

**AWISA Minutes**  
**Fall Meeting**  
**Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006**  
**Seattle University**

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- Social time was held from 8:30 – 9 am
- 77 members signed in.
- Leana de la Torre, current AWISA Chair began the meeting at 9 am.
  - AWISA team members were introduced.
  - Leana thanked Wade Bird and Seattle University for hosting AWISA.
  - AWISAns encouraged to submit Session Topic/Presenter forms
  - Change in “Best of AWISA” policy. Rather than voting on “Best of AWISA” during the Spring meeting, the winner of “Best of AWISA” will be determined from the session evaluations at all AWISA meetings
- Welcome by Andrea Frangi, Assistant Director of Admissions at Seattle University.
  - Ms. Frangi stated that Seattle University is proud to host AWISA
  - Emphasized Seattle U’s mission aimed at graduating students with a global perspective and to celebrate leaders devoted to the common good.
  - Stated that SU, in the spirit of the Jesuit education, aims to graduate students who combat poverty, protect the environment
  - SU also realizes that to foster this environment, hosting international scholars and students as well as a successful study abroad program are critical
  - Ms. Frangi mentioned the SU International Development Internship Program, in which SU students experience a profound transformation in their attitudes of the world by working with NGOs and with local populations that are striving to enhance equality and social justice in the political, social and economic systems of their homelands.  
(<http://www.seattleu.edu/idip/>)
  - AWISAns were invited to “experience the global inclusiveness” with a variety of highlights on the SU campus:
    - Memorial for Japanese Americans who were forced to serve at internment camps during WWII
    - Chapel of St. Ignatius: (<http://www.seattleu.edu/home/highlights/chapel/>)
    - International Student Center (ISC)

**Sessions**

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**Session A: A Lecture on the Middle East**

Presented by Dr. Faizi Ghodsi, Seattle University

9:30-10:30

Dr. Ghodsi is originally from Iran, has earned all 3 of his degrees at Seattle University. He began by showing a map of the middle, near and far east, and clarified these terms.

Dr. Ghodsi discussed **misconceptions** about Muslims, such as

- Muslims worship a different God
  - Dr. Ghodsi dispelled this belief by quoting the Koran, “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God”
- Inequalities between men and women

Dr. Ghodsi made comparisons between Christianity and Islam. Compared Sunnis vs. Shiites. Shiites make up 15% of all Muslims, most of whom reside in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and other locations.

The main difference between the 2 groups is in their leadership. Shiites believe that the prophet in his final sermon said that those who believe in him will also believe in his cousin, Ali, as his successor. Sunnis supposedly did not hear this, nor accept Ali as Allah’s successor. Shiites believe in 12 Imams.

Dr. Ghodsi went on to state that some Muslims are critical of the sharp contrast in the U.S. between affluence and poverty. Some Muslim members have attributed this to secularism, and the disregard for God's rules, and a reliance on man's rules. Dr. Ghodsi stated that many Muslims have a distrust of the West, but yet consider it a dream or a destination to which they would like to send their children to study.

Dr. Ghodsi continued to say that the Palestinian / Israeli conflict must be resolved soon or it will only get worse and worse. He commented that terrorists and extremists play on people's loss of faith in their government and international law. He considered Palestinians, who have seen their country in turmoil for 50 years and have no water. They can't understand why no one sees them nor has any sympathy for them.

Dr. Ghodsi ran out of time in completing his entire .ppt presentation. Check the AWISA website for Dr. Ghodsi's actual .ppt.

### **Session B: Does your Student Need Counseling?**

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Presented by Brian Smith, Seattle Central Community College, Carrie McMullin, University of Washington, Sara Dale, University of Washington

Concerns related to transition and development are common to all students. International students face additional stress related to cultural and separation adjustment. Studies show international students to be at greater risk for experiencing psychological and adjustment distress, yet counseling centers are generally underutilized by international students. They seem to seek help from a broader range of contacts, rather than focusing on counseling centers, so international student advisors are in a good position to recognize distress signs.

