

**University Senate International Affairs Committee (IAC)
FY 2017 Final Report
14 April 2017**

During FY17, the IAC sought input from various KU units to inform University governance on international issues. We hope this report provides a good picture of what the Committee learned and will enable governance to advocate for the KU international community and international issues of importance to the University and the state. The following document includes reports on Standing Charges 1, 2, 3 and Specific Charges 2 and 3. A report addressing Specific Charge 1, regarding the Academic Accelerator Program and its partnership with Shorelight, was submitted on December 23, 2016.

IAC members developed a list of administrative, academic and student offices, organizations, and other units to invite to speak with the committee. A version of the following invitation was extended to representatives of these campus units.

Dear NAME [KU dept/unit],

The University Senate [International Affairs Committee](#) would like to invite you or another colleague in NAME OF UNIT to meet with members of the committee to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the international community on campus, gather perspectives from your UNIT/ORGANIZATION, and seek active collaboration for effective policy shifts at KU.

Could you please share your availability on the following dates and times; we will then schedule a meeting with you for about 20 minutes.

- Feb. 8, 10.30-12
- Feb. 28, 2.30-5
- March 30, 1-2.30

For our meeting we would like for you to please share with us a short verbal report about your unit that includes, as relevant: key areas of work; major initiatives; areas of concern; opportunities for development; ideas for how can the IAC/University Senate be an effective conduit for international dimensions at KU.

The University Senate [International Affairs Committee](#) (IAC) works to improve the international dimension of KU by expanding opportunities and monitoring success of incoming international students and by promoting, expanding, and enhancing opportunities for KU students, faculty, and staff to have international experiences. As part of its FY2017 specific charges the IAC has been tasked the following:

- Determine ways that the Committee can reach KU faculty, students, and staff in order to identify their concerns regarding International Programs. Ask the units that comprise IP about their concerns or desires for IP.
- Investigate, report, and make recommendations on outreach to international students, both graduate and undergraduate, concerning their experiences at KU in terms of, but not limited to: mental health and overall wellness, housing, academic advising, and campus involvement. Solicit the input of Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) Staff and Student Senate Director of Diversity and Inclusion, as well as international student organizations in this effort.

We would very much like to meet with you or another representative from your unit in order to meet this specific charges as well as the IAC's standing charges to:

- Hear reports on strategic planning and activities from IP units, suggest changes or new directions, and facilitate collaboration among faculty and administrative units.
- Review and provide input on new policies that relate to international research and teaching.
- Identify concerns or issues for discussion and action related to KU's international affairs from students, faculty, and staff.

Thank you very much for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
IAC MEMBER

The following representatives spoke with members of the IAC over the course of three committee meetings:

- Stuart Day, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
- Mahboob Ahmed, Islamic Cultural Center
- Charles Olcese, Director of International Student Services, Office of International Programs
- Ali Behbahani, Kuwaiti Student Association
- Abdoulie Njai, Student Senate Director of Diversity and Inclusion
- Lorne Jordan, KU Postdoc Association
- Joshua Gaston, Representative of the School of Education TESOL Club
- Jennifer F. Hamer, Acting Vice Provost for Diversity and Equity, Associate Dean, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Professor and Chair, Department of American Studies, Joint Appointment, Department of African and African American Studies
- Hollie Hall, President, International Student Association
- Elizabeth MacGonagle, Director of the Kansas African Studies Center and Associate Professor of History
- Cécile Accilien, Director of Institute of Haitian Studies, Assoc. Director of CLACS, Associate Professor of African and African American Studies

Standing Charge 1:

- **Hear reports on strategic planning and activities from IP units, suggest changes or new directions, and facilitate collaboration among faculty and administrative units.**

Late in the spring semester, the interim status of both the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and the Associate Vice Provost for International Programs became confirmed appointments, bringing new potential for meaningful actions, including collaborations among the various units within Academic Affairs, as well as a stronger position for International Programs. One of the broader visions across these different units focuses on KU as an international research institution; this includes the importance of Study Abroad as transformative for students as well as developing programs with international institutions for faculty-to-faculty contact for research and at program levels. KU is currently investigating possibilities for international pipeline degree partnerships and online/distance learning opportunities for international students; the University is not currently exploring international satellite campuses. A new recruiter has been hired in International Recruitment in Undergraduate Admissions as the University seeks to maintain strong international pipelines in addition to the KU Academic Accelerator Program

(KUAAP). Moving KUAAP into International Programs is under consideration as a means to enhance communication and make stronger decisions. Additionally, a cost-benefit analysis of KUAAP is currently underway, which will provide more robust data and information for a stronger understanding of the impact of the program and how best to move forward for KU.

