

Virtual Meeting of the Advisory Committee of Bluefield State College's Office of International Initiatives

Monday, May 2, 2022 at 2pm

Minutes

Present: Jeff Disibbio, Cecil Marson, Dr. Stephen Rowe, Sharon Rowe, Thomas Gambino, Marvin Woodie, OII Assistant Katlin Presnell, Dr. Sudhakar R. Jamkhandi (Jammy)

Absent: Jim Ferguson, Joe Manzo, Jim Spencer, Kitt McCarthy, Pete Sternloff, John Feuchtenberger

Invited Guests: Provost and VP for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Ted A. Lewis (away at conference); Dr. Sarita Rhonemus, Institutional Effectives (ill-health prevented attendance)

Recognition of new members—Jeff Disibbio, Jim Spencer

The OII Advisory Committee was apprised about activities that manifest the OII's mandate -- **International Student Recruitment, Integrations, and Retention:**

- The request from the US Department of State/Institute for International Education to accommodate a student from Afghanistan which has been shared with BSC's Admission Office, Registrar, Counseling, and Provost. The Committee will be informed of the College's decision at its next meeting.
- John Feuchtenberger's recruiting a new homestay host to accommodate female Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange participant; two CBYX participants in 2022-2023.
- The OII is no longer responsible for SEVIS Compliance; however, advising international students about academic matters is still within the purview of the OII Director.
- Funds being provided by the WV Higher Education Policy Commission (WVHEPC) to support a new position--International Student Ambassador—to enable participation in virtual international student recruitment fairs.
- The activities of the International Student Organization (ISO) whose Campus Advisor is Jammy. In Spring 2022, the ISO celebrated International Women's Day by making colorful paper flowers to give to BSC's female staff, faculty, and administrators. The donation from Conn-Weld to fund production of ISO T-shirts that will be sold as a fundraiser.
- The ISO's plans for a joint celebration of UN Day on October 22, 2022, with the City of Bluefield, which, hopefully, become an annual celebration. Bluefield City Manager Cecil Marson indicated his support of this plan.

The OII Advisory Committee was apprised about activities that manifest the OII's mandate -- **Internationalizing the Curriculum:**

- The BA in International Studies being approved by WV Higher Learning Commission and Higher Learning Commission and the establishment of a dedicated Advisory Committee for International Studies (<https://bluefieldstate.edu/resources/international-initiatives/isac>).
- The decision to continue to host Fulbright Language Teaching Assistants for Arabic and Russian in AY2022-2023. Credit and non-credit (community) classes will be available. [Steve Rowe asked whether BSC awards foreign language credit to international students and if not to see if such a policy might be adopted. Marvin Woodie indicated his employees might be interested in enrolling in Russian, Spanish, and Mandarin.]
- The spring 2022 Windows on the World: International Studies Speaker Series which featured John C Law, Dean of School of Languages, Foreign Services Institute who discussed the Importance of learning foreign languages; and, Elsy Alvarez of ITCA, El Salvador and Marvellous Matswimbo of Zimbabwe who shared presentations about the Cultures, Traditions, and Customs of El Salvador and Zimbabwe, respectively.
- How ties with international partners were sustained in spring 2022, namely, (a) by inviting students of these institutions to submit their creative works to Agora, which students from a prospective partner (R.A. Podar College of Commerce and Economic in India) did and three of whom placed first and second for art and

poetry, respectively; and (b) through Conversations between students and faculty BSC and ITCA (El Salvador) and Ionian University (Greece).

- The 2022 virtual *Agora, A Celebration of Creative Expression* (<https://bluefieldstate.edu/agora>) is dedicated to the people of Ukraine, features music by two Ukrainian musicians. The virtual Agora will be available for viewing in June 2022.
- 25 passports were financed by OII (with donations from area Rotary International in Princeton and Bluefield). [Henceforth, free Passports will be given ONLY to students who enroll in the BA in International Studies.]
- John Cabot University's Study Abroad Agreement is being reviewed by BSC's legal counsel.
- AAA is considering being BSC's Study Abroad partner and has already indicated waiver of the transaction fees and possibly providing scholarships for study abroad.
- Thomas Gambino has requested United Airlines to consider providing discounts airfares to support BSC's study abroad.
- Funding from WV HEPC to support the International Student Ambassador to promote study abroad and engage in Conversations with partner institutions.
- Preparing for submission by May 15, 2022, a grant application to support internships/study abroad (Canada, Central America), a collaborative activity with WV State University and WV Higher Education Policy Commission.
- The forthcoming international institutional partnership with R. A. Podar College of Commerce and Economics
- Pledges to establish Legacy Scholarships from 5 Princeton Rotarians.

Other Updates:

The OII Director requested Committee members to

- help recruit PT drivers for airport-Bluefield-airport transfers
- recruit businesses for Internships for IS majors. Marvin Woodie and Jeff Disibbio indicated they would try to help with this activity.

Fall Meeting: It was agreed to tentatively schedule an-in person OII Advisory Committee meeting in October 2022 should BSC Alumnus Thomas Gambino and his wife, Catharine, visit Bluefield. If the in-person meeting does not take place in October, 2022, the OII Advisory Committee will be sent a google meet invitation for 2pm on Monday, December 2022. Thomas Gambino will notify Jammy upon confirming his travel plans stateside at which time Jammy will notify the OII Advisory Committee about the date, time, and venue of this dinner meeting.

With no further business to discuss, the virtual meeting was adjourned at 11:15am.

Respectfully Submitted by

Sudhakar R. Jamkhandi

May 6, 2022