

Council on International Studies and Programs
Minutes of the Meeting, October 16, 2019

I. Welcome, Introductions, and Approval of the Minutes of the September 2019 Meeting—Peter Biehl, Chair

Professor Biehl started the meeting with a brief welcome and introduced Professor Gina Prescott from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences as a new member of the committee.

II. Presentation on *Project Portal*, Experiential Learning Network—Mara Huber, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Research and Experiential Learning

Professor Biehl introduced Dr. Huber, to present on the Experiential Learning Networks Project Portal. Project Portal was designed over the summer months and launched in the fall semester. The goal of this project is to help students and mentors get more from research and mentored projects. The projects themselves have four requirements: (1) Needs to have mentors consisting of faculty and staff from UB, (2) the program needs to be collaborative, with feedback for students working together in a class or for students working independently, (3) a tangible outcome for students and mentors and (4) the projects need to have formalized preparation.

Project Portal was created to address how students engage in projects and how to facilitate engagement so that the students and mentors working on these projects feel like they are getting more for their efforts. It is sometimes hard for students and mentors to realize their impact through a project. One way for students and mentors to feel their impact is by receiving something tangible. Project portal added this to their projects with digital badges. The students earn these badges by finishing certain stages of a project or by completing a project. The PEARL framework is used as a foundation for the digital badges and projects in Project Portal. PEARL stands for prepare, engage, add value, reflection, and leverage. As students' progress through the badge system, they are able to share stories and are able to fully understand their impact. Dr. Huber mentioned that there are possible projects everywhere including, study abroad courses, global internships, COIL courses, and other international activities. The Buffalo Tanzania Education Project is an example of one of the many projects already on Project Portal.

The portal allows faculty to add pictures and context to their existing projects. It allows faculty to be able to promote the projects in the classroom. Project portal also has some data tracking capabilities. Fifty students have already completed the first badge and are continuing to go through the system. Dr. Huber said that they are looking for collaborators.

Dr. Wood asked if students would be able to apply for funding for certain projects. Awards of up to \$500 can be awarded to students who can prove their project would benefit from travel. Professor Biehl added that there is a potential for collaboration that would help expand resources.

III. Update from Student Life—Barbara Ricotta, Senior Associate Vice President, Student Life—Barbara Ricotta, Eric Walsh

Ms. Ricotta gave a quick update from Student Life. She reported that the One World Café will start construction soon, the campus housing master plan has been completed, they are starting a plan to rehab the Student Union, and they will also soon be launching a Student Wellness Center.

Eric Walsh was introduced and gave a presentation on the new 6-week survey of first-semester freshmen and transfers. This new survey, which replaced the orientation survey, was sent out six weeks after the start of the fall semester 2018 and asked students about a number of areas, including how connected students feel on campus, how they rate their mental wellness, if they seriously considered leaving UB and why. Student Life also integrated pre-enrollment data and streamlined the survey to 26 questions to gather first year retention data. The survey had a 40.6% response rate for 2350 new freshman and transfer students.

Dr. Wood asked about their strategies for achieving such a high response rate. Mr. Walsh attributed it to streamlining the survey. In addition, the survey was confidential and avoided questions about majors and other demographic information that UB already had. The most important reason for the high response was making the survey scale to mobile devices, as 56% of respondents took the survey on a mobile device. Everything, including instructions, was short and readable on a mobile device. They did see some drop off through the survey, but 96% of respondents completed the entire survey.

The percentage of students that seriously considered leaving UB was around 22%. Most of these students felt depressed and homesick. Some found the classes here more difficult than expected. A very small number of students mentioned that they felt the UB campus to be hostile or unsafe. Most of the students who considered leaving UB did not feel as connected to UB overall. Students were also asked what their biggest challenges were. Most students responded that their biggest challenge was personal, being away from home. Financial issues were the second most reported challenge.

Some 155 international students responded to the new 6-week survey. The students reported that the courses are as challenging as expected, similar results to domestic students. Perhaps surprisingly, 58% of international students felt connected to UB compared to 49% of domestic students. Overall, international students were less likely to consider leaving by the 6-week interval. However, international students were more likely to feel homesick, lonely, and depressed. This may be due to the fact that most international students live on campus compared to domestic students, who often commute. Dr. Wood mentioned that the number of domestic students that feel overwhelmed and depressed is concerning. The initiative of this survey is to build predictive retention models. Student Life units can use the resulting data to design new interventions and provide additional data.

Professor Biehl mentioned that the results of the survey in regards to international students is very positive. He also pointed out that an internal survey seems to work

better than an external survey – as in the case of the recent Campus Culture survey, which was also not available on mobile devices.