A new university-wide initiative to integrate orientation content and collaborate on content delivery will serve incoming domestic and international students together, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The initial focus is on the integration of content on the undergraduate side. Dean Roberts is considering the development of a new university orientation for all graduate students, which would create an opportunity to integrate content already delivered for international graduate students coming to KU. The CLAS Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is currently developing a list of resources to provide students, faculty and staff with easy access to a variety of answers and eliminate, or at least reduce, the need to search among various offices and departmental contacts. There remains a need to develop training and identify key departmental contacts. A new mobile app for orientation will link (undergraduate) students to campus services; an app for faculty and staff (and presumably graduate students) will also be developed.

While several of the representatives spoke about improving communication regarding resources, in addition to creating further support services, much of the attention seems focused on students. There appears a lack of support for international faculty and staff. The IAC encourages further development and promotion of resources for international faculty and staff as well as students. The Provost Office of Diversity and Equity will be convening focus groups to address issues and needs for international faculty (and possibly also postdocs) with regard to acclimation, retention, and resources, however, this needs to be a wider campus effort.

Standing Charge 2:

- **Review and provide input on new policies that relate to international research and teaching.**

No new policies relating to international research and teaching were brought to the committee to review during FY17.

The IAC stresses the importance of diversity in content and internationalizing the curriculum and experiences for students, and recommends further efforts that could also include incorporating these types of curricular development into faculty review processes.

Standing Charge 3 and Specific Charge 2:

- **Identify concerns or issues for discussion and action related to KU's international affairs from students, faculty, and staff.**
- **Determine ways that the Committee can reach KU faculty, students, and staff in order to identify their concerns regarding International Programs. Ask the units that comprise IP about their concerns or desires for IP.**

Several repeated concerns emerged across discussions that the IAC held with representatives from various associations, offices and units connected with international affairs. Most prominent among these concerns were issues of belonging and safety, with particular reference to guns on campus and

the impact of the current political climate in the United States with the rhetoric of America First and recent executive orders. International students express feelings of isolation, alienation and inequality, particularly students of color or those perceived as Muslim, as well as not feeling valued for their contributions on campus. Other key areas include: international student and faculty orientation and integration; student advising; communication about international resources; programs for both international and domestic students. While all of these concerns could contribute to declining enrollment of international students, guns on campus as well as the current political climate and executive actions were specifically cited as significant challenges.

Safety concerns reference both actual threats and perceptions. Already, there exist fears of white supremacists; both domestic and international faculty, students and postdocs expressed increased safety concerns with concealed carry. These concerns indicate the need for greater information sharing, orientation for international students, as well as training for domestic students that helps counter existing U.S. cultural stereotypes that contribute to negative comments and behaviors in and out of the classroom. The CLAS DEI Office is exploring online professional development training for faculty and staff working with international and diverse students, and the IAC supports these efforts. The IAC also supports the recommendation to provide further pedagogical tools and cultural competency training for instructors (faculty and GTAs) to work with diverse students, address discrimination and racism in the classroom, as well as contribute to a supportive and inclusive learning environment. It could also be helpful to provide additional training and orientation for international instructors (faculty and GTAs) to gain greater familiarity with U.S. educational cultures as well as training for U.S. instructors to work with students learning English and from different educational backgrounds.

The IAC recommends combining efforts across KU units and allocating additional resources to expand and develop international student orientation as well as other platforms for information sharing. Important aspects to continue to address and further develop include:

- familiarizing international students with U.S. judicial, legal, political and safety systems along with their implications;
- the rights and privileges of international citizens;
- language barriers (verbal and non-verbal);
- cultural differences (e.g. regarding interactions with the police, sexual harassment and issues of consent, meanings and consequences of official contracts, cultural approaches to dress, fears of misunderstanding and offense);
- tools for dealing with acts of discrimination such as hate speech.

