

Interchange

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Letter from Past Chair, Adria Baker

I want to thank each NAFSA Region III member for giving me the opportunity to be chair of the *best* NAFSA Region in the country. It was an honor to try to give back a little of what I have gained from so many in the past 20 years that I have been a member. The best way express my appreciation is to give you a "State of the Region" address.

First of all, I wish to mention how fortunate we are to have **Dr. Robert Crosier** lead us in 2008. With his: 1) long-standing experience in Region III, 2) his wise judgment, and 3) calm, yet strong presence, Region III is set up for complete success. I know you will join me in doing everything we can to support his work and leadership through this coming year!

Secondly, I want to especially thank each of the **Region III team members** (<http://www.nafsa3.org/?module=about/team&cat=about>) for a year of hard work on everyone's part. I have learned so much from each of them. During this past year as chair, I was given credit for so many things that the team members did. But at the end of the day, it was the group effort that made the Austin regional conference great!

State of the Region Report:

Beginning in 2007, many of Region III team members wrote statements of what we sought our legacy to be at the end of the year. As we review the summarized list, I am proud that the region was able to accomplish most of what we had set out to do.

Legacy goal 1: Region III is a leader in advocacy for international education. Region III has set a great example for advocacy nationwide for several years now. We had quite a few Region III members attend Advocacy Day 2007, and are seeking for more in March 2008. Through the efforts of the Art for Advocacy in Little Rock (thank you, **Julie Sinclair!**) and the raffle in Austin (thank you, **Erin Ray!**), we have raised enough money to fund registrations for up to eight people to go to Advocacy Day (two per state, preferably). If you are interested, contact your State Liaison about applying for the registration. More on Advocacy Day 2008 at: http://www.nafsa.org/public_policy.sec/grassroots_advocacy/advocacy_day.

We also want to throw our complete support behind **DeDe Long** (University of Arkansas-Fayetteville) who is the incoming NAFSA Vice President for Public Policy & Practice. As a Region, we will continue to support the advancement of international education exchange through the national level efforts, not to mention with state issues as well.

Legacy goal 2: All states in Region III have an international education policy. In the spring of 2007, both Arkansas and Louisiana leaders set about completing the work they had begun the year before, which was to "seal the deal" on an official international education policy. As is usual, each state had a unique story including forging excellent relationships with key legislators and decision-makers in their state. **DeDe Long** addressed Advocacy Day attendees in March about Arkansas' experiences, and afterwards, several states followed suit to do the same. Oklahoma's resolution was written so well, under the strong leadership of **Sunny Garner**, that it is being used in presentations around the country as the example to follow.

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Letter from Past Chair

We were the second region in the country to have *all states in the region* secure a state international education policy. This has served as a tool for friendly rivalry with other regions, which has encouraged them to do the same. This supports NAFSA's goal to have 25 state international education policies by the national conference in Washington D.C. in May 2007. What better way to encourage a *national* international education policy than to have *states* already lined up! To learn more about state level international education policies, visit: http://www.nafsa.org/public_policy.sec/international_education_23

We are so proud of the work that Arkansas and Oklahoma leaders did in 2007! You all are an inspiration to us all to continue moving this to an even higher level in *all* of our states!

Legacy goal 3: We have provided an excellent conference with quality information and lots of fun.

I believe that the Austin conference had excellent sessions, which was greatly due to the strategic planning by our **KC/Sectional/Two-Year Liaisons** and the **RegBuds**. Early on in the year, they sought out great presentations and key information to be presented. In the end, we had over 50 sessions and five pre-conference workshops, which included 125+ chairs and presenters. The feedback was that the sessions were so helpful, and that the chairs and presenters did a super job! Thanks to **Mark Powell**, many conference session presentations and handouts can be accessed online at: <http://www.nafsa3.org/conferences/regional2007/conference2007highlights.asp>. (By the way, thanks to Mark Powell for MANY things!).

