

IEC REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Faculty Senate has charged the International Education Committee with submitting a report on their 2022-2023 activities based on the committee's responsibilities as detailed in the Faculty Handbook. This report should include any problems encountered while trying to fulfill these responsibilities last year.

Duties of the IEC, as detailed in the Faculty Handbook, are as follows:

The International Education Committee is committed to the internationalization of New Mexico Highlands University as it pertains to the university's mission statement. It is also committed to diversification, pluralization and multi-cultural values. Its main objective is to recruit diverse International Students and ensure their wellbeing, to promote New Mexico Highlands University throughout the world, and to facilitate and encourage University supported faculty travel, participation in international seminars, and exchange of faculty and students.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities:

- a. To review and report on the University's effectiveness in meeting the needs of International Students from an academic and social well-being perspective.
- b. To assess whether the University is providing adequate resources and funding for the International Center and for faculty to travel and recruit.
- c. To make recommendations for improving the University's international education programs.
- d. To make travel abroad recommendations regarding costs, healthcare, insurance and policies to the VPAA and the Faculty Senate.

Prelude:

Although the Faculty Senate requested a report of the activities of 2022-3, we are including information from May 2021 because it is relevant to the committee's efforts to support international students and the International Education Center, as well as illustrating problems we have encountered while trying to fulfill these duties.

In May of 2021, The IEC met with Dr. Law regarding filling a position at the International Education Center since the Director, Ms. Tina Clayton, had been working alone for quite some time and really needed assistance. Among other responsibilities, Ms. Clayton helps international applicants to navigate the application process; issues I-20s or DS-2019 certificates that the applicants need to apply for visas; assists with immigration reporting; handles SEVIS (Student Exchange and Visitor Information Service) registration and enrollment; and issues

health insurance to students on F-1 or J-1 student visas (See <https://www.nmhu.edu/international-admissions/> and <https://www.nmhu.edu/international-students/>). Ms. Clayton is also close to retirement, and succession planning is important.

The committee explained to VP Law that the office had lost staff over the years and that the use of work study students was not acceptable due to confidentiality issues. VP Law was very reluctant to hire another employee because she said that the number of international students present at NMHU did not warrant another FTE. She was concerned that if someone were hired for that position and then the number of international students decreased, the new staff member would have to be let go. She, however, promised to assign a part-time Success Coach to Ms. Clayton as a DSO (Designated School Official). That worker was to have dual responsibilities, reporting to VP Law and admissions and also to Ms. Clayton and the International Education Center.

Fall 2022

In the Fall of 2022, the committee continued to hear about the heavy workload carried by Ms. Clayton. At times she struggled to issue the necessary I-20s to students because of the lack of support in her office. The need for an additional FTE or partial FTE was discussed at every meeting. Although a DSO, Carolyn Montoya, was assigned part time to the International Education Center, she rarely came into that office. Instead she issued I-20s from her office, which was separate from the International Education Center. At the end of Fall 2022, Associate Vice President of Strategic Enrollment Management, Benito Pacheco became Ms. Clayton's immediate supervisor. The Committee agreed that AVP Pacheco should be informed that at least an additional ½ FTE was needed in the International Education Center.

The Committee also held a Meet & Greet event for faculty and international students. It was originally scheduled to occur on September 16th but was later rescheduled for Oct. 26th. The chair and secretary initially requested funds from the Dean of Students, but funds were eventually provided by the Student Senate. Ms. Clayton attended the Student Senate Meeting and was able to obtain the \$650 needed for the event.

The Meet & Greet event of 10/26 was quite successful. Over 20 International students attended. A suggestion was made that going forward, it should be organized by the International Students' Club, not the committee.

SPRING 2023

Because the committee remained concerned about the lack of support for the International Students' Office, they discussed inviting AVP Pacheco to discuss the issue of assistance to that office.

In March Ms. Clayton reported that there were 91 International students, mostly on F1 and J1 visas, and there were over 371 applications in the queue waiting to be processed. At one time, there were over 1000 applications. Because of these numbers, international student applications were moved to AVP Pacheco's office. His office would charge \$140 for a third party, WES (World Education Services) to process each transcript for graduate students. The turnaround time promised by WES was 7 days. Ms. Clayton would then verify the applications for additional criteria before forwarding them to the departments.

The issue of assistance for the International Education Center was not being considered because there were only 91 International students. That number, however, did not account for all the additional filings that must be done for students or their family members on other types of visas, including J1s, H-1Bs or OPTs (Optional Practical Training).

In April, Ms. Clayton stated she had received more than 1000 applications, sometimes more than 60 applications per day. There were 2284 student applications pending. According to Ms. Clayton, Benito Pacheco promised that if he saw further increases in enrollment of international students by next semester, he would consider an FTE for the International Education Center.

September 2023

On September 7th, prior to learning that several of us were no longer to be on the committee, the 2022-23 committee held a meeting. Ms. Clayton gave her report and informed the committee that international admissions (for graduate students) was taken away from her office beginning last June. This was done by the Office of Admissions in lieu of providing additional help to the International Education Center. Ms. Clayton did not know whether any WES evaluations were being made.

It appeared that some students had paid their \$140 fee for transcript evaluation to be done by WES, but no evaluations had been done. Ms. Clayton had been told that WES promised a 2-week turnaround time to the university.

Ms. Clayton was also not certain who, if anyone, was validating transcripts to ascertain whether the institutions were real or fake.

Since there were too many concerns, there was a motion made and supported by all to invite AVP Pacheco to the next IEC meeting to address these and other international student concerns. The chair, Dr. Yongseek Kim, sent an email asking AVP Pacheco to meet with him and with the secretary, Dr. Nkwenti and also inviting him to a future meeting. AVP Pacheco responded by saying that he would be happy to discuss the process and new supports in place for international students.

Once the committee is established and this report is submitted, another invitation will be sent, asking Mr. Pacheco to attend a meeting.

Conclusions:

During AY 2022-23, the International Education Committee focused most of its attention on trying to draw attention to the need for additional staff and succession planning for the International Education Center.

In order to fulfill our charges, we need to ensure that the International Education Center is properly staffed, that the staff have adequate professional development, and that there is a plan in place for Ms. Clayton's successor.

If we are also to fulfill the stated charges of recruiting additional international students, we will require a budget and support for that recruitment.