

**2019-2020**  
**Unit Assessment Report**  
**Division: Academic Affairs**  
**Unit: Office of International Education**

*Amended to reflect changes and disruptions due to the pandemic*

*There are amended instructions throughout this document to reflect the special circumstances of this academic year (AY19-20). You will find these in **red**. As an institution and as departments we have learned that we can use our creativity to deliver services and learning even in the most difficult of circumstances. This year's annual report should also serve as a memorialization of the lessons learned.*

**I Mission and Goal/Outcomes Statement:**

The mission of the Office of International Education is to provide a high quality services to both international students and study abroad participants and serve as a resource for the Fitchburg State University faculty, community and their partners. Provide leadership in promoting global awareness by enhancing the understanding of our context in a global society.

**II Personnel:**

**Administrative Staff:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Nelly Wadsworth -	Director
Nicole Salerno -	Study Abroad Coordinator
Sandy Yu -	International Student Coordinator

**Support Staff:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Muchafara Punungwe	Student Office Assistant
Xhulja Kola	Student Office Assistant
Matilda Kola	Student Office Assistant – until December 31, 2019 only
Mingqing Zhuang	Student Office Assistant – until February 2020

*(Note all personnel changes that occurred during 19-20.)*

**III Facilities/Equipment:**

**New computer and new desk set up for the new hire (International Student Coordinator)**

*(List any new facilities/equipment/software etc. acquired during 19-20.)*

#### **IV Budget Expenditure Analysis:**

Budget was level funded. Hired the International Student Coordinator in July 2019 to fill the vacant position at the end of January 2019. We also hire a graduate student worker starting fall 2019 and worked until end of January 2020. Memberships in NAFSA, AIRC, Study Massachusetts, MaCIE and the license to use of the NAFSA Advisors manual for Immigration resource were all renewed. Memberships in these organizations helped increase the visibility of Fitchburg State University locally and globally for the purpose of increasing the number of international students.

The budget for the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 had a saving of more than \$6,000 from the student work budget code, CO5 and J56. Student workers were not able to work due to closure of the school due to pandemic and also we were not able to do the year-end activities such as the international graduation reception, etc.

*(Was budget expended as planned? Were additions/changes made, if so, explain. Please note any changes that resulted from the pandemic.)*

#### **V Action Plan for 2019-20:**

- 1. Increase and diversify the current population of international students at Fitchburg State.**
- 2. Services for student retention and success: Collaborate with student life to develop high-impact programs that integrate international students into the community and expand opportunities for student leadership and involvement. Work with the GCE to plan on instituting an English as a second Language Program.**
- 3. Continue the work on establishing partnerships with international high schools, local and international institutions/business organizations, Advising Centers for the purpose of increasing the visibility of Fitchburg State overseas and increase the number of international students and study abroad participants**
- 4. Increase visibility of the Office of International Education through programming and attending/presenting in conferences.**
- 5. Staff – More professional development and training for changes in the way we do things post pandemic.**

*(List Objectives for 19-20)*

## **VI Programs/Activities:**

1. International women's Day co-sponsored with the Intercultural Communication class
2. International Student Orientation (Fall and Spring)
3. International Students and Study Abroad Graduation Reception, December 2019
4. Diwali celebration, October 2019
5. Study Abroad outreach to Students: Rock the block, classroom visits/information sessions, freshman summer orientation and three Admissions Open Houses
6. Study abroad outreach to faculty: Collaborate with providers to offer workshops to Fitchburg State faculty
7. Pre-Departure Orientations to Study Abroad students for semester abroad and faculty led programs.
8. OIE Staff participated as MaCIE Planning committee members and presenter of MaCIE conference, July and November 2019
9. Skype meeting with accepted students to prepare them to pass the student entry visa application interviews at their country's US consular offices
10. Virtual check-ins for international students to comply with the Immigration regulations.
11. Professional Development and conferences attended:
  - MaCIE conference presenter
  - International Enrollment Management
  - Attended NAFSA National conference in Washington DC, July 2019 and NAFSA Regional Spring Immigration Workshop, February 2020
  - NAFSA Regional conferences, November 2019
  - Virtual webinars on dealing with the pandemic, Immigration regulations changes, April, May and June 2020
12. Attended webinars on recruiting international students during the pandemic, partnerships with overseas institutions, students' mobility, virtual study abroad and internships, updates and new SEVIS regulations, and weekly zoom meetings with colleagues in International education in Worcester area schools. NAFSA online meetings and webinars, IIE, AACSB, CHE, AIRC webinars on changes in student mobility, recruitment and future planning.
13. Member of the Strategic Planning Committee

*(List major campus activities, events etc. that the office participated in/supported; committees served; community outreach; etc. List events provided to current and prospective students. Also provide professional development of all staff. Please note which, if any, of these activities occurred specifically as a result of, or in response to, the pandemic)*

## **VII Accomplishments 2019-2020: (Cancelled in red ink)**

1. Increase and diversify international student population and study abroad participants
  - There are five more international students in Fall 2019 than 2018 and six new countries represented due to increase communication with prospective students; students who are in the USA who transfer from another US

institutions. Advising through Skype and mock entry visa interview for students who have visa interview schedule at the US Consular Office in their countries.