A special appreciation and congratulations for extraordinary work goes to the chairs and session presenters of Region III's "conference highlights" for this year. The sessions were:

- 1) "Registrars and Study Abroad Directors - Collaboration is Key!"
- 2) "Enhancing the Image of International Students Through Integration in the Life of the University and Community"
- 3) "International Secondary Credentials for Freshman Admissions"

We had *by far record attendance* with 532 registrants (about 38% higher numbers than ever before for a Region III conference). Early on we were crossing our fingers in hopes of hitting the 400 attendees mark. You can imagine how happy we were to see the record numbers, as well as feel the vibrant dynamics of the great numbers of attendees. (We were only 25 people less - total - than a previous bi-regional conference, counting together both regions' attendance!).

A conference with these numbers, and a region that is as active as Region III, requires clear communication for Region III members throughout the year. Thanks to **Lisa Tauferner**, she publishes the *Interchange* newsletters, as well as the conference mailer and conference program, which are very tough jobs, to say the least.

In regards to fun, I think it is hard to be in Austin, Texas and NOT have a great time. The **Local Arrangements** team worked so hard to show us a wonderful time, including Restaurant Hops and our trip to Austin City Limits. It was so great seeing colleagues relaxing, out-bidding each other in friendly competition at the Silent Auction, laughing, and dancing. Most of all, we are grateful to the awesome **Region III Players**, who prepared excellent entertainment for all of us! In sum, I think Region III did Austin well by supporting their local theme of "Keep Austin Weird"!

Legacy goal 4: Providing new opportunities for the membership to be involved with volunteering in the region.

From the beginning of the year, the region team was called to be more than a contributor on the Region III team, but to serve as the Region's "Board of Directors" and lead a subcommittee of volunteers to the region. Many Region III members gave of their talents in unique ways, such as the creation of several ad-hoc committees to make specific decisions for the conference, and a friendly contest for the conference graphic, won by **Jane Scott** (UTSouthwestern Medical Center at Dallas). Under **Regina Henry's** great leadership, we had quite a few "Assistant Registrars" and volunteers at the Registration table. The Local Arrangements, thanks especially to **Dr. Teri Albrecht**, **Elizabeth Barrett**, and **Beverly Heyen's** work, had great involvement.

Letter from Past Chair

There is more to be done in Region III, as we have grown, and need to reach more people by involving them with their great talents. We need to continue to make sure that we have an infrastructure in place that is able to tap into the great resources our international education colleagues provide. **Brownwyn Stewart** wrote a proposal paper for developing leaders in the region, which we have used in part, and hope to implement more in the next few months. We appreciated **Jerry Wilcox** and **Julie Sinclair** for their role in this as well.

Also, under the great leadership of our five **State Liaisons**, we had excellent state meetings in the spring in all four states. These meetings are a good opportunity for the newcomers to get involved in Region III volunteerism and leadership.

We have conferences planned for the future in places "near you", so plan now to be a part of those volunteer teams. Looking into the future, the regional conferences are planned for: Merida, Mexico in 2008, Dallas, TX. in 2009, New Orleans in 2010, and Oklahoma City in 2011.

Legacy goal 5: To leave the year with Region III being fiscally strong and raising money for emergencies.

Due to the re-evaluation of what is expected from regions fiscally, as stated from the NAFSA national leadership, we found that Region III needed to re-adjust our strategies and make sure that we have "in the bank" the amount of money (as back-up) as what we expect to spend at the regional conference.

The Region Team members took this charge to heart, and used this kind of thinking in all the decisions they made. Due to the very high registration numbers at the conference in Austin, and the *outstanding* fundraising efforts under the leadership of **Rebecca Crowell**, Region III is able to be in this kind of position, as we move forward. Rebecca's efforts were so great that we had 45 exhibitors in total, and yet had to turn down two others due to lack of space. This was by far a record number. In total, she secured over \$40,000 worth in fundraising – yet another record set! We have stated fiscal goals that will help us to continue to achieve this in the future. We are so fortunate that we have **Sue Marlay** as our terrific Treasurer, who keeps everything very clear for all of us.

