

**University Senate
Research, and Graduate and Professional Education Committee (RGPEC)**

**Interim Response to Charge S-1207, Support for International Students
November 7, 2014**

A. Charge

Charge S-1207, Support for International Students: Investigate and make recommendations with regard to core university support for international students and postdocs, particularly in the area of visas. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by December 2014.

B. Summary

The Research, and Graduate and Professional Education Committee (RGPEC) is addressing this charge on two fronts. First, the Committee has gathered testimony from experts at all three of our universities and RBHS to identify Rutgers' most pressing needs in this area, and ways to address them. Second, it has developed a survey designed to gather input from international students and those providing support services to them. The Committee will synthesize the expert testimony with the survey data to create a full report with recommendations. RGPEC has consulted extensively with Eugene Murphy and others at the Rutgers Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA) as well as the Senate's own Student Affairs Committee.

Last month, several RGPEC members met with Rob Heffernan (Executive Director, Institutional Research & Planning) and Victoria Porterfield of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning, about the RGPEC survey. Heffernan and Porterfield reviewed it in detail and agreed to administer it in February, 2015. The Committee expects OIRAP to complete its data analysis by March 31, 2015, and intends to deliver its final report, including the survey data, to the full Senate May 1, 2015.

C. Background

The Rutgers University strategic plan is clear: Transformation of the student experience is a strategic priority. Moreover, "Rutgers is renowned for the diversity of its student body ... [and] strives for a culture of inclusiveness." "Diversity is central to our culture, and the University will work to remove obstacles and to create the conditions needed for all individuals and groups to enjoy full participation and inclusion in our community." Critical to this effort is the provision of effective support for international students and postdocs.

Approximately 25% of the graduate student body at Rutgers is international, with the percentage varying significantly by school. Just to take one example, the Graduate School-New Brunswick, the largest graduate unit at Rutgers, is 53% international, and includes students from 40 different countries; a 10-year analysis shows a steady increase in international students as a percentage of the School's population.

D. Expert testimonies

A number of experts spoke with RGPEC members about issues and areas of need for international students and postdocs. The following topics (in no particular order) were addressed, and recommendations proposed. Please see Appendix I for a select list of experts consulted.

- Staff support and management structure

- Communication and language
- Cultural adaptation
- Community
- Health Services
- Housing
- Legal issues
- Transportation
- Orientation and first-time registration
- Degree completion processes
- Behavioral issues
- Academic integrity
- Student treatment by faculty
- Foreign Export Control Act
- IRB and international research

E. Survey

RGPEC prepared and tested its survey in the fall of 2013, and was poised to distribute it to the Rutgers community in early 2014. The Committee informed the Rutgers Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA) of its work, offering to share the data when it became available. RGPEC then learned that GAIA was planning to embark on a survey of its own, aimed at addressing many of the same questions, but targeting undergraduates. Since both GAIA and RGPEC were concerned about survey saturation, it was agreed to collaborate, and the two groups met to discuss the survey. RGPEC made minor revisions to the survey based on this discussion, and handed the survey over to GAIA, with the understanding that it would revise the survey further to include questions specific to undergraduates. However, over the summer, GAIA withdrew from the project in favor of a more general CIC survey which included neither the graduate student/postdoc demographic, nor the support services community. For those reasons, and because the CIC survey is, for the most part, not Rutgers-specific, RGPEC has continued with its own survey initiative, independent of GAIA.

The RGPEC survey will be targeting the following communities:

- international students of the graduate and professional schools
- international postdocs and visiting scholars
- graduate program directors
- employees of Rutgers Graduate and Professional Admissions
- deans and associate deans in schools with international students
- administrative and graduate program assistants in schools and departments with international students
- faculty and staff (including HR staff) handling issues related to international students and scholars

In addition to basic demographic questions, the survey asks questions pertaining to various aspects of the student experience: recruiting and pre-admission; admission and preparation for arrival; orienting to the University; orienting to the area; education and academic research; submission of thesis/dissertation; the graduation process; and finally, career development, internships, and placement services. Students will be asked to rate specific support services in these areas, and to indicate whether or not they received all the information they needed. Throughout the survey participants are given opportunities to suggest improvements.

Last month, RGPEC members Janet Alder, Judy Hudson, and Jane Otto met with Rob Heffernan (Executive Director, Institutional Research & Planning) and Victoria Porterfield of the Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Heffernan and Porterfield had by this time reviewed the survey in detail.

OIRAP agreed to convert the survey from its original SurveyMonkey format to Qualtrics, and distribute it on behalf of RGPEC and the University Senate. OIRAP emphasized that the timing is important, and recommended a distribution date of early- to mid-February, 2015, for the spring semester. The survey will go out as a formal email invitation from the Senate, utilizing a pseudonymous email such as UniversitySenateInternationalStudents@rutgers.edu.

