

# Interchange

## In this issue:

*Letter from Past Chair  
Letter from Chair  
p. 1*

---

*Regional Conference  
Advocacy Day Report  
p. 2-3*

---

*Development Report  
TechSiG Report  
Admissions Section  
Report  
p. 4-5*

---

*International Student &  
Scholar Advising,  
Campus & Community  
Liaison, Education  
Abroad, and Two-Year  
Institution Reports  
p. 6-7*

---

*State Reports  
p. 8-9*

---

*Immigration Report  
p. 10-11*

## Letter from Past Chair, Adria Baker

As we look into 2008, the future is so bright for NAFSA Region III members. We have a great network among our members, and the Region III leadership team serves as an excellent resource for helping us meet the dynamic needs of our work, our institutions, and other related entities of responsibility, i.e., government agencies, partners, etc. (*for names and contact information on team members, visit: <http://www.nafsa3.org/?module=about/team&cat=about>*) Be sure to call on team members for guidance, when the need arises for you, as it is an privilege to do our best to respond to your requests.

As Past Chair, I have three roles for the region: 1) serving as a Region III team member, 2) providing training for regional team leadership members, 3) serving on the national committee, Regional Affairs Committee (RAC), which serves as a liaison body between the NAFSA regional and NAFSA national levels. The purpose of RAC is to "provide the regions with an avenue to communicate trends, issues, concerns, and needs to the national organization, as well as providing the national organization with a way to communicate with the regions" (quoted from RAC conference call on 2/18/2008).

Please let me know of issues and concerns you have that should be discussed at the national level. It is a true honor to be a part of Region III, and I thank you all for the support you gave me last year as Region III Chair. We are indebted to Dr. Robert Crosier for the expertise and commitment he brings to us, as well as the long hours and hard work he is dedicating to making this the best year ever for NAFSA Region III!

## Letter from Chair, Bob Crosier

Spring-time greetings to Region III. It was great to see so many NAFSAs at the Texas State Meeting, and I hope that many more will be able to attend the upcoming meetings in Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. These are challenging days in international education, and the sharing and training provided in the meetings, and the everyday support provided through NAFSA's programs are essential in our ability to support our students, scholars and institutions.

The NAFSA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. (May 25-30) is approaching very quickly. This is a fantastic opportunity for professional development and training, advocacy, and meeting with colleagues from around the world. I hope that you will be able to attend and that you will be present at the Region III Update on May 29 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Our Region III Conference is scheduled for Merida, Yucatan, Mexico at the beautiful Hotel Fiesta Americana, November 3-6. Please note that our conference dates include Election Day 2008. Plan to vote early and join us in Mexico to watch the election returns. Also, in order to facilitate your return to the United States, please check your passport. Although it should only take 4 to 6 weeks to get a passport, now is the time to be checking travel documents for the fall. In addition, this is the time to be thinking about presentations that you want to give at the Merida conference. Session proposal materials will be available in less than a month from now, April 10. Merida will be a fantastic setting for our conference providing a unique cross-cultural experience, but ultimately our conferences are always what we make of them. NAFSA (and Region III) is an organization of volunteers, and it must have your ideas, experience and enthusiasm to make international education work.

I urge you to actively participate in NAFSA events and to volunteer to assist with NAFSA programs. Please contact me or any of the Region III Team <http://www.nafsa3.org/?module=about/team&cat=about>.

## Regional Conference

-- *John Singleton & Lizbeth Branch,  
Local Arrangements Co-Chairs*

Plans are well underway for the NAFSA Region III Conference in Merida, Mexico on the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. In February of this year members of Mexico's international association, AMPEI, met in Merida as well to formalize their plans to hold their national conference at the same time. As a result, Region III will be partnering with AMPEI in many facets of this year's conference, which promises to be one of the best ever.

The Region III team met in Fort Worth one week following the AMPEI meeting to begin coordination of the conference, and as has been promised for some time, the 2008 conference will be unique in many ways, including joint sessions in Spanish and English, a major co-organizational offsite event and lots of opportunities to professionally mix and share educational ideas and opportunities. At least one "poster event" is being considered strictly for International Educational Exchange" between Universities in the United States and Mexico, so come prepared for serious dialogue with well-respected Mexican and Latin American institutions.

