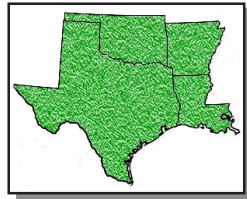


Report on Region III Conference

-- Michele Stelljes, Region III Chair



The year was 1954, the place was the University of Houston. A small band of international educators held their first meeting and elected Joe Neal as Chair of a newly formed Southwest Region of what would become NAFSA Region III. Happy 50th Anniversary Region III ! We celebrate 50 years of our accomplishments, our students and scholars and we celebrate what we have become as colleagues in such a wonderful profession.

We are an association of international education professionals and volunteers marked by a commitment to students, scholars, institutions, international diplomacy and to one another. NAFSA has grown to over 8000 members, and Region III now has over 700 members and another 700 professionals who rely on the region to offer information and training. Region III has produced dozens of national leaders and many more regional leaders in NAFSA because we are dedicated to serving and mentoring each other. Our members hold leadership positions in other higher education associations forging networks that develop our profession and expand our vision. As each NAFSA region evolves a regional personality develops. Region III has a reputation for excellence, vision and above all a personality of warm collegiality.

Here are just a few ways Region III is leading the field of international education - In 2003 Region III was one of three regions to pilot NAFSA's Academy for International Education. Mentors and participants attended their first workshops and sessions in New Orleans in areas of admissions, community programming, education abroad, English programs, student and scholar advising, and administration of international education. Region III is part of a national team that will shape this Academy curriculum to respond to the specific needs of the participants. This two year program includes the PDP programs offered in the Spring, the annual conference, the Regional conference and year round mentoring by members of Region III.

Region III built the template for Development partnership with service providers and sponsors by offering sponsor sessions in crisis management, health and welfare, and technology. Region III has forged genuine professional relationships with our sponsors to develop excellence in service to our campuses.

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Region III Celebrates 50 Years !! (continued)

This year we will launch a regional Advocacy Committee with the mission to shape state and national policy and regulation affecting international education. The Advocacy Committee will be identifying Region III members in each state who will become advocacy leaders and mentors with the objective to equip and coach every member to become advocates and agents of change in the interest of international education. Ambassador Maura Harty, the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, in a recent visit to Texas called upon all citizens to become diplomats and ambassadors to the world in our communities and to lobby our local, state and national leaders to bring positive change in our foreign policy. Adria Baker, who will chair the Region III Advocacy Committee, has already begun these efforts. She along with an ad hoc committee have begun a focused effort to see Texas implement a Policy for International Education. Be watching for emails from Adria on ways we can each take baby steps as advocates.

Our association has become strong through waves of change over 50 years of political upheaval, tragedy and regulatory reaction. From the wars of Viet Nam to Iraq, from threats to our students such as the Iranian Secret Police to Tiananmen Square, new doors opening from the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of Apartheid, and doors closing from the era of Fulbright Exchange to September 11 - the Department of Homeland Security and SEVIS - We have navigated these waves and emerged as **the** organization of International Education.

One thing remains constant – each one of us, **you and I, are NAFSA** – it is our commitment as member volunteers that make this association what it is and makes us what we are as professionals to further international education. We will continue to excel and grow as we step out and share our knowledge and our vision with one another and in our sphere of influence. We celebrate a good start at age 50 and look ahead to applying ourselves to the next 50 years together.

Get involved, become a mentor in your immediate network of colleagues, become a presenter at our conferences and become a volunteer in Corpus Christi, Texas this fall. Millie Slaughter is seeking out conference volunteers to make our 50th anniversary conference one to remember. Contact Millie at 361-593-3317 millie@tamuk.edu and take that next step as a member.

Happy anniversary. See you in Baltimore in May and in Corpus Christi October 30 to November 2, 2004.

You Call The Shots !

Workshops

-- Brenda Robati, Past Chair

In the planning of workshop and PDP offerings at past conferences, the NAFSA team members have often had to focus on the financial feasibility of workshop and PDP offerings at our regional conferences. If the workshop didn't appeal to the majority of our members, it would not draw enough registrants and could result in a financial loss to the Region.