Distress signs to note include:

1. Marked change in functioning: this might include missing appointments, missing classes, personality change, changed appearance, mood swings, increased risk-taking behavior, and intense/exclusive focus on one topic.
2. Reports of physical complaints (possibly as signs of psychological distress): often students perceive physical complaints to be more acceptable than emotional complaints, or they may experience emotions in very physical ways.
3. Social estrangement/interpersonal difficulties: social isolation
4. Apparent lack of balance: all attention on schoolwork or only on relationships

#### Suicide Warning Signs

There are many signs that, especially present in combination with each other, could warn of suicidal feelings. They include persistent, irritable, sad moods, feelings of hopelessness, the inability to experience pleasure, and a sense of isolation. The question of administrative reactions to suicide attempts came up; schools may deal with them differently, and there have been lawsuits that challenge this, but it is common for a school to send students home after suicide attempts, because this then becomes violent behavior and affects roommates and other students. It presents a difficult situation.

#### Referring Students to Counseling

Present the idea in the context that a counselor will help one as a student, will help one to understand the challenges of transition, and will help one strategize to achieve goals. The general rule of thumb for discerning when depression is temporary or when it becomes more serious is if it lasts 2 weeks or longer, and/or disrupts daily functioning. Even the opposite behavior—manic tendencies—may suggest a referral. We should use language, as advisors, to demonstrate that we care about students' well-being and success at school. This may help assuage feelings of embarrassment or indignant reactions at finding out they were being discussed (among advisors/professors). Advisors should build relationships with the campus counseling center and include counselors in student orientations.

## Session D: Are We on the Same Page? Let's put our AWISA brains together and develop some local Best Practices!

Presented by Maureen Chao, Shoreline Community College, and David Roseberry, Seattle Central Community College

The goal of this session was to discuss common practices regarding a variety of topics and come up with ideas for facilitating cooperation and communication between schools. Session participants were divided into five groups to address the following topics: The Student Experience (student life, cross-cultural experiences, non-academic life), English Proficiency (TOEFL requirements, "English shopping"), Concurrent Enrollment (vacation quarter students, "guest students"), University Transfer (major advising, transfer credits, application to specific programs), and Transfer Admissions (probation/dismissed students, problem students, multiple school applications).

Among many ideas, there were several concrete outcomes:

1. Ideally, all schools would accept an email in lieu of a printed letter as permission for a student to take part-time classes at another school.
2. The group decided to create a questionnaire to gather information from schools such as application requirements and deadlines, contact information for extra-curricular activities, the best person to contact when a SEVIS record needs to be released, etc. The information gathered with this questionnaire would be posted on the AWISA website, hopefully in a format that would be easy to update. Volunteers to decide what should be included on the questionnaire: Mabelle Allman and Ginger Villanueva.
3. The group also decided to create two common transfer forms that could be used by any school: a transfer-in form (providing the transfer-in school with pertinent information about the student's status, employment and vacation history at the previous school) and a transfer-out form (giving the transfer-out school permission to release the SEVIS record). Volunteers to create the forms: Jo Scozzafava and Christine Kofmehl

### Lunch:

Lunch was provided by Seattle University. *Thank you very much from AWISA!!*

### Advisor to Advisor:

Kelley Osmanbhoy, Regulatory Ombudsperson, led Advisor to Advisor.