Merida is known in Mexico as "la ciudad blanca," and you will see this infused in its architecture, the clothing and the smiles on the faces of its citizens. Merida is one of the regions largest producers of Guayaberas, and is internationally known for its special spin on latin cuisine. Our hotel, the Fiesta Americana, is 30 minutes from the coastal town of Progreso, a well-traveled stop on the Mayan Riviera, and the region is rich with pre-Colombian and colonial archaeology, architecture, and cultural heritage.

It isn't often that we get the chance to meet outside our borders and we are making sure you have some opportunities to see the city and the region. I hope you're making your plans and book early....NAFSA room rates for this 4 star hotel are \$129.00. See you in Mexico lindo! If you have any questions, please contact me at [J.Singleton@tcu.edu](mailto:J.Singleton@tcu.edu).

## Advocacy Day Report

-- *Maggie Pinson, International Manager  
University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB)*

Thanks to generous travel grants made possible by NAFSA Region III, Samantha Spence, Director, ESOL/International Student Services, North Lake College, Irving, Texas, who is the Region III North Texas State Representative, and Maggie Pinson, Manager, Office of Diversity and International Affairs, The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, former South Texas State Representative, were able to participate in NAFSA Advocacy Day, March 11-12, 2008 in Washington D.C. Courtney Goike, Director of Student Services at Academic Programs International (API) in San Marcos, Texas was the third Texan who participated with API's support. Since this was a new experience, and one I found extremely valuable, I hope to encourage future participation by sharing our experience.

*(continued on next page)*

Aside from Washington D.C. being a fantastic place to visit (did you know that when standing on the Mall beside the Washington National Monument you can see the Capitol Building in one direction and the Reflecting Pool and Lincoln Memorial in the other?) NAFSA Headquarters did an impressive job of providing newcomer training, prepping us on the three international education issues to be targeted during our visits to Capitol Hill, setting up individualized appointments with the appropriate Legislative Correspondents or Legislative Directors, and in some cases the Senators and Representatives themselves, and debriefing our experience after the trip to the Hill.

As newcomers, we learned how to establish ourselves as individual constituents representing our professional association, NAFSA, rather than our employing institutions or agencies, that as constituents we have the right to express our concerns to our legislators or their representatives without feeling intimidated, and that no matter how young they may appear, legislative aids have power and may advance to more senior positions, and therefore relationships with them should be cultivated.

The three targeted advocacy issues were to:

1. Congratulate the House for passing H.R. 1669, the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Act, and urge Congress to fully fund this initiative
2. Restore America's competitiveness for international students and scholars by urging all House members to co-sponsor a companion bill to S.2653, the ACTION Act of 2008 (containing similar provisions to the SKILL Bill that came before Congress during 2007,) when introduced
3. Urge Congress to preserve higher education's exemption from the H-1B cap to maintain America's innovation and competitive advantage in the world

NAFSA Headquarters arranged for the Texas delegation to meet together with the Legislative Correspondents for Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Senator John Cornyn. On the House of Representatives side, Courtney was able to meet with the Legislative Assistant of Austin's Rep. Lloyd Doggett, of Austin, Samantha met with Rep. Pete Sessions, of Irving, and I met with Rep. Ron Paul, of Galveston and his Legislative Director. NAFSA provided us with a professional briefing folder containing position papers on the targeted issues, information on the financial impact of international students in the State of Texas, and other reference materials, as well as a briefing sheet providing tips for approaching and recognizing each Congressional representative. Armed with all of this information and resource materials we were able to speak about what we know with authority and experience the satisfaction of a successful grassroots experience.

During the debrief session, we were reminded that our work cannot stop here. Now that we have initiated a relationship with our Senators, Representatives, and their legislative aides, it is our job to write thank-you notes, continue to build the relationship by sharing timely and important information that may help them to do their jobs, and writing personal letters to these same representatives when we receive the call from NAFSA ACT to target critical international education issues.

Is the opportunity to have direct grass-roots impact on Capitol Hill through personal relationships with my Congressional representatives worth the \$100 NAFSA Advocacy Day registration fee? In my view, that would be an emphatic "YES"! When the call goes out to Texans in the spring of 2009 to participate in NAFSA Advocacy Day, I encourage you to participate.

