Annual Report of the Senate Committee for International Programs
Academic Year 2014-15

Submitted by Howard Spodek (CLA, History), Chair

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The charge of the Faculty Committee on International Programs, as I understand it, is to work along with Temple’s Office of International Affairs, with Denise Connerty and Brooke Walker – both Assistant Vice Presidents, reporting to the Provost – to provide support and to keep them advised of faculty concerns. The committee met three times this year with Denise and Brooke, together.

Because the work of their offices is substantially different from one another – colloquially put, Denise’s office deals primarily with “export,” with Temple students going to study overseas; Brooke’s office with “import,” with international students coming to Temple – the subcommittee also has subcommittees within it that have also met with Denise and Brooke separately. I have personally met informally throughout the year with both Denise and Brooke.

I report here not on the overall work of these offices, which is comprehensive, professional, skillful, and constantly expanding as international education expands, but only on faculty interaction with the offices.

I. “Export.” As increasing numbers of Temple students choose to study abroad, one of the principal new initiatives of Denise’s office has been to assemble information on overseas programs that will help students choose wisely, and ensure that the programs they choose are acceptable for Temple credit. Faculty members have been involved in this process of selection of appropriate providers and their programs and, in cases in which students propose programs of study outside the approved list, to evaluate the student proposals.

Denise is asking for additional faculty assistance with these processes. For the most part, she knows which faculty have been helpful in the past, but seeks names of additional faculty, including, as appropriate, faculty not now on the existing subcommittee. (See below, in suggestions.)
A major program run through Denise’s office in which faculty have also participated is the annual “Global Temple Conference,” held this year on November 12. Hundreds of Temple students and scores of faculty report on their international research, activities, and programs through panels, film, artistic presentations, and poster sessions. The Conference provides a showcase of Temple’s overseas activities for our own community and for the outside world. Mary Conran chaired the 2014 planning committee chair.

This year, for the second time, Denise arranged a program to introduce to faculty the opportunities afforded by the Fulbright Scholars program. On April 10, a representative of the Fulbright office in Washington came to Temple and addressed about twenty faculty members to acquaint them with the program and its opportunities for research, teaching, and academic collaboration overseas.

II. “Import”: Brooke’s Office is responsible for overseas recruiting; liaison with the admissions committee of the university on evaluating overseas applications; and for a wide variety of support functions for international students upon arrival, everything from meeting them at airports, to helping locate apartments, assistance with health issues, and counseling on personal issues. Her office is, however, NOT responsible for academic problems that may, and do, arise; for these she refers us, and the students, to Peter Jones and the academic side of the Provost’s office. See below.

Because Brooke’s office is not charged with academic matters, she has had less interaction with faculty, but she notes that some initiatives – some originating in her office, some from individual, private concerns -- have involved faculty.

1. Peter Jones proposes to work with the First Year Writing Program to restructure the teaching of writing course 711, adding to the basic track a second track for students who have had no experience with American-style education. The curriculum for this second track includes materials for academic acculturation along with the writing.

2. Alex Howard (CL. Political Science) and Pam Barnett (TLC) convened a three-session workshop on increasing faculty sensitivities to the needs and feelings of international students. Brooke has repeatedly stressed the need for such a workshop. It seems to have occurred at the individual initiative of Pam and Alex, and it appears, so far, to have been a once-off occurrence since Pam has subsequently departed Temple (for Virginia?) and Alex is off for the next 2-3 years to TUJ. We should actively move to institute this workshop on a regular, advertised basis. (See recommendations below.)

3. Terry Halbert teaches a course in the Fox School of Business that has students interviewing Philadelphia residents and then presenting the results of the interview through multimedia resources. She is proposing to include international students working alongside Americans in the processes of interviewing and presenting.

4. Brooke’s office advertises the opportunity for faculty to host international students especially for Thanksgiving dinner. About 70 faculty and students have participated.

5. The International Students Association with about 200 international and some Americans is one of the most active Temple student organizations. The international office provides advice and counsel to the student leaders, including their annual international students ball, with several hundred attending each year.
III.