The Committee expects OIRAP to complete its data analysis by March 31, 2015, and intends to deliver its final report, including the survey data, to the full Senate May 1, 2015. RGPEC members believe that this survey could prove to be valuable as an ongoing annual institutional survey.

Appendix I

Select List of Experts Consulted

Elizabeth Atkins

Associate Dean, International Students, Division of Student Affairs, Rutgers University-Camden

Barbara Bender

Associate Dean, Academic Support and Graduate Student Services, Graduate School—New Brunswick

Yocasta Brens-Watson

Director, RBHS International Services, Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers)

Yee Chiew

Associate Dean for International Programs, School of Engineering

Michael Marcondes De Freitas

GSA International Student Affairs Committee

Robert M. Goodman

Executive Dean, Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Shashank Kandade

Chair, GSA International Student Affairs Committee

Jerome Kukor

Dean, Graduate School—New Brunswick

Amy Liberi

Graduate Student Services Coordinator (now Assistant Dean), Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Camden

Howard J. Marchitello

Associate Dean for FASC Graduate School and Research, Professor of English, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University-Camden

Eugene Murphy

Assistant Vice President for International and Global Affairs, Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers)

Urmi Otiv

Director, Center for Global Services, Centers for Global Advancement and International Affairs (GAIA Centers)

Kathleen W. Scotto

Dean, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Lily Young

SEBS Dean of International Programs, Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (now Provost of Rutgers University—New Brunswick)

Appendix II

Questions Submitted to Expert Consultants

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

- What are the areas where Rutgers services to international graduate students and scholars are working well?
- What do you think are the areas of greatest need, in terms of Rutgers support for international grad students and scholars?
- Do you think students know where to go for information they need? for services they need? If so, are they getting helpful answers when they go there?
- What recommendations might you propose?

QUESTIONS FOR THOSE PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES

- What is your role vis-à-vis international students and scholars?
- What are the areas where Rutgers services to international graduate students and scholars are working well?
- What do you think are the areas of greatest need, in terms of Rutgers support for international grad students and scholars?
- Does your unit have sufficient resources (personnel, money) to provide the appropriate level of support?
- Does your unit have sufficient information/training to provide the appropriate level of support?
- Do you think students know where to go for information they need? for services they need?
- Ideally, how would you divide responsibilities for international student/scholar support between individual academic units (departments, grad programs, grad schools) and a central unit within the university?
- What other recommendations would you propose?

RGPEC International Students Charge Ad Hoc Working Group

Jane Otto
Gayle Stein
Janet Alder
Robert Goodman

Jerome Kukor
Monica Mazurek
Lena Struwe
Nil Uzun

Research, and Graduate and Professional Education Committee (RGPEC)

2013/2014

Otto, Jane, Libraries (F), Co-chair
Stein, Gayle, NB Staff, Co-chair
Abu El-Haj, Thea, GSE (F)
Alder, Janet, GSBS (F)
Amenta, Peter, RWJMS Dean (A)
Angell, Beth, SSW (F)
Apuzzio, Joseph, NJMS (F)
Bolden, Galina, SCI (F)
Buchholtz, Ann, RBS:N/NB (F)
Clear, Todd, SCJ Dean (A)
Cohen, Stanley, NJMS (F)
Connors, Jeremy, NJMS (S)
DeLisi, Richard, Dean, GSE (A)
Farmbry, Kyle, GS-N Acting Dean (A)
Fitzgerald-Bocarsly, Patricia (F)
Gajic, Zoran, Engineering (F)
Goodman, Robert, SEBS Dean (A)
Hackworth, Rhonda, MGSA (F)
Holzemer, William, Nursing Dean (A)
Hudson, Judith, SAS-NB (F)
Jimenez, Leslie, SAS-NB (F)
Kukor, Jerome, GS-NB Dean (A)
Lewis, Jan, Acting Dean, FAS-N (A)
Maher, Ali, Other Units-NB (F)
Mao, Zhengyu, GS-N (F)
Mazurek, Monica, GS-NB (F)
Ottomanelli, John, Alumni Association
Pratt, Carlos, SHRP (F)
Pritchett, Wendell, Camden Chancellor (A)
Rodgers, Yana, GS-NB (F)
Salmond, Susan, RSN Dean (A)
Struwe, Lena, GS-NB (F)
Taghon, Gary, Other Units-NB (F)
Tsakalacos, Thomas, Engineering (F)
Uzun, Nil, GS-NB (S)
Vaz, Sharon, RWJMS (S)
Weigert, Laura, GS-NB (F)
Zimmerman, Dean, SAS-NB (F)

2014/2015

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Stein, Gayle, NB Staff
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