In addition to further incorporating these broader issues into orientation (and perhaps as part of integrated orientation with domestic students), the IAC further recommends consideration of suggestions raised to further coordinate with established student associations on campus as well as off-campus international organizations, such as cultural centers, to provide information about various logistical issues (e.g. banking, groceries, mobile phones).

For international students with families, access to childcare that is responsive to different cultural needs was raised as an issue. It was also noted that with the loss of graduate student apartments, which often served international students, visiting scholars, and their families, there was a loss of a communal space for connections. The IAC recommends that the University look into alternative residential spaces as the previous apartments provided a key support systems, particularly for graduate students with families.

Currently, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is producing a series of videos in collaboration with units across campus that include the Office of Public

Safety (recently posted at <https://dei.college.ku.edu/diversity-equity-and-inclusion>), among others. The IAC recommends consideration of an idea proposed by Mahboob Ahmed from the Islamic Cultural Center to coordinate information and share videos that include both logistical and broader cultural issues regarding what to expect on upon arrival at KU (such as the topics raised above).

The area studies centers at KU provide significant international resources for teaching, learning, research and community outreach for faculty, students and staff. (For details, see the Appendix A: “International Education at the University of Kansas.”) The centers are eager to collaborate with other units and cosponsor programs and initiatives and can assist in combating cultural and national stereotypes. The important work done by the area studies centers, they would benefit from greater visibility and branding.

Specifically, with regard to faculty research and international issues, it was noted that KU’s classification of Caribbean Studies within the U.S. region is inequitable and marginalizing as it affects funding and limits opportunities.

Specific Charge 3:

- **Investigate, report, and make recommendations on outreach to international students, both graduate and undergraduate, concerning their experiences at KU in terms of, but not limited to: mental health and overall wellness, housing, academic advising, and campus involvement. Solicit the input of Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) Staff and Student Senate Director of Diversity and Inclusion, as well as international student organizations in this effort.**

Advising poses a major issue for both undergraduate and graduate international students. Key issues include transparency about degree and language requirements (including admission directly into KU degree programs). Additionally, challenges exist in understanding the advising system and KU academic structures, such as identifying helpful advisors and making advisor changes, as well as other issues relating to timely completion of degrees, particularly within the period of a scholarship or fellowship. The IAC encourages the stated intention by administrators to further address advising issues for domestic and international students.

Student Senate Diversity and Inclusion serves as a resource for international students and a space to raise issues, including questions and concerns regarding concealed carry or mental health initiatives. D&I is currently working with CAPS to increase outreach and providing access to mental health services such as streamlining the process and eliminate fees. The IAC should continue information sharing with Student Senate D&I and develop ways to work collaboratively to serve international students. Furthermore, it would be helpful for the IAC to remain in conversation with both the Provost and CLAS Offices of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to understand and address issues relating to international faculty, students and staff. In particular, as the recently released data from the KU Climate Survey are analyzed, the IAC should work with relevant units to assess what can be learned (in conjunction with international student survey data collected over the past few years by International Programs) to determine further actions to support international students, faculty and staff at KU.

International students appreciate the initiatives of International Programs and CLAS DEI. Specifically cited were the international coffee hours, CLAS time lunches, spring break activities for international

students, and the Walk to Class program. The IAC recommends continued support and expansion programs and initiatives such as these.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The IAC takes seriously its role to create opportunities for different voices to inform University governance in its understanding and decisions related to international affairs at KU. Based on the reports and conversations by these various campus and off-campus representatives, the IAC finds there is a deep community need and desire for greater international, intercultural awareness, knowledge, understanding and experiences at KU. The IAC encourages the continuation and support of programs that bring together international and domestic students, and recommends the development and promotion of further integrated programs, perhaps across student organizations as well as academic departments and administrative units. There exists a growing awareness at KU of how volatile international relations impact higher education as well as the direct costs related to success with international students. The IAC further recommends identifying additional resources to support for both international and domestic DEI issues.