

BFC-INTL: Meeting minutes, September 27, 2023

Attending: Mahasweta Baxipatra, Israel Herrera (co-chair), Patricia Kubow, Francesco Marchionne, Jose Luis Antinao-Rojas, Ron Sela (co-chair), David Taylor, Attia Youseif.

Following introductions and a summary of the committee's undertaking in the previous year, the committee turned to discuss its assignment for AY23-24:

Explore ways that BFC might act to make IUB more attractive to international students, and more supportive of the international students who have already joined our community. It is no secret that the interest of international students in US institutions of higher education has waned over the past several years for numerous of reasons. It essential for IUB's success, and indeed the state's success, that we work actively to preserve IU's legacy as one of the most welcoming institutions of higher education for students and faculty from around the world.

The committee co-chairs raised questions about the assignment:

a.) In early 2023, committee members noted the poor, almost invisible presence of "International Affairs" in the IU 2030 Strategic Plan. The committee began exploring this matter, and the co-chairs requested (also in writing) the BFC Executive Committee (EC) to continue monitoring the situation in the AY23-24 to make sure that International Affairs remain an IUB priority.

b.) While the recruitment and well-being of international students are, of course, of primary concern to us (almost all members of the committee were born and raised outside the US, and several went to school at IU as international students, so we are intimately familiar with such concerns), we believe they can be integrated into a larger framework. After all, these matters (e.g., recruitment, appeal, and well-being of international students) have been explored by almost every committee; many aspects of IU's appeal (or lack thereof) are not in our hands (location, state politics, concerns about race and prejudice beyond the university, housing issues addressed by a different committee, etc.); per the Provost, international student numbers are likely not going to grow for a number of reasons (economic, political, investment in students' countries of origins, etc.), and so forth.

Our suggestion, then, is to integrate this assignment into our larger concern, namely, IU's international engagement in its 2030 Strategic Plan.

In addition, per requests from several academic units on campus who have voiced concerns over this matter, the committee seeks to explore graduate student exchange programs and what appears, on the face of it, to be a decision to cut down the duration of several such exchanges (for example, from a full semester to one month). The committee wishes to understand what has happened, who makes such decisions, what criteria are taken under consideration, how and when stakeholders are notified, and if there is an appeal process. This issue, too, may be integrated into our larger goal.

Finally, members raised the question of conflicting messages about the production and availability of web-based courses (with international components, such as foreign language instruction, or catered specifically to international audiences).

A discussion followed, resulting in a consensus: the co-chairs should raise our concerns and requests with the EC and report back.