At the New Orleans conference this last year, the team realized that although fiscal responsibility is certainly one of our primary charges as Region III team members, we also have the responsibility to meet the training needs of all of our members even if their interest sections may be small. Therefore, along with the more popular ones, PDPs and workshops that had not been offered in the region for many years were made available at the New Orleans conference. We hope to do the same this year at the Corpus Christi conference. I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!

If you would like to see a Foundations of International Educators Workshop or a Professional Practice Workshop offered at the Corpus Christi conference please send your suggestions in an email to bnr@thelanguagecompany.com. If you are not too familiar with what is available, please visit the NAFSA website at www.nafsa.org under the heading of "training", where you will find a thorough description of all offerings.

If you would like to see an independently designed workshop offered, please go <www.nafsa3.org> and download the Workshop Proposal Form and submit it to me at: bnr@thelanguagecompany.com. Although offerings are limited by space and time, we hope to further meet the needs of our Region III members by providing these additional training opportunities. This is your chance to CALL THE SHOTS!

2 YEAR

Two-Year Institution Report -- Reginald Cooper, Two-Year Institution Representative

Hello colleagues and fellow NAFSAns, Preparations are well under way for the Region III conference to be held in Corpus Christi, Texas. As a group, two-year institutions were under represented with regard to session presentations at the New Orleans conference last year. This year, the conference can be even better if we will showcase some of the things that are happening on the two-year campuses. If you have done something different or new and have a desire to be a presenter, please complete a proposal to present. The more active we become as a group, the more recognition we will receive and the more respect we will earn. A proposal form can be obtained from the Region III web site, or send an e-mail to me and I will send one to you. My e-mail address is rcooper@sautech.edu.

Work is continuing on the regional two-year institution directory. I hope to have it ready by the time we meet at the Regional Conference. I believe it will be a good resource for networking.

I hope to see you at the Regional Conference because this is the best way for us to stay current so our students will have access to a well-informed resource and ally on campus. This one-stop resource for current information, best practices and collegial resources is the best buy on the market. Even if the campus attracts only a small number of international students, that one, two or ten students need to have a well-informed resource and ally on campus.

Please contact me at any time to share your ideas, concerns or if you need to talk with a colleague. I am looking forward to the two-year institution participation in the next Region III conference and I hope you are too.

ADSEC Report --- Julie Sinclair

ADSEC

I'm Julie Sinclair, Director of International Admissions at Oklahoma City University. I will be your ADSEC representative for 2004-2005. It is a tremendous pleasure to have this opportunity, and I look forward to working with all of you during this time.

First of all, I would like to make sure you are all aware of a new web-based ADSEC newsletter. If you indicated ADSEC as you as your "Section/PEG", you should already have received information about the first addition. If not, and you would like to receive it, just go to the following web site: www.adsec.nafsa.org/newsletter You should receive an e-mail message every few months letting you know the next edition of the newsletter is available.

Sandy Gault, 2004 National ADSEC Chair, sent the following message in the initial ADSEC news announcement from March 5, 2004. "Our web-based newsletter will contain timely and useful information for professionals in international admissions. We hope you will contribute ideas for news articles, best practice articles, hot topics, serial items, etc., and volunteer to be one of our credential evaluation participants. Please feel free to share your ideas with any member of the national team or with Alan Margolis, our editor. We believe this is a healthy idea-gathering mechanism that will allow us to communicate among team members and produce the best resource possible. Please help us make it meaningful and worthy of our effort by sharing your ideas and suggestions for enhancements."

Second, I want to remind everyone that we have an early bird deadline for conference session proposals for this year's Region III conference in Corpus Christi. Those who submit session proposals by May 7th will receive a 10% discount on conference registration. The final deadline for session proposals is June 18th. Please submit all proposals electronically by going to the Region III web site at www.nafsa3.org/ProgramSessions2004.

As far as some ideas for ADSEC sessions, it would be good to hear how different institutions are dealing with declining international enrollment: how has it affected your job description/structure of your international offices; what new strategies have you considered in

planning recruitment. Of course, the Bologna process and its implications for admissions offices continues to be a very important topic. I look forward to receiving your proposals. Please let me know if I can assist you in any way.