- ✓ Kelley encouraged AWISAns to use NAFSA's IssueNet.
- ✓ Region I has been a leader in submitting issues and cases to IssueNet
- ✓ IssueNet can be used 2 ways: to report a case, or to report an issue
  - Reporting a case: case intervention, used in place of the old Nebraska Service Center (NSC) inquiry form
  - Reporting an issue: to be used for trends and general issues, not for specific cases, useful for NAFSA to know what is happening in the field.
    - Recent example: DHS survey many schools were required to submit
- ✓ Kelley stressed the important of including ALL information when submitting to IssueNet. **The case number is especially important.** Be sure to include student name, case number, and all related information. Be as detailed as possible; this avoids unnecessary work.
- ✓ Kelley addressed the SEVP/DHS validation exercise, for which 11-12 Region I schools were selected. This project was initiated by DHS. Some schools have requested additional time to comply and were sent brief responses indicating that unfortunately no additional time should be granted.
- ✓ DHS has stated that 10% of all schools were included in the exercise
- ✓ I-515A form:
  - I-515A form DOES need to be returned to SEVP. Submit with copy of I-20 and I-94 and submit to SEVP with filled out I-515A form
  - SEVP officers have been behind in processing the I-515A form
- ✓ AWISAns encouraged to contact Kelley with any immigration advising questions. Kelley Osmanbhoy: [waltersk@u.washington.edu](mailto:waltersk@u.washington.edu)

- ✓ Kelley discussed FAQs, and how seriously FAQs issued by SEVP should be taken. Are they as valid as regulations?
  - Yes. Chapter 2 of the Advisor's Manual talks about the hierarchy of government agencies and how the courts view documents such as FAQs,
  - Kelly summarized the issue as saying it would NOT be wise to ignore the FAQs. It is SEVP's interpretation of the regulations which they are responsible for governing. Therefore, in a court of law, their interpretation is likely to hold up more strongly than that of individual advisors. Kelley again urged advisors not to ignore the FAQs; this would be ignoring a document issued directly by SEVP.
- ✓ Next, AWISAns divided the group into 4 sections, which each discussed various immigration case studies.

### Group 1:

*"We have had students who take an incomplete in their graduating quarter for a degree requirement, and then request transfer to a university. It brought up the whole issue of students who do not graduate by the end date on the I-20 form, but who, according to school policy, may have more time to complete a class (in the case of an Incomplete, students have two quarters to complete a class, not including Summer, which means an incomplete in Spring does not have to be completed until the end of Fall). How long does the student have to finish the incomplete? Can we transfer the student out in status prior to completing the class, even though degree requirements have not technically been met? Would immigration policy trump school policy, and should we tell the student to complete the course within 60 days or fall out of status (60 days being the post-degree / transfer out period)? Is the student simply out of status?"*

This case depends largely on institutional policy, and depends on the individual student case. Different institutions would handle the situation differently. The question is also very broad and lends itself to a wide variety of interpretations.

### Group 2:

*"A student requests a vacation quarter for summer and is entered this way in SEVIS. At the end of the vacation, the student reports for the next quarter, but indicates that he will return home rather than register. Has the student violated status by not enrolling after a vacation, or would it be appropriate to give an authorized withdrawal?"*

- All participants agreed that it would be too harsh to terminate the SEVIS record for anything other than authorized early withdrawal. This is in large part due to the word "intends" in the regulations.

### Group 3:

*"A student transfers to our institution for Fall, but wants a vacation quarter from Fall term. The student has been enrolled for 9 months, but it feels strange to put the student on a vacation from Fall Quarter. The previous school has not yet released the record. Possible scenarios: the previous school gives the student a vacation quarter, and releases the SEVIS record to us at the end of Fall Quarter; the previous school releases the SEVIS record to us now and we put the student on a vacation quarter for Fall Term; or the previous school releases the SEVIS record now and we issue an I-20 form for Winter. Which makes the most sense and why?"*

- The vacation regulation at 8 CFR S 214.2(f)(5)(iii) states that a student is eligible for vacation if the student completed the equivalent of an academic year prior to the vacation and intends to register for the next term. (It does not say the registration must be at the same school). The Transfer FAQs at [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov) address the issue indirectly and suggest that a student might be eligible for a vacation in his/her first term at a transfer-in school provided the academic year requirement has been met (Question 2.4). However, school policy must also be taken into account. UW, for instance, requires full-time registration in a student's first term. There is also the challenge of schools with different academic schedules; ESL programs, for instance, run on very different schedules, with much shorter class terms, than universities. How does that affect a

student's transfer and vacation eligibility? The consensus reached was that the transfer-out school is the most appropriate school to determine a student's vacation eligibility. If eligible, the previous school should release the SEVIS record at the end of the vacation term, and the student can then begin at the new school and register full-time.