Legacy goal 6: Sustain our caring nature to Region III membership.

I believe that this goal was the underlining presence for all decisions made during the year. It is so easy for me to be just "task-oriented" and not stop to think about the whole picture. However, when Rebecca Crowell pointed out that this has been the major bequest for years in Region III, and that we must make sure it is sustained, unanimously the team agreed. . .and held me and others accountable!

Our number one goal for the conference was to make Newcomers feel welcome, help people to network with one another, do what we can to get the best information out to our colleagues. . .and do so in a *kind* manner. I hope this was your experience.

Some ways Region III has shown their caring nature fiscally are: 1) Using funds raised though a "labor of love" in the Silent Auctions under the leadership of **Olga Grieco**, to fund travel grants, and 2) responding to **Marilyn White's** suggestion to donate to NAFSA's Annual Fund. The team voted to donate \$250 on behalf of Region III and in honor of **Dr. Joe Neal**, founder of Region III and one of the founders of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

I know I mentioned in name only a handful of people who did great work. I am sorry that my limit on space does not allow me to mention all of you who make Region III an excellent region.

Thank you all for a year I will never forget! Best wishes in the New Year, as we continue to move international education exchange forward with Region III leading the way!

With great affection and respect to you all,

Adria Baker, Ed.D.

Message from the Chair

For the twenty years that I have been in Region III, we have been blessed with outstanding leadership and an active and knowledgeable membership – a tradition we wish to continue. This past year Austin hosted the largest and most successful regional conference in our history. The Austin conference also attracted the largest group of newcomers we have had – a testament to the growth of international education within the region and a challenge for us to continue to provide meaningful and effective professional development opportunities.

The success of the past year came under the able leadership of Adria Baker and her marvelous Regional Team; Teri Albrecht, Beverly Heyen and their great Local Arrangements group; and the hundreds of volunteers in regional activities throughout the year. NAFSA is a volunteer organization that works because of the contributions of its membership, and Region III is a leading example of tradition. So, congratulations to all for the outstanding work in 2007.

As Region III Chair for 2008, I look forward to another outstanding year with your help. This year we have new opportunities and new challenges. State meetings are already approaching. The Annual Conference in Washing, D.C. at the end of May promises to be the biggest international education event in years. And, our Region III Conference in Merida, Mexico November 3-6 will be something entirely different.

I urge you to actively participate in NAFSA events and training during 2008, 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>.

All the best for 2008!

Bob Crosier

Development Report

-- Rebecca Crowell, Development Chair

WOW! What a great time we had in Austin. The exhibitors, sponsors, and advertisers were very kind to Region III. A grand total of \$40,228.00 was earned and we thank all of them. There were 45 different companies represented in our exhibit hall and all had very favorable evaluations. A big thank you goes out to the conference attendees for visiting with the exhibitors. Visit each of the company's webpage links from our Region III website.

Austin Conference Report

A number of presenters have submitted their PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and other information from their sessions at the NAFSA Region III Conference in Austin. There is also information about the sponsors and exhibitors from the conference as well. Finally, there are pictures taken by Jane Dunham. All of this information can be found on the Austin conference recap page. The URL is listed below:

<http://www.nafsa3.org/?module=conferences/regional2007/conference2007highlights>

Current Job Openings

Current job openings are listed on the Region III website weekly email is sent out ever Wednesday listing the job openings that have been posted in the last week.

If you would like a job posted, please send a description of the position to Mark Powell at powellm@austin.utexas.edu

If your university or company has a job opening on the website that has been filled, please email Mark Powell at powellm@austin.utexas.edu to remove it.

State Websites

Check the state websites for information and details about state meetings this winter. There are links to state web pages under the Other NAFSA Sites button on the Region III site <http://www.nafsa3.org>.

Knowledge Community Reports

Two-Year Institution Report

--Diana Klinghagen, Two-Year Institution Representative

The NAFSA Region III conference in Austin was a huge success! I was pleased to see a number of sessions focusing on issues that the two-year institutions deal with on a daily basis. To download handouts from some of these sessions, please go to the Region III website.