ATESL Report --- Dave Burns

ATESL

Greetings from your new ATESL representative!! I have started this spring as your new ATESL representative. My name is Dave Burns and I am the International Student Counselor for the Language and Culture Center, or LCC as we and our students usually refer to it. We are the intensive English program at the University of Houston.

Jane Hughey, our previous representative, has noted before that although ATESL is one of the smaller groups within NAFSA, we are an important group. Often we are the ones who are the first contact incoming international students have with Americans and the U.S. educational system. We have an important role to play in NAFSA and I would like to continue Jane's efforts to increase our membership and participation in NAFSA.

I would also like for us to communicate more frequently among ourselves. To that end, I would appreciate it if you would send me your names and contact information, especially your e-mail addresses. As I understand it, the only way I can reach all of you other than through this Newsletter is to forward a message to NAFSA's central office and they will then forward it to you. I believe it would be easier if we could build our own mailing list and I could contact you directly. If you are willing to let me share the list with the other members of our section, it would be easier for you to contact your fellow ATESL members, too, either as a group or individually.

I know I don't have to tell anyone that these are challenging times for those involved in teaching English to internationals. I hope we can share our ideas, strategies, and any other information that will help us all.

Let me end by reminding you that an excellent opportunity for us to meet and learn and share information is at our Region III conference. The conference this year is in Corpus Christi. I have seen the hotel and it is an excellent meeting place. Millie Slaughter and the local arrangements committee are planning a great conference for us. Please go to the Region III web site at www.nafsa3.org for more

[ATESL Continued....] information and a Call for Program Sessions form. I am hoping that many of you will choose to share your knowledge and experiences with us through presentations. We want to have sessions in all areas of ATESL, from administration to instruction to student counseling. The Early Bird deadline for proposals is May 7 and the Final Deadline is June 18 so start thinking about your proposal and be an Early Bird!

I know that many of our teachers are involved in TESOL rather than NAFSA, so please share this information with your teaching colleagues and encourage them to participate at the NAFSA conference, too. I welcome your suggestions and comments and anything you think we should pass on to our colleagues.

CAFSS Report -- *Jalal Daneshfar*



Greetings from your CAFSS Representative. I hope all is well at your corner of the Region and on your particular campus!! As I write this note, I am thinking of two important conferences, the Nafsa National in Baltimore in May and our Regional Conference in Corpus Christi in October. Please make every effort to attend both of these events where you can be updated about the regulations, meet Government Officials, learn about Advocacy issues, be involved in Nafsa's Structural changes, attend uplifting Sessions, and meet old friends and have fun!

I also wish that you would consider presenting a Session of importance to you at the Regional Conference. Your ideas on advocacy issues and how we operate are important to us. Please keep in touch with your Regional team and contact us with any questions or concerns.

SECUSSA Report -- *Sue Mennicke*



Well, Spring is here again! Coming from Minnesota (where Spring always meant either/both melting sloppy slush or a last ditch blizzard in March), I have come to love this beautiful, cool time of year in central Texas. I hope you all are able to enjoy these days before the heat of Summer sets in all over Region III.

[SECUSSA Continued....] Things are moving along for SECUSSA, both at the regional and national level. As NAFSA examines its current structure, and invites members to participate in strengthening and re-envisioning the organization, we have before us a unique opportunity to participate in creating a new entity that serves our needs and professional goals. This is an exciting time for all of us involved in international education.

We SECUSSAns have been faced with challenges over the last several months as well. I hope that all of you have been able to use the resources available through NAFSA and through colleagues in the field to help make your jobs more manageable. As we all know, it is nearly impossible to function in isolation as an education abroad professional. Thankfully, there is a wealth of information and wisdom in the field. If you are having trouble accessing these resources, and do not know where to get started, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be happy to help you find what you are looking for.

