

BA-PIER MEETING JUNE 21, 2012 MINUTES by Virginia Spinelli [vspinelli@menlo.edu]

The BA-PIER meeting was called to order at approximately 1 PM by Dolly Ballangitao. There were twenty three members present.

Michelle Ayazi, Holy Names University, introduced Holy Name's Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Michael Miller and President, Dr. William Hynes. Dr. Hynes spoke regarding life changing experiences he has had due to participation in exchange programs and emphasized the importance of international education.

The Treasurer's Report was given by Susan Sermeno and she encouraged us to use the money available from our treasury when we serve as host school.

We have recently received 15 new members.

Arthur Levine (Foothill) and Louis Gecenok (SJSU) presented information from their notes from the NAFSA National Conference. Arthur explained that we were formerly able to purchase tapes of conference meetings. Now during July streams from the conference will be available.

Arthur spoke about an ICE program called Campus Sentinel. Officers will be dropping by schools to visit and educate PDSO's and DSO's. It was stated at the conference that Officers would call for an appointment and not come unannounced. However, a BA-PIER member reported that one of his district schools was visited unannounced and the Officer was fact finding with specific questions. Some officers are encouraging DSO's to report on schools that they interact with or that are physically close to them. It was suggested that DSO's have another staff member present when Officers come and debrief after the meeting. New SEVP regional offices are also being established. One of the goals is to be able to meet on a yearly basis with all SEVP approved schools.

A meeting with a SEVP representative for this BA-PIER meeting had been cancelled since SEVP had a recent appearance at the NAFSA National Conference. It was also suggested that it was important to allow members time to freely discuss concerns regarding sensitive issues. In the future it was suggested that Officers be asked to leave after presenting material and answering questions. We now have fewer BA-PIER meetings in which to conduct discussions amongst members.

There is a now NAFSA Taskforce on Non-Traditional Programs (Including short term, summer, non-credit, distance learning, low residency and special OPT issues). These are often areas where not many specific provisions are included in laws. Questions keep reoccurring in the area of disabilities.

There is no specific provision for a student who has ongoing learning disabilities and requires a reduced course load throughout a college career. Current regulations allow no more than 12 months of reduced course load for medical or psychiatric situations. However, recently the Vermont Service Center responded to a question stating that schools could create

individualized programs of study for this type of student (with learning disabilities, etc.) and then would not need to adhere to the 12 unit term requirement for undergraduate students. It is hoped that official communication on this issue will be coming out shortly. New regulations are expected in the near future.

The dilemma of reinstatement for somewhat minor violations was discussed.

For instance, a student had registered for 12 units including a one unit course that did not start until later in the semester. The college cancelled the course and it was too late for the student to register for another course. Many officers would consider the student out of status and require reinstatement because of the 1 unit deficiency. Some schools have encouraged students to take extra units to protect from this type of scenario and others have agreements with some classes (in which students may start attending late, example: Physical Education courses). Also, a student took 12 units and academically failed one class. An officer stated that the student was out of status and required all student transcripts from previous semesters. Previously, we have been told that it is a pattern of F's that would make a student out of status and not one occasion where the student failed, even while pursuing the course with great effort. It seems that more reporting and stricter adherence to rules is being required.

However, at the same time while regulations are more strictly interpreted to require reinstatement, students are allowed to obtain new I-20's for "reinstatement across the border" and are approved to enter, even after committing several offenses. Mixed messages are being sent. Members expressed the need for more discretion on the DSO's part.

Members engaged in a lively discussion regarding trends and future possibilities for dealing with grey areas.

Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) is now in limited operation. USCIS is moving from a paper based model to a secure online environment. It is an account –based system. The I-539 may now be completed online. The system requires an individual, his attorney or certain non-profit organizations to set up account codes. Attachments and checks may be scanned and sent by the student. DSO's will not be able to establish accounts for individual students. It was suggested that DSO's tell students to enter information and SAVE it as a draft. They may then bring the draft to the DSO and have it checked for errors. Now I-20's and I-94's should not be originals when sent with an I-539. USCIS will not be stamping them. The student will now get back only the I-797 with a perforated I-94. When questioned, officers stated that an I-20 is not a document that proves anything about status.

Social Security, etc. must be educated to know not to expect any stamped paper.

BA-PIER members were told that they could email Public Engagement at USCIS.gov/outreach to attend seminars about ELIS in June and July. NOTE:

Currently the only seminar date available is July 12. Special officers will be processing electronic aps in the current stages of transformation.

Arthur shared that the USCIS website has a 6 page Table of Contents regarding ELIS and the manual entitled "Instructions for Requesting Benefits Using USCIS ELIS" is 26 pages. However, FAQ and shorter versions are available.

SEVIS II – Several government sections on SEVIS II at the NAFSA National Conference were cancelled because there was not enough significant new material to present. SEVP is currently in the process of visualization and creating models of final project and process. No vendor has yet been chosen. Batch specifications are expected to be out in October or November. Schools should have one year to modify school systems and consult with necessary personnel. The next phase (within 1 – 1 ½ years) will begin initial operating capability and will begin migrating data from SEVIS I to SEVIS II. Look on ICE website for future SEVIS II information and seminars. Everyone using SEVIS II will have a customer account. It has been reported that new regs announced during SEVIS II might allow F-2's to work. It is also hoped that "Leave of absence" issues will also be considered.

Several schools and officers reported that Re-certifications are taking at least nine months from initial submittal date.

Inna Zaltsman, CoChair, reported on the upcoming NAFSA Region XII Conference at San Jose in October. Registration will open August 1.

Volunteer Program Chairs are still needed. Inna is also looking for someone to volunteer to do a Graphic Design Program. A previous conference in 2007 utilized an art school project to keep costs down.

Perhaps, a BA-PIER member could contact Inna and arrange a project for this conference. The email address for the conference is: sanjoseconference@gmail.com. There have been some recent changes in grant distribution money for conferences. All districts will receive \$ 5,000. The grant could go to a non-NAFSA member.