#### **Group 4:**

*Question: Can an initial F1 student report, then transfer without actually attending classes? Can a US institution require that a student attend classes for at least one term prior to the student requesting transfer?*

Reference: school reporting requirement: 8 C.F.R. 214.3 (g) (3) (iii)  
school transfer: 8 C.F.R. 214.2  
Memorandum for SEVIS Certified Academic Institutions (dated 10/17/03)  
SEVP FAQs

Overall group consensus: schools should allow students to transfer on arrival. Although SEVP FAQs are not regulations, it will not be wise to ignore the FAQs, which is coming from DHS.

Issues to consider:

- What if student (still in his home country) informs you that he got an F-1 visa with your school's name but wants to go to a different school? What would you say?

Tell him to go back to the US Embassy to apply for a new visa again. The school name on the visa and the school he plans to attend have to match (per State Department instruction). However, if the student does not tell us his plan, enters the US with the F-1 visa with your school's name (and with I-20), and then informs you that he'll transfer to a different school --- unfortunately that's okay.

Note: State Department and DHS are not on the same page on this. US Embassies do not seem to be aware of this newly arrival transfer issue/SEVP FAQs.

- Some schools started/are considering charging a fee for these newly arrived transfer students. One school already charges \$100 (goes to the international student office). Schools should consult a legal counsel on this and be approved.

- Reporting policy: Do you require a student to report to your school physically or take e-mail or phone call?

Reporting physically puts so much burden on the student (i.e. student in east coast needs to fly to Seattle to report, and fly back). However, just a phone call could become an issue, because the student may call from France and say "I want to transfer." It is probably a good idea that school gets documents from the student (via fax or email) to show that she entered the US with your I-20, I-94, and F-1 visa. One school said that they want to see the student signature on a transfer out document.

#### **Business Meeting:**

- Minutes from the Spring 2006 AWISA meeting were approved
- Leana said AWISA will be working to improve the AWISA website
- New AWISA members introduced themselves.
- 2006-07 AWISA dues due now. Dues are \$15 for an individual membership, or \$35 per office or program.
- Brad Huggins made the AWISA treasurer's report.
  - AWISA pens have been made; members were given "Please sign in blue ink. Return to Immigration Advisor" pens.
  - Current balance in AWISA account is \$2,498.
  - Paid: Best of AWISA, zip drive, Spring AWISA conference was paid for, snacks and beverages purchased
- Donations have been made on behalf of AWISA to the Region I NAFSA conference in Boise, Idaho, to be held on October 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>
- Position Openings:

- Edmonds: Full time Associate Director position opening
  - Wendy Stewart of Green River Community College announced a position opening for a Lead International Student Advisor
- AWISAns were reminded that Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup> was the last day for NAFSA Region I pre-conference registration. After October 6<sup>th</sup>, registration must be completed on-site.  
Region I conference website:  
[http://www.region1.nafsa.org/Regional2006-Boise/Index\\_Regional06.htm](http://www.region1.nafsa.org/Regional2006-Boise/Index_Regional06.htm)
- David Nevin to be the keynote speaker
- Sabrina Moss of Cascadia Community College said that the NAFSA regional conference is sure to be a highlight! She stated that the team has truly come together this year, and has focused on creating an original program. Breakfasts will not be provided this year, focus was moved to the lunches and dinners.
- Next AWISA meeting to be held Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at Lake Washington Technical College

*Thank you for coming!*