Of course, many others would be happy to help you as well. I hope that we'll all be able to gather at the next regional conference in Corpus Christi to share ideas, learn from each other, and renew acquaintances. I would also be delighted to receive session proposals from anyone interested in presenting on a topic of interest to them. If you need help crafting an idea for a proposal, please contact me. Several people have been in touch with interesting and innovative proposals, and I'm hoping to build on the great work we all did at the New Orleans conference. If you would like more information about the conference and the proposal process, please visit www.nafsa3.org. The deadline for proposal submissions is June 18, but meeting the early bird deadline of May 7 entitles you to take 10% off your registration fee!

In addition to the stimulating sessions and conversations that will take place at the conference, the venue for the Corpus Christi conference is absolutely beautiful! The hotel and conference facility will provide an excellent space for us to do our work. When we're ready to play, right outside the hotel door is the bay shore and the opportunity to go for a stroll, people-watch, and relax. Hope to see you there for a rejuvenating time together!

Louisiana State Report -- Alea Morelock Cot, Louisiana State Representative



The Louisiana state meeting was held on the campus of the University of New Orleans on March 12, 2004, with fifty members in attendance. Region III Chair-Elect, Dan Erickson of Louisiana Tech, promoted the upcoming Region III conference in Corpus Christi and briefed members on the reorganization of NAFSA central.

Janice Thomas, University of New Orleans, provided an update on the progress of the Louisiana Board of Regents' Advisory Committee for International Education.

In 2003 the Committee recommended five items to the Regents: 1) Host an international education symposium, 2) sponsor a grant competition, 3) undertake a more comprehensive survey of international activities on campuses, 4) require an international education component in the general education requirements, and 5) require an international component in all honors curriculum. The Board was receptive to all suggestions, although the grants proposal was not funded. However, they did institute a requirement for all public post-secondary institutions, beginning with Fall 2004, that an international education component be included in the general education requirements. The Board further recommended both public and private institutions include an international education component in all honors curriculum.

Planning for a more comprehensive survey of all international activities on campuses is slated for the fall semester. Moreover, planning for the 2nd symposium on International Education as Economic Development is well underway. This symposium will be held on May 7th in New Orleans and will bring together key stakeholders in education, business, government, and the community for a focused look at practices in other states in order to shape policies that Louisiana can adopt to promote international education and economic development.

Cynthia Anthony, Louisiana Department of Motor Vehicles, and Cheryl Champagne, Social Security Administration, graciously agreed to present the latest regulatory updates from their respective offices and answer questions from members about rules and procedures relative to student access. Of course, regulatory shock brought on by SEVIS continues to provoke many questions. David Ware shared an excellent Power Point presentation with us that addressed all the SEVIS questions we had...but were often afraid to know the answers to! David's excellent Power Point is now on our website as a great reference tool. Thank you David!

Danilo Levi, Southeastern Louisiana University, shared his school's formula for success in funding study abroad scholarships through student government sponsorship. Walter Wiles, Southern University, Karen Nichols, University of New Orleans, Dan Erickson, Louisiana Tech, and Marilyn Gonzalez, Nicholls State, participated in a lively and enlightening panel discussion regarding different Louisiana system policies relative to non-resident fee waivers. We discovered some interesting variations among the four public systems in our state.

Thanks to facilitation by Leroy Broussard, University of Louisiana-Lafayette, A. Gail Bier and Bill Lennon, Tulane University, and Tina Turnbull and Elizabeth Anderson, University of New Orleans, we engaged in hot topics discussions covering credentials evaluation, study abroad, cultural and educational programming, and the state of flux of IEPs today.

Finally, LaNAFSA members generously agreed to help sponsor the Board of Regents' symposium on May 7th. There is a lot of energy in Louisiana and LaNAFSA members are working hard to promote initiatives that further access to all facets of international education and lend support to the those offices and individuals in the frontline. Our members are to be congratulated for their energy, enthusiasm, and dedication.

Oklahoma State Report -- *Tamara Newell, Oklahoma State Representative*



This year's state NAFSA meeting was held February 12th in Shawnee, OK on the campus of Oklahoma Baptist University. Sixty-five participants enjoyed a day packed with information on current issues and future plans.

I would like to extend an extra special thanks to those who volunteered their time and considerable energy to make the day a success: Tom Karman of OBU served as registrar, Tim Huff of OSU set up the electronic registration, Regina Henry of OSU and Julie Sinclair of OCU - past state representative and current ADSEC rep - helped coordinate the event. Both The Language Company and MACORI INC. made a generous donation toward the day's activities.