- For Study Abroad – Increase communication with students who showed interest from the Summer Bridge program students, at the summer orientation presentation and continued encouragement of students to apply for scholarships that support study abroad trip

## 2. Services for student retention and success

- Conducted workshops
- Trained the newly-hired International Student Coordinator on advising students on immigration, and personal and career choices.
- Collaborated with Student Life department in developing more programs to encourage involvement of international students and study abroad students in broader campus life.
- Facilitated processing of student requests for the waiver of school health insurance.
- Develop programs targeting the specific needs of international students and more programming activities post-orientation to enable successful transition of international students into campus life and US culture.

## 3. Partnerships

- AUIA successful pilot program in Shanghai on July 2019 which give participating faculty members a cultural experience that will enhance their multicultural competence. Due to the pandemic, the summer 2020 Shanghai program classes were moved to online and generated about 100 course enrollments.
- Coordinated and planned the itinerary of the President and Provost's trip to China to open the AUIA program, plus a visit to sign renewed agreement and strengthen the relationship with Zhejiang University as well as a meeting with the BIEI staff on Hunan city partnership.
- Created the itinerary for the President and the Provost trip to three cities in Asia end of February: Tokyo, Japan; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; Legazpi City, Philippines.
- The visit to Saigon Tech, Vietnam and Bicol University, Philippines to sign the partnership agreement with Fitchburg State were ready to sign but President Lapidus and Provost Cardelle's visit was cancelled due to the pandemic but

will pursue the possibility of the visit to Saigon Tech and Bicol University when it is safe to travel.

- Initiated a new partnership with University of Florence, Italy for exchange programs. In fall 2019. The plan was to finalize the partnership this spring 2020. Italy is a popular destination for Fitchburg State students in studying abroad. Due to the pandemic, the University of Florence is also closed. We are waiting for the University of Florence to review the comments and edits in the agreement.
  - New partnership with University of Ghana for the health fair activities during the Nursing faculty-led program in summer 2020. The faculty-led program to Ghana was cancelled as with other trips abroad.
  - Reitaku University partnership coordinated – two students who are here in fall semester 2019, and three Fitchburg State students going to Reitaku University in the spring 2020. Retaku University students went back home and we cancel the exchange programs with Japan in March 2020.
- 4. On-campus Programming: (the highlighted in red were cancelled).**
- a. Asian New Year celebration event on January 30, 2020 was a very successful event with a total of 97 attendees both American and international students, faculty and staff.
  - b. International women’s day on March 5<sup>th</sup> was successfully celebrated with students from the Intercultural Communication class and seven international female students who talked about women issues in their countries.
  - c. Fitchburg State 125<sup>th</sup> celebration to highlight Study Abroad at Fitchburg State and the popular event, International Night were all cancelled due to Pandemic
  - d. An Evening of Cultural Expression presented by CFAW Boston scheduled on May 9, 2020 at Weston Auditorium was cancelled due to pandemic.

### **Study Abroad**

Hosted meeting and conversation with new faculty about the opportunities for creating new faculty-led programs and how to market these programs to students.

Held sessions for students on information of faculty-led program opportunities. Held debriefing meetings for faculty leaders for the Game Design Japan trip and the Verona trip. Increased the number of students participating in Study Abroad programs. In the Fall, 2019 and spring 2020, study abroad students were well underway with their programs abroad and in March 2020, the university had to recall everyone who was abroad (except for one student who was in Japan who refused to come back), and cancelled the two groups of faculty –led program to Ireland and Greece a day before their departure due to the pandemic

The Study Abroad office has worked very hard, and the goals to have the required number of students needed to run the faculty-led programs was reached and all the faculty-led programs for 2020 were cancelled.

5. Staff

Hired a new International Student Coordinator in July 2019.

Hired a graduate student part-time work study to help with the website and other events, fall 2019 and trained student workers on responding to student inquiries.

*(Please note which, if any, of these accomplishments are related specifically to your department's response to the pandemic.)*

**VIII Assessment Report:**

**See VII – Accomplishment 2019-2020**

*(Were the Action Plan objectives met? Provide in list format that parallels item V.)*

**IX Future Directions/Action Plan 2020-2021**

**1. Recruitment and diversity international and Study abroad students:**

Working with US Department of Commerce for International Partner Search and with Study Massachusetts group to do virtual presentation about Fitchburg State to agents from: Colombia, Russia, Vietnam, Mexico, Brazil, and Kenya and Kazakhstan.