# Development Report

-- *Rebecca Crowell, Development Chair*

The Region III conference in Austin attracted 45 exhibitors and 13 sponsors last November and raised a total of \$40,043.00. The conference in Austin was one of the most attended conferences we've ever experienced. We are very appreciative of our exhibitors and sponsors attendance, and their generous support.

How can we surpass our Austin conference? With your generous sponsorship, gifts and donations we can make **Merida** a conference to remember!

In just a few months we will be inviting our recent exhibitors and sponsors to sign up to attend and contribute to the Merida conference. If you know of a company or individual that would like to be an exhibitor, please ask them to notify me (<http://nafsa3.org/?module=about/team&cat=about>). Our exhibitor space is limited.

# Tech SiG Report

-- *Mark Powell, Tech SiG*

## Region III Job Registry

Due to some problems with the Region III website, the Region III Job Registry has taken on a new look and format. There is a Job Registry link on the main Region III homepage. This link takes you to a listing of the current job openings in Region III. The jobs in the top section are the openings for the current week. The bottom section lists all other previous job openings chronologically from when they were posted.

If your office has a job opening and wants it to be posted on the Region III website, send the information to me at [powellm@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:powellm@austin.utexas.edu) and I will post it to the website. Additionally, I send out a weekly email to the Region III mailing list with all the new job openings on Wednesday.

If your office has a job posted on the Job Registry that has been filled or is closed, please email me at [powellm@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:powellm@austin.utexas.edu) and I will remove it from the Registry.

## State Meeting Information

Information and links to websites about upcoming state meetings are also listed on the Region III homepage.

## Fall Conference Session Proposals

Proposals for our Fall 2008 Conference in Merida, Mexico are due according to the schedule below

Early Bird Session Proposals Due	June 6, 2008
Regular Session Proposals Due	June 14, 2008

## Have YOU created your NAFSA Expertise Profile yet?

Don't let the word "expertise" make you think this is only for experts. You have valuable skills and knowledge that are important to the region and NAFSA at large. Take a few minutes to complete your Expertise Profile on the NAFSA web site ([www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org); once logged in, click on "Expertise Profile"). You will have the opportunity to indicate your general areas of skill (e.g. budget management, writing/editing, tech 'know-how', strategic planning, etc.) and your experience in international education (e.g. marketing, credential evaluation, student/scholar orientation, etc.).

Expertise profiles will be searched by the Nominations Committees and chairs of committees, knowledge communities, regions, subcommittees, and task forces to identify potential committee/team chairs and members. You will be considered for positions requiring the combination of skills and experience you include in your profile. Both longer term and shorter term positions come up throughout the year, so please update your profile online as needed to keep it accurate and complete. Profile your expertise today!

# Knowledge Community Reports

## Admissions Section Report

-- *Kristalina Karabunarlieva, Admissions Section Liaison*

Dear Region III NAFSAns,

I am so excited about the conference in Merida, Mexico! The fact that the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI), the Mexican counterpart of NAFSA, is holding their 15th annual conference in Merida at the same time as we are having our regional conference there provides unparalleled opportunity to meet with representatives of Mexican colleges and universities. This is the time to look for partnership and offer sessions of mutual interest to the members of both organizations. This is a time to honor the great cultural and educational history of our Mexican neighbors with sessions targeting Mexican secondary and higher education, a opportunity for educational exchange and cooperation. Our Mexican colleagues are interested in our interpretation of Mexican credentials and the transfer credit and grade conversion policy of the different US institutions. We have similar interests, especially with the increase of educational exchange between the two countries. I envision panels presided over by members AMPEI and NAFSA where hot topics relevant to international education and cooperation between Mexico and US are considered.

Following the trend of increased interest in international education and recruitment during the last conference in Austin, we hope to be able to offer a workshop on International Marketing and Recruitment, as well as the Credentials Evaluation 101 workshop. All varieties of good credential, admissions and recruitment sessions are welcome, but I would like to encourage panel sessions and cooperation between different educational institutions. Don't you want to know how our Mexican colleagues accept the India 3-year degrees? What is their reaction to the Bologna process and the three-year European bachelor degrees? What are their best recruiting practices and how, through cooperation, we can both increase the diversity and educational exchange? So many opportunities for collaboration! I am absolutely thrilled. Think Merida! Think Mexico!