Brenda Robati, Past Chair of Region III, welcomed the participants and provided updates on the upcoming conferences, NAFSA Academy and other training opportunities along with a charge to get involved in advocacy at the local, state and national levels.

Concurrent morning sessions included a Study Abroad Round Table, chaired by Gerry Auel of OSU and Tax Information session followed by an Immigration Q&A. The tax session focused on both the withholding requirements of our institutions led by Linda Dunbar of OSU and the reporting requirements for our international students led by Linda Stephens, VITA volunteer from OCU. Both presentations offered much needed information and brought in some of our human resources personnel from campuses across the state. Panelists for the immigration Q&A included Tommie Nicholas from the Oklahoma City office of Citizenship and Immigration Service; Regina Henry, currently serving NAFSA in several areas; Jalal Daneshfar, Region III CAFFS representative; Julie Sinclair, current ADSEC representative; and Danny Massey from the OKC Social Security Office. Shirley Adams, from the Shawnee Social Security Office also attended the morning session. After an overview presented by Tommie Nicholas of current CIS and ICE practices the panel fielded questions from the audience. Although we could have gone on all afternoon, hunger won out and we all enjoyed a nice lunch together.

The afternoon Admissions Workshop was led by Jean Ringer of Global Credential Evaluators in College Station, TX. The mini-workshop concentrated on credential evaluations from around the world and was attended by both new and experienced advisors. Jean's expertise offered an invaluable wealth of information including necessary reference materials.

Again, I would like to thank all of those who assisted in the day's activities and all of those who participated from across the state. Although there was no singing and dancing as with past state meetings it was a great success.

**Submit a Conference Session Proposal for the
2004 Region III Conference
in Corpus Christi, Texas
October 30 - November 2.**

**Conference Proposal forms can be found at:
www.nafsa3.org**

Texas State Report -- Kristalina Karabunarlieva , South Texas State Representative



Everything is big in Texas, and so was the Texas State Meeting in Houston! This time y'all made history, guys: it had the biggest ever turnout in the history of the Texas State Meetings! Yeeehaw!

The meeting attracted so many people that the initial site had to be changed to a bigger one in order to accommodate the 230 attendees. The change of venues three weeks prior to the event put enormous pressure on the hosting institution, but the University of Houston Hilton Conference Center turned out to be the right place for the meeting. From its very beginning the meeting was referred to as a "conference" due to the record number of participants, ambitious agenda, variety of sessions, and elegant setting. The generous support of Sandra Rodriguez from SDR Educational Consultants, the meeting's Diamond sponsor, as well as Macori Inc., SpanTran Educational Services, and the University of Houston helped handle the increased costs.

The nine sessions offered on that day were covered by a record number of presenters—23—who brought knowledge, professional insight, and set new standards. A lot of information and new initiatives were shared during the sit-down luncheon: the creation of the regional Advocacy Committee, a local mentoring program, NAFSA diversity advising, and National NAFSA policy updates, among others. The fact that the meeting attracted a number of non-traditional participants, such as faculty members, domestic advisors, human resource staff, lawyers, and other non-NAFSA members attested the increased interest of the public in all the areas handled by international educators.

This year's meeting was the apogee of the combined efforts of the Local Arrangement Committee, State Representatives and Houston Forum Leadership. The on-site local team—Bridget Canty and every single member of her remarkable staff from the UH Office of International Admissions—did a stunning job given the limited time for preparation, sparse funds, and numerous accommodation adjustments due to the increasing number of participants. Maggie Pinson played a very instrumental role in providing the government officials, Rose Mary Valencia bestowed guidance and wisdom from her great experience, and Michele Stelljes offered her tremendous enthusiasm and support. Many thanks to Adria Baker and all Rice ISSO team for the words of appreciation before and after the event: it felt so good... And finally, thanks to my colleague Kristine Combs and her wonderful staff for going through this together and making it a real success.