Dr. Huber asked about the biases in regards to cultural differences when answering the survey questions. With international students, we will see cultural differences in how people use scales and there is a potential for correcting for these differences.

Dr. Hamill stated that UB is paying close attention to retention numbers and who returns the following year to continue their degree. The most successful groups in regards to retention are honors students, students in the EOP program, and international students. It would be interesting to see what those students have in common. It may then be easier to catch students when they are in trouble. Dr. Wood stated that in general international students might be more invested in their education due to traveling half way around the world and paying a much higher tuition.

Ms. Ricotta observed that Student Life is finding that students are having a harder time making friends today compared to a few years ago. Dependence on social media is only one factor. Higher education institutions expect students to come to school already having these social skills. Student life is experiencing an increase in calls from parents about their children not having friends at UB. Ms. Ricotta said that services like the shuttles to the mall are used more often by international students. Dr. Wood proposed that perhaps the six-week survey results reflect a “honeymoon period” in which students are generally happier with being at UB. Mr. Walsh made a comment that they have found that the feeling of being connected to UB begins at a higher point and then drops off. Ms. Ricotta explained that they see the drop off often after students come home from break, after seeing their families.

A question was asked about how UB seminars play a role in fostering connections at UB. Professor Hammill stated that he is interested in seeing if there is an effective way to help collect data on this, if it does not already exist. Professor Biehl mentioned the recommendation of the task force to better utilize the UB seminars for engagement and inclusion of international students. Dr. Huber added that these social skills are tied to social capital and that students are missing out on professional skill development. Students need to be taught how to interact with people at job fairs. Ms. Ricotta explained that they are concerned with the number of students that lack these skills. There is a need for workshops to teach students how to interact with others in professional settings and to develop interpersonal skills.

IV. PhD Excellence Initiative Update—Graham Hammill

Vice Provost Hammill provided a brief update on the recent changes to the English language proficiency policies. These changes allow Graduate School policies to align with current best practices. The Graduate School also expanded the list of native speaker countries based on recommendations from International Admissions. Students from these countries are not required to take the English language proficiency exams for admission to UB. The practice of allowing students to take the English language exam upon arrival to the States has been discontinued based on recommendation from International Admissions.

Professor Hammill gave an overview of the university's PhD Excellence Initiative, which aims to attract the best PhD students and enhance the quality of PhD programs. The deans are seeking to add more diversity to their programs while continuing to provide exceptional training for PhD students. Professor Hammill said that retention and time to degree are bigger problems now. Only 39% of PhD students earn their degree in 6 years and 58% of PhD students earn their degree in 8 years. Beyond the 8-year point they found that most students do not complete their degrees. The Graduate School also wants to ensure the training that PhD students receive aligns with a broader career trajectory. The PhD Excellence Initiative will help UB improve in the rankings and become one of the top 25 public research institutions.

Each academic dean has been asked to create a unit-based academic plan to align with the goals mentioned above. Currently, there is a wide variation across PhD programs at UB. The Provost will accept the deans' plans on a rolling basis until October 2020. There will be two opportunities for investment requests. Schools can participate in both rounds of investment requests. Professor Hammill states that this would be a good opportunity to advocate for PhD education for international students. Professor Biehl suggested that a discussion take place among Council members; perhaps a committee or task force could be formed to provide input.

Professor Hakala asked about the progress with accepting unfunded PhD students. Is there any analysis of the students who fail to finish or take longer to degree in terms of their being funded or unfunded? Professor Hammill said that the Graduate School does not have access to data on PhD students that receive funding from institutions outside of the university. If a department is more selective, that might reduce the number of unfunded students. UB also has had difficulty placing Fulbright students due to high cost of their tuition waivers. The decline in sponsored students like Fulbright reduces the diversity of PhD programs.

Professor Hammill said that this is an opportunity to dig more. It would be interesting to have data on students funded by university vs non-funded students. Would be able to have more transparency around funding packages for international students. Have the offers handled at department level and try to audit to catch when there is a problem. This would be a good time to bring issues to light to improve diversity.

V. Report from the Chair—Peter Biehl

Professor Biehl announced that Dean Daniel Pugh of Nazarbayev University would be coming to visit. Anyone who wishes to meet with him can contact Professor Biehl directly. Professor Biehl also mentioned that he would be meeting with our partner institution in China.

VI. Report from the Vice Provost—John Wood

Dr. Wood reported that Trevor Poag, Director of Global Learning Opportunities, was leaving the university for a new position in Rochester. His duties are being reassigned while a search for a new director is considered.