# International Student & Scholar Advising Report

-- *Claudia Evelyn Graves, Int'l Student & Scholar Advising Liaison*

Hello Region III NAFSA members: I cannot believe that another wonderful year has passed by. 2008 promises to be an exciting year as we are looking forward to our next Region III conference in Merida, Mexico. Remember, you will need your passport in order to attend this wonderful conference.

Last year, we had such wonderful sessions not only at the Regional Conference in Austin, but also in each of our State Meetings. This year promises to bring not only the same wonderful sessions such as updates in regulations, but also sessions that encourage the partnership between our universities and colleges with our neighbor academic institutions in Mexico.

Again, I want to encourage to present or share any ideas of hot topics regarding the services we provide. If you have never presented and would like to co-chair a presentation, please let me know. Our region is happy and desires to hear from you regarding the different issues we face with daily. We want this conference to be a great success and in order to succeed we need your input.

Finally, remember that I'm here to serve you and help you in any way I can. If you have any questions regarding the how-to process, please do not hesitate in contacting me. However, I will be on maternity leave from March 15 through the end of May and will only be able to help you via email: [cgraves@smu.edu](mailto:cgraves@smu.edu)

Remember my assistance with regulatory issues should not be case specific. If you have any case specific issues, please contact your Regulatory Ombudsperson.

## Intensive English Programs Report

-- *Joy Tesh, Intensive English Programs Liaison*

The NAFSA Region III Team met in Fort Worth, Texas in February to plan the regional conference scheduled to take place in Merida, Mexico in November, 2008. I hope to see many of you at the NAFSA Convention in Washington, D.C. before then, but right now is certainly not too soon to start thinking about proposals for the program in Merida.

In a brainstorming session in Fort Worth meant to generate ideas for timely topics for the program in Mexico, some of the following ideas were mentioned with regard to Intensive English Programs: accreditation of IEPs, scholarship sources for IEP students, cooperative recruiting between International Admissions and IEPs on university campuses, IEP relationships to host institutions, recertification training for IEPs, marketing, curriculum, cooperation and exchange between IEPs in Mexico and the United States — just to name a few. One of my favorites was a suggestion for a joint session on ways to foster exchange as well as to increase enrollment of Mexican students in IEPs in the United States.

Proposals for joint sessions are encouraged. Do you have a colleague in Mexico who might present with you on a topic of interest to both Mexican and U. S. ESL educators? If so, we would love to read your proposal.

As a new member of the Region III Team, I was caught up in the excitement of the planning for the conference in Mexico. In this context, I was encouraged to hear real concern about Intensive English Programs and their importance to NAFSA and its mission. NAFSA Region III loves Intensive English Programs. I hope that we can have a real presence at the regional conference in Merida, and the best way for us to have this presence is to get busy writing proposals for the program.

As your new Intensive English Program liaison, please let me know if I can be of help with any issues related to submitting proposals or participating in the program. I hope to see you in Mexico!

# Education Abroad Report

-- *Sandra Crosier, Education Abroad Section Representative*

I hope spring semester is going well for everyone. I am sorry that I did not see more of you at the State Meeting. It was a great meeting and we did have two planned sessions on study abroad and one impromptu session, a discussion of education abroad issues. I hope more of you will decide to propose sessions for next year's State Meeting. It is a great platform for people who have not presented before. We had a great presentation on Graduate student opportunities abroad and on study abroad opportunities for community college students. Thanks to those who presented and participated in those sessions.

Put the fall conference Region III on your calendar – November 3-7. Of course you know we will be in Merida, Mexico and this presents a wonderful opportunity for you to propose sessions involving you and your Mexican partners. I hope we will take advantage of the site by having presentations on how to set up a program with a Mexican partner and different types of programs including dual and joint degree programs. We would also like to see panel discussions from already established partnerships on the advantages of such linkages, how to establish such partnerships, things to be careful of and things that work well. Additionally, the site offers a great opportunity to discuss the differences in higher education in the U.S. and Mexico – institutional organization, expectations of faculty and students, credit issues, etc. and how to prepare students going each way. We will offer a workshop on Short-term Study Abroad since it seems that this is the biggest growth area in many offices. Look for a call for proposals which will be out April 10 and proposals are due: Early Bird Session Proposals – June 6 (if accepted, you receive a break on registration); Regular Session Proposals - June 7.