In conclusion, I expect to see you all at the Anniversary Region III conference in Corpus Christi: we promise great sessions, a fabulous location, and a playful Halloween spirit!

If you can offer any help, please contact Millie Slaughter of Texas A&M-Kingsville who is in charge of the local arrangement team. Millie's e-mail is millie@tamuk.edu and she will need all the support we, Texas NAFSA's, can offer.

Kristalina K., South Texas Representative

Advocacy Corner: Advocacy Efforts in Region III

-- *Adria Baker, Texas State Whip*



One of the key NAFSA priorities for Public Policy this year is **advocacy**, which includes seeking a US commitment for an international education policy (see specifics: <http://www.nafsa.org/content/publicpolicy/NAFSAontheIssues/priorities04/htm>).

Webster's definition of advocacy is "to plead the cause, or in favor, of another". Region III has chosen to move forward and lead advocacy efforts, which are inspired by NAFSA. I am grateful for the enthusiastic leadership of our Region III Chair, Michele Stelljes, who is pushing forward with these efforts. Please "stay tuned" as you will see new developments in the very near future. Below is a summary of things happening in our Region:

- An Advocacy Committee for Region III was approved by the team members at their training in February, 2004.
- Fund-raising possibilities are being discussed, which we hope to have in action for the Region III conference in Corpus Christi. (The committee was approved with no allocated funding.)
- State Reps, the Chair, and other NAFSAs' input are part of the developing stage of the newly-formed committee.
- Four NAFSA Region III members attended NAFSA's Advocacy Day in Washington D.C. in March. They visited their Senators and Representatives "on the Hill" to discuss the importance of international education.
- The Ad-hoc Committee for an International Education policy in Texas began their advocacy efforts by meeting with Texas legislators in Houston and Austin to discuss the need to encourage international education, in hopes of gaining a formal policy in the State of Texas.
- We are encouraging other states and Regions in the US to seek their own state-level international education policy.
- Texas led in all of the most recent NAFSA-initiated letter writing campaigns (with the exception of New York having only one letter more than Texas in one campaign).
- "Advocacy Tips" will be sent to you on a regular basis via email, to give you ideas as to what you can do from your home or in your institution to support international education.

Please let me know if you have ideas on what you would like to see this committee accomplish for Region III. I am grateful to have the opportunity to expand my role as Texas Whip, to the Chair of the Advocacy Committee. I will do my best to serve as a resource for you, as I am also learning as well. I welcome your suggestions, and am enthusiastic to hear how we can help you "plead in favor" of international education. Please feel free to call me to discuss your ideas at: 713-348-6095.

Respectfully,
Adria Baker, Chair, Region III Advocacy Committee
Texas State Whip

Advocacy, continued

Dia de Los Muertos Dash at the Region III Conference in Corpus Christi

Last year, Halloween in New Orleans. This year, Halloween in Corpus Christi. Could ghosts, goblins, and skeletons be running amok at NAFSA Region III conferences? They just might!

Beyond Halloween, other reasons to celebrate will abound at next fall's Region III conference in Corpus Christi, Texas. One is our region's 50th anniversary. Can you channel 1954? Ladies, break out your poodle skirt, bobby socks, and saddle shoes. Men, dust off your lettermen's jacket, penny loafers, and Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and Buddy Holly recordings. They may be the perfect items to wear to the Silent Auction. Or to auction off!

Each year, our region and regional conference continue to grow. New professionals in our field along with new institutions and organizations bring fresh ideas and innovative ways to strengthen and develop International Education. Our region supports newcomers to our regional conference through allocation of Travel and First Time Attendee Grants. And these grants are raised through Silent Auction proceeds. So be sure to bring items to auction off in support of our region and our profession.

Our 2004 Region III conference will fall during Dia de Los Muertos as well. With this in mind, Region III will be sponsoring a fun run/walk to raise money for a local Corpus Christi charity and for Region III advocacy. The run, titled Dia de los Muertos Dash, will be a 5k (3.1 mile) run/walk along the beautiful Corpus Christi seawall and perhaps through one of Corpus Christi's historic downtown neighborhoods. No prizes will be given for times although an award for best costume will. Really. We're not kidding.