Also at the conference we had a Community College International Educators gathering. In NAFSA's restructuring a couple years ago, two-year institution representation was somehow lost in the shuffle! Well, we now have a voice in NAFSA. Samantha Spence is the 2007-8 Coordinator of the Two Year Institution IIG as we begin to structure and strengthen this organization. In Austin, at our first Regional Community College IIG meeting, Samantha facilitated our discussion of ideas and concerns to communicate to NAFSA. To join the Two Year/Community College IIG visit http://www.nafsa.org/about.sec/migs/two_year.

If you have not received an e-mail from me in the past year, please contact me so I can add you to my communications list!

And finally, mark your calendars! Region III's next conference is November 3-6, 2008 in MERIDA, MEXICO. Please think about a conference proposal to submit. If you have any questions, or need a co-presenter, just contact me at dklingha@tulsacc.edu. Get your passport in order, brush up on your Spanish and get your marketing materials ready! This sounds like one of our best conferences yet!

International Student & Scholar Advising Report

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

This year Austin welcomed one of the largest gatherings of knowledgeable professionals within the International Students & Scholars Community.

Attendees were able to enjoy one of the best conferences thanks to the wonderful innovative sessions offered with excellent presenters. Professionals in the student and scholar services community were able to learn new skills through inspiring sessions such as the "Survival Kit for New Advisors," which had excellent reviews. New professionals in the field learned how to best make use of resources that will enhance their advising abilities and expand their network. Others enhanced their knowledge by sharing information on controversial issues regarding employment authorization, in particular, Curricular Practical Training. The CPT Multi Campus Perspective session had some of the best reviews by those who attended. Some of the comments suggested that it was important to hear what other schools were doing in regards to internal policies that best suited the needs of different schools and their student population.

Our community area also benefitted from incredible sessions such as "Enhancing the Image of International Students". This session received glowing reviews, some suggesting that it was the best session they had ever attended. As always, our conference allowed all of us to advance and update our knowledge in areas of interests such as SEVIS, F-1/J1 regulations update, Consular's Office Update, as well as updates on the Social Security Office policies.

Over the last year, we have continued learning about changes that keep making our working days exciting. We continue to work together in order to provide our students and scholars the best services we are able to offer. I will continue to hear from you not only with questions regarding student and scholar issues, but also with comments and suggestions about upcoming conferences' sessions. You can reach me at (214) 768-4477. Whether I see you in the next State Meeting, National or Regional Conference, or whether I'll continue communicating with you via email, I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Campus & Community Liaison Report

-- *Olga Grieco, Campus & Community Liaison*

The NAFSA Region III Conference was definitely "AUSTIN-tacious" with high attendance, excellent hotel and conference rooms, superb workshops and sessions, numerous exhibitors, and outstanding restaurants, food, and music. The Austin City Limits off-site event was exceptionally entertaining and tasty, accompanied by the awesome Silent Auction. Thank you so much for donating 110 auction items, then purchasing the items, and helping with the auction. The proceeds will be used for scholarships to send many newcomers to the next regional conference in Merida, Mexico.

Campus and Community Programming was well represented in the many sessions at the conference. Some of the sessions were: "It's Not All Play: Games for Experiential Learning", "Maintaining Harmony In International Education Through Ethical Practice", "Albatross", "The Cultural Contact Center Project", and "Collaboration the NAFSA Academy Way". Evaluations for all the sessions were extremely positive. It's time to start thinking about what you would like to present in Merida!

I would like to exclaim that it was my pleasure serving as the Campus and Community Liaison on the Region III Team for the past three years. We have the best team and region! I have learned so much and worked with so many wonderful people. I thank you for this opportunity.

I will be passing on the torch to Elizabeth Barrett from University of Texas at Austin. She did a great job being a local arrangements co-chair at the conference in Austin. Let's welcome her as the new Campus and Community Liaison to NAFSA Region III!