I hope to see many of you at the annual conference in Washington, D.C. The workshops and sessions look excellent including a session from the November, 2007 Regional Conference: Registrars and Study Abroad Directors – Collaboration is the Key offered on Thursday, May 29 at 8:00 AM.

## Two-Year Institution Report

--*Diana Klinghagen, Two-Year Institution Liaison*

Get your passport ready! The NAFSA Region III Conference will be held at the beautiful Fiesta Americana Hotel in Merida, Mexico November 3-6, 2008. Besides pre-conference sessions, conference sessions, luncheons, Exhibits and speakers, we will have two off-site events and a college fair. Our conference is being held at the same time our Mexican counterparts are having their conference in Merida. We have planned some joint events.

Please consider presenting a session in your area of expertise. Need ideas? We would welcome session proposals regarding, Globalizing a Community College; Recertification training; Field trips for international Students; Study Abroad Programs in Community Colleges; Educating ICE agents; Advising students with Disabilities to name a few. We welcome any and all proposals. If you are not interested in offering a session but would like to serve on a panel, let us know about that too. We need your help and involvement to make our Regional Conference a success.

I encourage you to attend the NAFSA Annual Conference in Washington, DC. The Two Year/ Community College IIG will meet on Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup>, 3-4:15 pm. Also featured at the annual conference is a Two Year Forum and a Two Year Institution Luncheon. I hope to see you there!

# Texas State Report

-- *Samanthia Spence, North Texas State Representative*

-- *Barbara Harrison, South Texas State Representative*

Texas Woman's University hosted a successful Texas State Meeting on Friday, February 29, 2008 and five NAFSA Professional Practice Workshops on Saturday, March 1, 2008. Local Arrangements Committee made up of Director of International Education, Juanita DuenezLazo, and her accomplished staff made meeting arrangements such as hotel, room and equipment reservations, and catering. Additional TWU and North Lake College volunteers for the days of the conference and workshops diligently worked to make the day a most pleasurable and enjoyable learning experience for the 150 international education professionals who attended the Texas State Meeting in Denton, Texas.

The Texas State Meeting included nine presentations. Two concurrent sessions of three topics each provided updates and practical information in the areas of Study Abroad, Admissions, and Student and Scholar Advising and Work Life. Thank you to all our presenters, Madhuri Kumar, UT Southwest, Peggy Bell Hendrickson, Univ. of North Texas, Clarissa Steele, TAMU, Maka Hutson, UT Austin, Joel Battle, ICE, Department of Homeland Security, Ashley Porterfield, Texas Wesleyan University and Wanda Whitten, North Lake College. We also extend our thanks to the session panelist who freely gave of their time to share their knowledge and expertise. We were honored once again to have David Ware, of David Ware and Associates, who provided the "Legislative Update" as key note presentation during lunch. David spoke on recent legislation and its effects on International Education. He also provided excellent informational resources and web-site addresses regarding presidential hopefuls and their views on current International Education issues. Please look for David Ware's power-point presentation and other Texas State Meeting sessions' powerpoint presentations to be posted on the NAFSA Texas state website very soon.

The day closed with a well received Advocacy Session presented by Dr. Adria Baker, Rice University, entitled "Town Hall Meeting on Legislative Issues Affecting Texas International Educators: What One Person Can Do to Make a Difference." Finally, a very big thank you goes to Maggie Pinson, UT Medical Branch, for being instrumental in the event planning and arranging and organizing the PPW workshops. Maggie was a tremendous help and her efforts are very much appreciated.

Thanks again to the TWU local arrangements for assisting with the five NAFSA Professional Practice Workshops (PPW's) held the day after the Texas State Meeting. The "F-1 Regulations for Beginners Workshop" was led by Marilyn White, University of Dallas., F-1 Regulations: The Second Step led by Dotty Horton, J-1 Regulations for Beginners, led by Maka Hutson, H-1 Filing H-1B Petitions led by Maudhry Kumar, and Safety and Responsibility in Education Abroad led by Sandra Crosier. Also, heartfelt thanks go to the Co-leaders and the Table Moderators who also gave of their Saturday to share their knowledge and expertise with the PPW participants.

This year will be my final year as North Texas State Liaison. Barbara Harrison is the new South Texas State Liaison beginning 2008. We are actively seeking a North Texas State Liaison replacement. If interested please contact Bob Crosier, Region III Chair, Olga Grieco, Region III Chair-Elect, Barbara Harrison or myself.