UB Immigration Services Update — Oscar Budde

Dr. Wood invited Mr. Budde to give an update on immigration matters. Mr. Budde started his report with some good news. Three US District Courts came down hard on the Trump Administration in regards to its new “public charge” requirement. The courts ruled that, for the time being, the government is not permitted to force green card applicants to meet the new public charge rules. The administration’s new rule stipulates that acceptance of any kind of benefits, including housing benefits, would disallow someone from moving forward with their green card application. The government wanted to apply the public charge requirement to non-immigrants as well. The government may require submission of a credit report or even a family health history from people applying for green cards. With respect to exchange visitors and other non-immigrants, it is up to each institution to say what an adequate level of funding is to qualify for visa eligibility. Some institutions do not follow government guidelines with respect to documenting funding.

Update from ISS — Katie Tudini

Ms. Tudini was invited to report on a Student Success program piloted in the spring looking at freshman and sophomore retention. This program looked at 6-week progress reports for first semester students in UB Seminars and ENG 105. They found that 209 freshman were at risk for failing these courses. Faculty members reached out to 55 international students to see how they were doing and to understand why they were not showing up for class. Currently, they are doing phone follow-ups with the students. Students having difficulty can be matched with peer coaches and they are invited to attend a workshop on time management and self-care. The students are also assigned a GA to help them work on motivation. They found that most international students are appreciative of someone reaching out to them. The group is currently looking at UB courses to see whether or not those courses are a good fit for international students and to see if there is anything they need to adjust. If international students are having trouble in their classes, it is now on the committee’s radar and they will be able to receive the help they need.

Update from Study Abroad—Mary Odrzywolski

Ms. Odrzywolski provided a quick update on the study abroad fair, which was a huge success. The fair featured UB faculty-led, exchange and SUNY programs. Approximately 600 students attended the event. Ms. Odrzywolski thanked everyone who encouraged their students to attend and mentioned the Global Gallery Photo event taking place during International Education Week in November. Both study abroad and international students can submit photos about their travels to capture their experiences.

Council Business—CISP Award Nominations for 2020—Deadline: March 27, 2020

Dr. Wood reminded everyone that the 2020 deadline for the CISP award nominations is March 27, 2020. Nomination materials are in the meeting folders.

November 21st is the annual awards luncheon to honor the 2019 award winners; everyone please have it marked in your calendars. This year the award winners are Professor Filomena Critelli and Professor Kristin Stapleton.

**Council on International Studies and Programs
Attendance at the Meeting, October 16, 2019**

Present:	Katharina Azim	Psychology
	Tilman Baumstark	Faculty Affairs
	Peter Biehl, Chair	Anthropology/College of Arts and Sciences
	Oscar Budde (ex officio)	UB Immigration Services
	Filomena Critelli	Social Work
	David Fertig	Linguistics
	Lindsey Gladney	Law
	Walter Hakala	Asian Studies
	Graham Hammill	Graduate School
	Daniel Hess	Architecture and Planning
	Christopher Hollister	University Libraries
	Maria S. Horne	Theatre and Dance
	Mara Huber	Undergraduate Education
	Christine Human	Engineering and Applied Sciences
	Wei Loon Leong	Alumni Engagement
	Zhiqiang Liu	Economics, Confucius Institute
	Donald McGuire	Classics
	Lorraine Oak	College of Arts and Sciences
	Mary Odrzywolski (ex officio)	Study Abroad Programs
	Muchand Patel	Biochemistry
	Jessie P.H. Poon	Geography
	Gina Prescott	Pharmacy
	Barbara Ricotta	Student Life
	Steven L. Shaw (ex officio)	International Admissions
	Katie Tudini (ex officio)	International Student Services
	Lisa Vahapoglu	Community for Global Health Equity
	Claude E. Welch, Jr.	Political Science
	Lillian S. Williams	Transnational Studies
	John J. Wood (ex officio)	International Education
Guests:	Eric Walsh	Student Life
	Aisha O'Mally	Management
Excused:	Janina Brutt-Griffler	Graduate School of Education
	Yu-Ping Chang	Nursing
	Colleen Culleton	Romance Languages and Literatures
	Kathy L. Curtis	English Language Institute
	Stephen C. Dunnett	International Education
	Christian Flaugh	Romance Languages and Literature
	Joseph J. Hindrawan (ex officio)	International Enrollment Management
	Junhao Hong	Communication
	Shaun Irlam	Comparative Literature
	Meredith Kolsky Lewis	Law
	Othman Shibly	Dental Medicine
	Dorothy Siaw-Asamoah	Management
	John H. Stone	Public Health and Health Professions