Engineering and Human Development. Other topics included housing and an invitation to Barry Olsen at future meeting to discuss solutions.

Unfinished Business

Covell shared amendments to MOA-26/02: *Revision of University-wide Global Learning Outcomes*. The revisions include the addition of the term "guidelines" in approximately 20 instances throughout the document to clarify that the outcomes are not intended as curricular mandates or requirements. The intent is to more clearly communicate that the outcomes serve as guiding principles at the program level. Hadley noted that the revised MOA must be submitted to the Faculty Senate office in order for it to go before the Executive Board.

[MOTION] It was moved by Covell, seconded by Gupta, to approve MOA-26/02 as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Graduate Student Association President Kasprzyk reported that a primary focus of the organization is fostering a stronger sense of community among graduate students.

- A survey administered at the beginning of the 2025–26 academic year indicated that graduate students are seeking
 - increased social support and opportunities for community engagement. In response, the GSA plans to expand community-building initiatives over the coming years.
 - Additional student concerns were identified with financial barriers as a consistent challenge; federal policies regarding immigration enforcement and the uncertainty of travel and reentry to the United States. The WMU President's office has been notified regarding these concerns.
 - Limited funding opportunities during the summer term, particularly for international students. Kasprzyk indicated that this concern will be brought forward for further consideration.
- GSC is exploring opportunities to enhance inclusive community-building efforts, including programming that supports graduate students with families and promotes cross-cultural integration.
- It was noted that communication regarding family-friendly events could be improved.
- Recent initiatives included a donation drive supporting family needs and continued promotion of the Essential Needs Project.
- Ongoing concerns regarding access to childcare were also highlighted.

- GSA is encouraging faculty to assist in sharing information about available Graduate Student Association funding opportunities, including travel grants, data collection support, and professional certifications.

Discussion was held regarding the survey responses to how IEC is meeting its charges.

Announcements

Popkova announced that WMU, in collaboration with multiple departments and external partners, will be hosting a visiting scholar from Mexico through the Visiting Scholars and Artists Program. Two events are planned as part of that visit, including a presentation on poetry and international relations, as well as a community-focused event at Crawl Space on “Queer Diplomacies in the Americas.”

Covell reported that the Asian Forum, in coordination with HIGE, will host a conference focused on aging in Southeast Asia to be held on second and third of May at WMU.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Covell, seconded by Villalobos, to adjourn the meeting at 4:34 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The International Education Council will meet next on 19 March 2026 via Webex conferencing platform at 3 p.m.

Approval

Submitted by Shannon McMorrow (substitute for Anna Popkova), Secretary

Minutes were approved on 16 April 2026.