Why a fundraiser for advocacy? What is advocacy? Advocacy is NAFSA's grassroots work with your political representatives, and it is the most effective way to advance International Education priorities within local, state and national political circles and bodies. It is through the work of our national NAFSA grassroots advocacy program that your school and ours are not currently collecting (or paying) the SEVIS fee proposed by the U.S. Federal government.

For International Education advocacy to be vibrant, effective and relevant, it should be advanced at local and state governmental levels as well. For this reason, proceeds from the Dia de los Muertos Dash will directly support advocacy efforts at the NAFSA Region III level. We hope you will come out and support the run/walk. More information on the Dia de los Muertos Dash will be available in the coming months.

Chao! --- Steve Bell, Region III Development Coordinator & John Singleton, Dia de Los Muertos Dash Coordinator



During talks in Austin with several legislators in April, a copy of the proposed International Education Policy for Texas was presented to Texas Senator Lucio, Chair of the Senate Committee on International Relations and Trade. Pictured are: Michelle Pickard, Adria Baker, Laura Garcia (Staffer for Senator Lucio), Bridget Canty, and Dave Burns.

Immigration Update



-- Laura Hammons & Jim Nesmith CIPP-RRs

Howdy Region III! We are very pleased to be serving as your new CIPP-RR's, Laura on F and J student issues and Jim on employment based issues. We have quickly found that we follow in the footsteps of two very consummate professionals, Deane Willis and Michele Stelljes, who have set a standard that will be difficult to match. We want to acknowledge and thank both Deane and Michele for their excellent service to Region III in the role of CIPP-RRs in addition to their many other contributions. Through their remarkable and selfless efforts, our transition into these roles has been very pleasant, and we will do our best to continue their tradition of excellence.

Let us introduce ourselves. I, Laura, currently serve as a Senior International Student Advisor at Texas A&M University, and, with our population of over 3,800 international students, I have the opportunity to address a wide variety of immigration issues on a regular basis. I look forward to utilizing my experience to assist you in the future.

I, Jim, am the International Faculty Counselor at Texas Tech University. I have been involved in Immigration, on both sides of the desk, for more years than I care to admit. It's a different creature than what I was first introduced to and there are more complications, frustrations and strange things happening now than ever before. It's a challenge for everyone, whether you are brand new to the field or an old hand, and if anyone can benefit from some of these gray hairs on my head, I am delighted.

Since September 11, 2001, our work as advisors/counselors has changed dramatically, and since taking up our roles as CIPP-RR's in January 2004, we realize more than ever, what a challenge it is to keep abreast of the daily changes we face in the regulatory arena, in addition to our other job duties. With that challenge in mind, our charge is to assist you, and we hope to do that by providing up-to-date information about changes in regulatory issues, potential problems you may face and changes being implemented at the Texas Service Center (TSC), and resources that may assist you in your work. Our role is also to serve as a liaison, assisting you to communicate cases which have run into complicated problems directly to the Texas Service Center and providing advice on how to solve regulatory uncertainties you may be addressing.

In order to be more familiar with the types and magnitude of problems being faced by Region III members, we do encourage you to contact us. Even problems you have already addressed may provide useful information for other members. Feel free to contact us at cipp@tamu.edu (for Laura) and cipp@ttu.edu (for Jim).

In March and April 2004, we posted some changes you should be aware of to the Region III webpage. In addition, the TSC has provided NAFSA with a new inquiry form that is to be used for all inquiries. This has also been posted to the Region III webpage. If you have not taken a look at this information, we encourage you to do so. Here are a few other items you may find useful:

Texas Service Center News:

Change in NAFSA liaison: As many of you know by now, Madeline Burgess is no longer serving as the TSC liaison. Although she will still be at the TSC, her efforts on behalf of NAFSA will be truly missed. TSC has continued to provide liaison service; however, the fax number for inquiries changed in February. **The new fax number is 214-962-1450.**

Change of Status Applications: We have received e-mails from several members noting that they have encountered problems with change of status applications (generally from J status or to J status) where the TSC was returning the application prior to receipt issuance. With the returned application, TSC was requesting that the application be resubmitted with the original IAP-66 and/or original I-94 card. After making the TSC aware of the problem, we have been assured that this is not a change at the TSC and original I-94 cards are not required (original DS-2019s are required only for a change of status to J). If you have received any of these returned applications, you should now be able to resubmit them.