Knowledge Reports

Education Abroad Report

-- Sandra Crosier, Education Abroad Section Representative

If you were not at the NAFSA Region III Conference in November, you missed an outstanding conference, especially in our area of Education Abroad. We had a workshop on Safety & Responsibility in Study Abroad. There were 15 EA proposals accepted in all and 12 were listed as EA session. We had sessions on research in study abroad (2 sessions on this subject); The Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act: Making it Work; Developing a policy on suspension of a program – when to suspend a program abroad; Study Abroad Fairs; Registrars and Study Abroad Directors- Collaboration is the Key; Training Students to Deal with Culture Shock; Evaluating Credentials from Study Abroad; Pre-departure Orientation; Study Abroad Returnees – Your Biggest Asset; Alternative/ Follow-up Programs to Study Abroad – volunteering including Peace Corps, work abroad; Sending International Students Abroad...Again. There were also sessions on experiential learning and insurance. Obviously, there was a wealth of information presented. The number of sessions has doubled. It is exciting to see so much interest in presenting by EA members.

The Texas State Meeting will be held on February 29-March 1 at Texas Women's University. Proposal forms are available for download on the Texas State NAFSA page:

<http://www.texasnafsa.org>

The form can be downloaded directly using the URL below

<http://www.texasnafsa.org/SessionProposals2008.doc>

We hope some of you will consider doing a session at the State Meeting in your state. The deadline for proposals for the Texas State Meeting is January 11, 2008. Information on other State meetings will soon be available on the NAFSA III website.

Watch for information on submitting proposals for the NAFSA Region III Conference in Merida, Mexico. Workshops are November 3-4 and the conference is November 4-6. We would really like to see at least some proposals involving Mexican counterparts – exchange programs, dual degree programs, credentials evaluation, how to set up and sustain a program, and organizational differences in U.S. and Mexican institutions of higher learning, and other issues. So, if you have Mexican partners, here is an opportunity to do a joint presentation.

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 (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!

Admissions Section Report

-- Kristalina Karabunarlieva, Admissions Section Representative

When I first joined the brotherhood of foreign credentials evaluators, the credential sessions offered at NAFSA conferences were mostly oriented toward specific countries. Emphasis was placed on the country's educational system, with numerous examples of documents illustrating each step of the educational ladder. Nowadays, however, we see a pronounced tendency toward more complex, integrated topics such as the overview of a group of countries with similar educational systems (*A Study on the Educational System in Central America*), or a group of countries trying to unify their academic requirements under a common academic umbrella (*Is Bologna in France, Russia, Germany or Norway?*); or even sessions that leave us with more questions than answers, like the different interpretations of the same credentials by three different types of US educational institutions (*Bologna-Compliant Degrees and the People Who Review Them*).

We live in more complex times—the days of a single right answer are over, and “discussion” is the new buzzword. Our colleagues come to the sessions and workshops expecting intelligent reasoning, professional collection of real-life documents, and interactive discussion that will help them find the right placement according to their specific institutional benchmarks.

With the globalization of education, nothing is simple and taken for granted anymore. Today's student can start with one educational system, transfer to another, and graduate in a third. Alas, the old books' straight credential evaluation placements are not accepted by default anymore, although there are still colleagues who religiously quote them and refuse to accept modern, “heretical” ideas.

The second noticeable trend of this year's conference was the increased interest in international marketing and recruiting. As Cheryl Durrup-Boychuck put it, “The benefits of international student recruitment extend far beyond any figures with dollar signs in front of them. Yet, our supervisors increasingly demand justification for every penny in our budgets” (*Measuring Return in Investment in International Student Recruitment*). The attendees welcomed the examples of successful (and some not-so-successful) initiatives in student recruitment. The admissions-faculty collaboration session (*International Admissions and Academic Partnership in Recruitment*) was very well accepted and I believe that we will have more of those sessions in the future.