And finally, thanks to Jane Dunham, our kind and patient webmaster, Jane was instrumental in getting all the Texas State Meeting information on the website.

We hope to see many of you at the NAFSA National Conference in Washington D.C. May 25 -30, 2008 and then again next fall at our NAFSA Region III Conference in Merida, Mexico.



# Oklahoma State Report

-- Glenn Freeman, Oklahoma State Representative

Within the last year the state of Oklahoma has seen many advances in international education. This was largely due to the tremendous efforts of former Oklahoma State NAFSA Representative, Sunny Garner, who spear headed the Concurrent State Resolution 1041 recognizing the importance of international education in the state of Oklahoma. The legislation was successfully passed on May 21, 2007.

At the same time, Oklahoma has passed some of the strictest anti-illegal immigration legislation with House Bill 1804. The bill requires that public employers verify the status of new employees, that local/state law enforcement agents detain illegal immigrants and that those seeking state identification prove legal residency or citizenship. The bill also establishes that knowingly concealing, harboring, sheltering, transporting or attempting to transport an illegal immigrant is a felony crime. It also terminates government subsidies except in certain emergency or humanitarian circumstances.

The bill identifies three categories of undocumented or illegal immigrant students. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education issued specific guidelines on January 2, 2008 to instruct institutions regarding post secondary education benefits for each of the three categories.

During our upcoming Oklahoma State NAFSA meeting, which is to be held on April 3, 2008, we will explore the advances and challenges in international education for our state. The meeting will include remarks from Representative Shane Jett (Oklahoma State House of Representatives) and a discussion regarding the impact of Oklahoma's legislation on K-16 schools by Armando Peña, Assistant Vice Chancellor for GEAR UP with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Afterwards we will have a presentation from SEVP and finally conclude by exploring one university's new program on Global Competency.

For the full agenda and registration we invite you to visit the Oklahoma State NAFSA website at <http://union.okstate.edu/iss/Nafsa/StateofOklahomaNAFSA.html>

## Arkansas State Report

Greetings from Arkansas!

-- Amy Pennington, Arkansas State Representative

Arkansas NAFSAs will be convening very soon for the NAFSA Arkansas Annual State Meeting at the Lake Point Conference Center in Russellville, Arkansas. The meeting scheduled for Friday, April 18, 2008, will feature an agenda packed with excellent sessions that will provide participants with important updates in all areas of international education.

Included in the agenda is Steve Springer, an Associate Attorney with David Ware and Associates, who will provide an immigration law update; the Social Security Administration and the Arkansas Office of Driver Services will partner to discuss a variety of topics including issuance procedures, SAVE system errors and the REAL ID Act of 2005; Dr. David and Dr. Susan Underwood will present a session on effective assessment of programming activities; and Michael Freeman (UA), Andrew Faulkner (UCA) and Diane Birge (ATU) will tackle to the topic of new student orientation programs. Additionally, a variety of roundtable discussions will be led throughout the day covering education abroad (DeDe Long, UA), intensive English programs (Lynn Schaefer, UCA), and international admissions (Lynn Mosesso, UA). The agenda will also feature reports from Takeo Suzuki (UAFS), Arkansas State Whip and Wayne Garner (SAU), Leadership Conference Past-Chair.

For more information about the meeting agenda or for registration details, please contact Amy Pennington (ATU) at [apennington@atu.edu](mailto:apennington@atu.edu). Registration deadline is April 1, 2008.

Please join us for a great meeting!

# Immigration Update

-Madhuri V. Kumar, Regulatory Ombudsperson for Scholar Issues

-Maka Hutson, Regulatory Ombudsperson for Student Issues

Dear fellow NAFSANS,

It seems that we just saw each other at the regional conference in Austin and now the state meetings are upon us. Texas has already had its meeting where we went through recertification training by SEVP representatives Timothy Hanes and Matthew Stucky, as well as a Q&A with Paul Sturgeon, Assistant Director of the USCIS Texas Service Center. We hope you all enjoyed regulatory sessions with the latest updates in immigration policy and practice.

The next regional conference in Merida, Mexico will be unusual in many respects. We strongly encourage you to submit a conference session proposal; this year we would like to see proposals that will address collaboration with our Mexican colleagues, as well as intercultural issues. Please watch for the proposal forms to become available online in April.