Immigration Update, continued.

Optional Practical Training: Requests for Evidence (RFEs) have been received by several institutions for OPT applications where TSC was not clear about the date of graduation/completion. It does not seem sufficient to merely shorten the program to the student's date of graduation, rather you should note in the OPT recommendation remarks the specific graduation date. The following is a good example of what to put in the field labeled *How/Why is the Work Relative to Course Work?*: "Post-completion OPT in [student's major] based on graduation on [date]".

Change of Status from F-1 during OPT: We continue to see problems with change of status for F-1 students who are in their period of OPT, trying to change to F-2. A recent RFE from TSC noted that the student should "submit copies of your previous I-20 forms showing DSO signatures that notes that they knew that you were never employed during your OPT". It may be wise to counsel students who are considering changing to F-2 following OPT, and are unsure of their ability to secure employment, to change directly to F-2 rather than pursue OPT. For those students who choose to pursue OPT, it is a very good idea for them to keep records of actively seeking employment and notify the DSO if they are unable to find employment. As a note, in the most recent SEVIS Conference Calls (NGLU 2004-c: March 10 and 31, April 14, 2004), this issue was brought up and CIS noted that this should not be occurring and agreed to follow up on the issue with TSC.

SEVIS News: On another note, the newest release of SEVIS 4.10 includes several new items of which you should be familiar. For more information on this release visit: <http://www.nafsa.org/sevp>. Some helpful changes include the ability to cancel OPT prior to adjudication and cancel CPT prior to the start date, reducing the number of issues for which we must contact the SEVIS Help Desk for data fixes. Please note that, for any OPT application that has already been sent to the Service Center, in addition to canceling the request in SEVIS, a faxed withdrawal request should also be sent to the TSC. There has also been significant functionality change for changes in educational level.

Fee Changes: On April 15, 2004, the final rule implementing fee hikes for many USCIS immigration benefit applications and petitions was published in the Federal Register. The new fees become effective April 30, 2004. For information on the new fees visit <http://uscis.gov/graphics/publicaffairs/newsrels/USCISFeeStructure.pdf>

For employment based cases, the TSC continues to send out RFE's for many if not most I-140's for Extraordinary Ability aliens and some RFE's are going out for Outstanding Researchers/ Professors as well. The threshold of evidence to meet the burden of establishing extraordinary ability seems to continue escalating and we are aware of very few approvals in this category. The RFE's for Outstanding Researchers/Professors ask for some strange things, things we feel Congress never considered a necessary component to establishing standing as outstanding. Thus far, the TSC has not demonstrated much flexibility or even willingness to discuss these issues.

There are a couple of positive signs out there in Immigration land. The Dallas District Office has embarked on a pilot project to adjudicate I-485's within 90 days of receipt, as long as fingerprint and other clearances do not delay the process. The California Service Center has announced a similar project, adjudicating concurrently filed I-140's and I-485's within 90 days. And finally, I-90's filed at the Los Angeles Application Support Centers will result in immediate production of an I-551. They will have a magic button which connects to the production facility and, when all of the biometric information requirements have been met, the button is pushed and, voila, a card is produced many miles away and put in the mail.

It's easy to be facetious about the attempts of CIS to improve things but it does appear that sincere efforts are being made to do so and we truly hope for their success and adoption by other Immigration offices.

As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, there have been a number of new issues arise: the new case status portfolio option which allows customers to build a portfolio of up to 100 receipt numbers (<https://egov.immigration.gov/cris/jsps/index.jsp>), a new USCIS and Immigration Policy and Procedure Memoranda on the correction of I-94 errors issued by USCIS (<http://uscis.gov/graphics/lawsregs/handbook/I94Errors033004.pdf>), and many others. As always, the whirlwind of changes are more than can be noted here. We encourage you to stay up-to-date by visiting the USCIS and NAFA web pages and utilizing the many other resources which are available to you.

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