Peter Jones office

Although it did not seem part of our charge, our committee has kept in touch with Peter Jones, Senior Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies informally. His office has the responsibility for academic issues affecting international students. In our recent correspondence, Peter notes some of his accomplishments and some of his concerns. They suggest the need for regularizing the liaison between his office and Temple faculty, I think through our committee. From Peter:

Also, during the last year, and partly due to the support of Brooke and your committee I was able to secure funding support for two positions:
· A full time academic advisor in the Academic Resource Center who serves all international students – both prospective and current students
· A full time coordinator in the Writing Center who provides direct support to international students and directs a large number of international student writing tutors (a number of whom are actually international students themselves).

The challenge is not just resources – one can always use more. It is to be able to strategically identify international students at risk/in need and to do this earlier enough that we can respond in a positive, preventive, supportive way. To do this we need to make better use of data and to enable better communication among what are quite dissipated sets of student supports.

IV.

Teaching and Learning Center

Our committee has not been in touch with the TLC. I think that we should be, especially in light of reports that Brooke’s office receives of faculty insensitivities toward their problems and their sensitivities. We need to explore this issue and the TLC may be the right venue for the exploration. Apparently the past director was concerned, and perhaps the new director is as well. If we do undertake this mission, it will be new for us.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. In addition to liaison with Brooke’s and Denise’s offices, the Committee should ESTABLISH REGULAR LIAISON WITH THE OFFICE OF PETER JONES AND WITH THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER. Brooke’s office does not deal with (the special) academic problems faced by students coming from overseas; Peter’s office does, the TLC may, and Temple faculty do.

2. Peter is very aware of the need for expanded academic services for the increasing numbers, and variety, of international students. He has lobbied for expanding the personnel available for helping students, especially with writing skills, and with providing acculturation experiences for those students completely new to American educational patterns. We need to know what he is doing – and WE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP HIM WITH HIS MISSION AND IN LOBBYING FOR MORE, NECESSARY RESOURCES.

3. About two years ago, on their own initiative, as I understand it, Alex Howard, CLA, and Pam Barnett, TLC, offered a three-session sequence for faculty designed to develop and increase sensitivities to the needs and experiences of international students at Temple. The initiative did not continue, and despite its usefulness, it may not continue without further encouragement; Pam has left Temple and Alex will be spending the next two to three years at our Tokyo campus. Will
anyone step in to continue their work? Brooke has long argued for this kind of sensitivity training. **WE SHOULD COORDINATE WITH THE TLC TO ENSURE THAT SENSITIVITY PROGRAMMING CONTINUES.**

4. Terry Halbert, on her own initiative, has begun bringing American and International students together in her class on interviewing and presenting digitally the life stories of residents of Philadelphia. **PERHAPS THE COMMITTEE, PERHAPS THROUGH THE FSSC, COULD MAKE SUCH INITIATIVES BETTER KNOWN** so that others might be inspired to emulate them.

5. Similarly, we might do more to advertise the invitation **TO HOST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY AT HOLIDAYS LIKE THANKSGIVING.**

6. Early on in the fall, members of our committee should meet with Denise to **ENSURE THAT DENISE CAN ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH THOSE FACULTY WHO CAN BE OF SPECIAL ASSISTANCE IN EVALUATING OVERSEAS PROGRAMS AND STUDENT PETITIONS.**

7. As international education – in both directions – continues to expand, **THE COMMITTEE SHOULD COORDINATE WITH DENISE, BROOKE, PETER, AND THE TLC TO UNDERSTAND THEIR MISSIONS, TO ASSIST THEM, AND TO LOBBY FOR ADEQUATE RESOURCES.**

It has been my privilege, and pleasure, to serve as chair of the FSSC Committee on International Programs for the past two years. I have learned a lot and, hopefully, helped at least a little. For the coming academic year I shall be on sabbatical in India, studying city planning in Ahmedabad, so I will not be able to fill out my term on the committee, which runs through 2016, and the committee, or the FSSC, will have to choose a new member and a new chair.

Respectfully,

Howard Spodek

Professor of History, CLA