We would like to provide you with a summary of recent immigration updates that might be of interest. The information was obtained on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

## USCIS Update

**NAFSA Practice Advisory on I-539.** The latest version of Form I-539 (Rev. 12/31/2007) has some new aspects that advisers should be aware of. New features include: new checkbox for "Reinstatement to student status"; a stronger statement on providing information on prior participation as a J-1 or J-2 nonimmigrant; greatly expanded applicant background questions; language competency statements. We highly recommend to review the advisory which is available on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

**REAL ID Act.** A DHS final rule effective March 31, 2008 establishes minimum standards under the REAL ID Act, for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards that federal agencies would accept for official purposes on or after May 11, 2008. Detailed information on the REAL ID Act implementation is available on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

## DOS Update

**Visa Fee increase effective January 1, 2008.** The Department of State (DOS) announced that effective January 1, 2008, the Machine Readable Visa (MRV) fee charged to nonimmigrant visa applicants will increase to \$131 (a \$31 increase).

## US ICE SEVP Update

**SEVP presentations "2008 SEVP Update" and "Preparing for Recertification: Petition Updates" released by SEVP.** The PowerPoint presentations created by SEVP for spring meetings with NAFSA regional and state-level associations include information on the following topics: SEVP's Fee Rule Initiatives (I-901, certification and recertification fees); Preparation for Recertification; Petition Updates; SEVIS II Development; Recertification resources; Additional Full-Time Employees. The PowerPoint presentations are posted on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec)

***SEVP Notifies Schools About OPT Validation Project.*** In a February 27, 2008 notice to SEVIS schools, SEVP announced that it was preparing to begin an OPT (Optional Practical Training) data validation exercise. The notice states that PDSOs (Principal Designated School Officials) will receive a second e-mail that "will have specific instructions for updating SEVIS and an Excel spreadsheet with the name and address of students currently on OPT information to make the task of contacting students easier." The notice further states "by May 15, 2008, all schools should ensure that the employer information (name and address) and the student's address is current for all students on OPT. Schools do not need to send a separate report - the only obligation is to update SEVIS." Additional information will be posted on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec) as it is obtained by NAFSA.

### **US CBP Update**

***Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Requirements.*** On December 4, 2007, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) reminded the traveling public that as of Jan. 31, 2008, all adult travelers will be required to present proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, and proof of identity, such as a driver's license, when entering the United States through land and sea ports of entry. We highly recommend to review the advisory which is available on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

### **Employment-based Immigration**

***H-1B Petition Filing Centralized At CSC For Higher Ed Employers.*** Starting January 30, 2008, H-1B cap-exempt petitions filed by the following cap-exempt employer types should be filed at the California Service Center (CSC), regardless of place of employment or location of employer. Please see the text of the notice as well as the address for the CSC Cap Exempt H-1B Processing Unit online on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

***USCIS Memo Allows I-485 Approval If FBI Namecheck Pending Over 180 Days.*** A February 4, 2008 USCIS memo instructs field offices that where an application for adjustment of status (Form I-485) is otherwise approvable, and the FBI namecheck request has been pending for more than 180 days, USCIS can now approve the I-485 and proceed with card issuance. Please see the complete text of the memo online on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

***PIMS System Now Used by Consular Posts.*** As of November 11, 2007 before issuing an H, L, O, P, or Q visa consular posts must now first verify the approval of the underlying petition through the CCD in a new report called "PIMS" (Petition Information Management Service), even if the visa applicant has a paper Form I-797 approval notice. Under this system, a paper Form I-797 approval notice can be used to schedule an appointment, but may not be sufficient proof for granting the H, L, O, P, or Q visa, if the consulate does not also find the petition approval information in the CCD PIMS report. The cable instructs posts that cannot find petition approval information in the CCD, to e-mail the Kentucky Consular Center's (KCC) Fraud Protection Unit (FPU), which will "research approval of the petition and, if able to confirm its approval, make the details available through the CCD within two working days." Please see the complete text of the cable online at the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at [www.nafsa.org/regulatory\\_information.sec](http://www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec).

As always, we enjoy serving you, and we hope to see you all at the upcoming regional conference in Merida, Mexico!