Submit a proposal to use recruiting agents to recruit international students for Fitchburg State and increase the visibility of Fitchburg State abroad.

Submit change of the English proficiency requirement IELTS score from 6.5 to 6.0 for undergraduate applicants and accept Duolingo and additional waivers for the English proficiency requirement to have Fitchburg State a competitive destination for undergraduate international students.

Develop strategies to partner with English Language schools in Boston area to get more international students to come to Fitchburg State University.

Respond very quickly to prospective students' inquiries and recommend to them to apply and work closely with international students who are already in the United States. With this population, there is NO problem in getting entry visas.

Revise and update the International Student guide to include in the international recruitment flyers.

**For Study Abroad** – Strategize the recruitment of student to participate in the 2021 faculty led and study abroad programs.

Faculty-led for summer 2021 and scholarships. Looking into new strategies in offering study abroad such as virtual and domestic study away programs in case travelling abroad is not a possibility in the near future.

2. **Services for Retention and Collaboration:**
  - Work closely with Risk Management office and the Campus Safety to update the Emergency Management Plan for study abroad.
  - Work with the Student Services offices in the Hammond third floor to facilitate and encourage virtual student engagement.
  - Revised and update CPT forms to incorporate policies for internship/CPT to make it easier to students to navigate the paperwork.
  
3. **Virtual Programming:** a. Virtual orientation for new incoming international students; b. virtual global village during the International week; c. Virtual check-in for students to comply with SEVIS requirements and we reminded students to register for the next semester, d. Stuttgart University presentation to prospective exchange students;
  
4. **SEVIS I-17 updates** and SEVIS recertification.
  
5. **Submit the English Language program proposal to SEVIS** for approval to accept international students in this program. SEVIS must approved the program before 1 before recruitment starts.
  
6. **Define the role of the International Advisory Committee** and develop tasks for the IAC to include but not limited to: Evaluating current partnerships and assessing viability of additional partnerships; Working with academic departments to increase exchange partnerships in traditional and non-traditional regions around the globe; Defining and rethinking about the direction of Study abroad program and define the faculty role to promote global learning in their classroom
  
7. **Staff:**

Continue training/assisting the International Student coordinator in Immigration regulations, updates and workshops.  
Encourage Study Abroad coordinator will learn additional ways to give students global experiences through professional development such as virtual webinars, conferences and meeting colleagues.

Participate in the Worcester/Boston area international educators/advisors in the on-going meeting for updates in the field and to learn about how to encourage more engagement of students virtually.

*(Provide general summary of goals to be included in Action Plan for 20-21, due Aug 1)*

## **X Reflection:**

*(Report on how the department adapted to the mid-semester disruption caused by the pandemic. Reflect on actions that surprised you and on lessons learned that will help in the future).*

1. The spring semester has been very challenging. All on-campus programs were cancelled and classes were moved to online platform. We assisted international students who decided to go back to their countries and those who decided to stay in the USA; we advised and assisted students to apply for work off campus due to losing jobs on campus, and we helped students

who wanted to change their immigration status. We also helped students to extend their I-20s to continue their studies in the fall. We submitted reports to SEVIS, detailing the changes of courses from in-person to online. We tracked students' whereabouts every two weeks, and monitored the progress in their studies. We hosted bi-weekly check-ins through google meet to all international students who are currently registered and all on OPTs.

2. All scheduled faculty-led programs for the spring and summer semester were canceled. All semester abroad and exchange programs were halted due to the pandemic. Students who already started their semester abroad were asked to come back to the USA due to this pandemic. We helped with travel arrangements, and we maintained continual communication with all students until they arrived back to US. We managed to get all students back to the USA. On time communications with providers, institutions and students abroad were vital in mitigating risks.
3. I managed department staff working remotely to be sure the work is being accomplished. We also responded quickly to many questions and inquiries by current and prospective international student – using google meet when appropriate.
4. We were so much busier and accomplished more working from home than in the office where there are a lot of interruption

There is high risk for reduction in the number of international students enrolled at Fitchburg State in the fall. The outlook is uncertain due to travel restrictions, limited flights, and the closure of Consular offices and suspension of DOS visa services.

The outlook is similarly uncertain regarding Study Abroad programs. The international landscape and travel availability/restrictions are difficult to predict. **The Study Abroad office is looking into the possibilities of virtual study abroad, virtual internships and domestic study away programs in case travelling abroad is not a possibility in the near future!**

Perhaps now is the time to rethink the approach to recruitment of international students to be ready for the fall 2021. Also rethink about some of the changes that happened that have a positive results and retain them post COVID; e.g. virtual meetings, virtual orientation, etc.