

Minutes: KU International Affairs Committee

Friday, October 1, 2018 | 8:30 a.m. | Marvin 206C

Attendees: Kapila Silva (Chair); Virginia Harper Ho (faculty); Seth Brooks (staff); Humberto Salinas (voting student); Peter Okpokodu (faculty); Charlie Bankart (ex. Officio); Melissa Birch (Business School); Dee Steinle (Business School); Chuck Olcese (ISS); Lynne Vanahill (ISS)

Excused: Manuela Gonzales-Bueno (faculty)

Absent: Pallavi Singh (staff); Camila Ordonez (voting student)

Approval of Minutes of 9/20/18 meeting: Virginia motioned; Seth seconded. Minutes approved.

Changes to Visa Regulations – Chuck and Lynne presented an Overview

1. Chuck: there have been several changes to federal regulations.
 - Policy change of how the government interprets F1 students: should students have a problem with their status and need to drop a course that then makes them go below full-time status. In the past, they would have to apply for reinstatement and it was fairly simple.
 - Now, they have changed the interpretation of “Unlawful Presence”, but before they were under a status that avoided this. Now, they will incur Unlawful Presence if they have a status problem (i.e. drop 1 hour below full time, get sick and don’t get authorization to drop course, etc.), but to apply for reinstatement can take many months to process. After one year of unlawful presence, the student will be barred from the United States for 3-10 years, ending an academic career.
 - A policy since July 2016 narrowed the definition of being within a degree program. It was made to address the growing number of pathway programs, that is, programs that give the students a variety of ESL classes and slowly transition to a full-time student. Policy now dictates that if they are not fully in a degree program, they must be indicated as being in the pathway program.
 - Now, a student must be fully admitted. We cannot give a student an I-20 until they are fully admitted. They need this document to apply for a student VISA. We have to file an I-17 with the government documenting our International Student Programs. Once approved this provides method to issue I-20s, etc.
 - o However, the government is taking a long time to process. ISS has been waiting over a year for approval and is limited until then.
 - Goal is to issue a pathway I-20 (over 1 year) to provisional I-20.
 - Exceptional circumstances: J-1 exchange visitor – so must have an exchange agreement, or substantial outside funding, OR government funding in order to procure a provisional visa.
2. Graduate Admissions Policies
 - The difference between why this is an issue for graduates more than undergraduates is that undergraduates do not have an English proficiency agreement, so can get an I-20 and then figure out ESL and change the I-20 after arrival. Graduate admissions has very specific criteria for admission.
 - If there is an exception written in, then students can still be granted admission for other circumstances.

3. Admissions for Business MBA program:

- Melissa: There is a minimum standard that applies to the graduate program for GPA. For the Business School, students often come back to an MBA after being in the workforce. This provides additional information on why students should be successful in a grad program even if other requirements are not fully met. Currently, the Business School may not admit a student with a GPA below the requirement. Example of a specific student who was successful in other arenas, including taking community college classes successfully, but they had to decline him due to being slightly below GPA requirement.
- Melissa explained the issue to the graduate dean. However, for graduate admissions there is sometimes an assumption that the students applying for master's degrees will also continue to PHDs, which not accurate.
- Melissa wants Grad College to change current policies

4. Current Admissions Restrictions and Resulting Consequences

- The one-size-fits-all standard across all schools and departments (e.g. min GPA) established by the Grad School doesn't fit all departments.
 - o The assumption is that a grad student is understood to be a "PhD" student "but not so for different programs, which have terminal degrees that aren't PhDs".
 - o This has application for all professional schools.
- Melissa: Students come back to MBA after being out of college and we have lots of info other than GPA on which to decide; want grad school to allow prof. schools to vary on criteria like the college GPA; in the past didn't need it because they got a provisional I-20 and after 1 semester, switched over; but now it is prohibited issuance of I-20 without minimum GPA.
 - o An example: a student in the U.S. on visa, Uighyer speaker from China, and we teach the language at KU; felt his GPA might be unreasonably low; prior business experience and while in U.S. was enrolled at a junior college, where he was doing well. Grad school wouldn't bend on this.
 - o Student couldn't risk losing immigration status by applying post-graduation with a new GPA and couldn't issue conditional I-20 pending graduation.
 - o The problem is that we are losing students like this one to other schools. The Graduate Admissions is not realizing this.
- Melissa: The Business school looked at 7 years of data of provisional admits – all of them are successful, so no real admissions mistakes.
- Dee (administrator of the MBA program): adds that this has negative impact on globalization of our primary cohort.
- The key issue is getting stuck on GPA and not considering other factors (such as GMAT, prof. experience, etc.)
- Charlie noted that there is an equity issue since international students are put in a more precarious position than domestic students based on their acceptance, as compared to their peers from the United States. Without exceptions, international students are disadvantaged.

5. Possible Exceptions and Solutions:

- Dee: The opportunity to write a petition letter based on other factors.
- Dee: hang ups are almost always international students, but they are used to handling this process.
- Virginia: are there any current models within the university or at similar institutions?

- Lynne: The exceptions for English proficiency that we currently have seems like an option.
- Charlie recommends putting the control within the individual schools to be able to admit, since there is already an exceptions policy.
- Melissa suggested schools could even be given a quota of a certain quantity of students with exceptions that they can admit at their discretion.
- Charlie noted that this creates a potential issue of the idea that we are taking risks.
- Melissa: alternative documentation is key in petitioning exceptions.
 - o Kapila suggested the committee talk to the graduate dean as well.
 - o Humberto: questioned if there is a way for him to work with student senate to help advocate for the issue. Could work with the graduate international students that are on student.

6. Other Examples of Admissions Policies with Exceptions

- Charlie: Need to adapt language: Undergrad Board of Regents model incorporates exceptions. Weird to exclude international students
 - o (Regents institutions have 10% variability for undergrad deviation from KBOR)
- Charlie: Exception for English proficiency is a good model – have to be reviewed by ACS & Grad School/Dean
- Alternative: AEC is experts on exceptions. Talk to Dean of Grad Studies to approve together with each Unit (previously Business School worked with Joe Potts to get him to sign off for 1 semester and test students at the end – let the Unit take responsibility for the decision).
- Could appeal to the Grad School to make exceptions on a case by case basis.

7. Recommendations

- Have Review Body at the school level; process is regularly practiced at undergrad level and how exceptions are reviewed.
- Change Grad School policy to allow exceptions
- Need petition process to change. Just require justification with other credentials (a letter/petition). Also need to advocate why we need international students in other disciplines and why they may not look like a typical STEM PhD student.
- Waiver for all terminal master's degrees (or for all)
- Potential process would be to get faculty senate to get the Grad School to reconsider

8. Options to Investigate for Admissions Process

- Kapila suggested talking to TESOL/teaching licensure depts. in the school of education.
- Charlie mentioned the School of Music (Bob Wosell – performance-based programs) since their work is also much different than other schools.
- Include Journalism, Social Work, MPA programs, etc.

Progress for the Charge on Smoking Policy

- Humberto: they are currently drafting the questions.
- Peter: Do we have the information on specific countries for international students in order to include that information in the responses?
- Humberto: what is the best way to ask the students questions electronically?

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.