The third significant trend: the PowerPoint avalanche. Every presenter nowadays feels obliged to build a PowerPoint presentation, and I am okay with it as long as it enhances the content and the presenter is not willing to sacrifice the quality of the .PGF file in order to squeeze it in the pretty PP frame. I myself was using the dreaded application for visual communication with my audience—it is so easy, so handy. Another question is, can it meet the test of delivering a clear message by content and form? People are beginning to get tired of the same old PP form everywhere. For the first time in the sessions evaluations I heard comments such as, “Thank you for not reading aloud the text from the screen” or “Thank you for not reading verbatim the PP text.” Can you imagine how condescending to the audience it is to just read aloud the projected text? I believe that this is a sign that people are starting to get impatient with the overuse of PowerPoint slides. On the other side, I am happy that a lot of real paper is still circulating around in the admissions sessions, that people complain every time there are not enough hand-outs for all of them even if the presenter makes the soft PP copy available to them. Clearly, people expect quality information and they cannot be fooled by fancy templates and animated clip art. I expect that very soon we will shift toward rejecting the suffocating PowerPoint frame and re-inventing a clear visual design that reveals data and sends an unbiased message.

Admissions Section Report

I am very happy of the consistently positive responses to the admissions recruitment sessions. Let me summarize them: the raving reviews for the high school credential session presented by the academy trainee Peggy Bell together with Rita Cooper the very positive reaction to the informative and challenging session on high school credentials by Jean Ringer and Marybeth Gruenewald, the outstanding reviews for the advanced Bologna-placement discussion session presented by Robert Watkins, Marybeth Gruenewald and Hoai Nguyen, the excitement for the great knowledge resource of EDGE data base presented by Bill Paver, Deana Williams and Robert Watkins; the excellent session on fairness of assessment by Linda Kosene, and last but not least, the elegant, knowledgeable update on Bologna process by the awesome Robert Watkins.

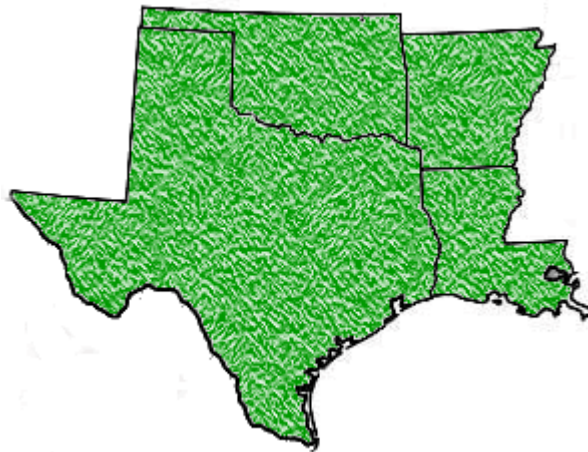
This year, true to the regional practice of offering different admissions workshops every year, we offered in Austin the graduate admissions workshop, delivered by one of the region's best seasoned professionals Linda John and Sandra Rodriguez.

Furthermore, I was happy to host our overseas advising guest, Wesley Teter, one of the ten Regional Educational Advising Coordinators worldwide. Wes updated us on new EducationUSA initiatives, scholarships and advertising options.

I want to thank all of the presenters who have put thought, work, and enthusiasm in preparing and delivering excellent sessions in this year's regional conference. Your hard work, dedication, and NAFSA spirit shape the face of the organization and make events like Austin conference a success.

I want to also thank the Region III Team, and especially Adria Baker, Julie Sinclair, and Mark Powell for their help in making the admissions and recruitment sessions and workshop successful.

A call for action: if you have good practice, new credentials interpretations, good recruiting and admissions experience to share, put in writing, provide good data and send in your proposal. I will be thrilled to hear about it at our next regional conference in Merida, Mexico. You can reach me at kkarabun@central.uh.edu.



Arkansas State Report

-- Amy Pennington, Arkansas State Representative

Greetings from Arkansas! Wow, what a semester! It always seems that each passing term goes by just a little bit quicker but with the same amount of work to accomplish. So, without further delay, here's a quick look at a few projects and upcoming events involving Arkansas NAFSAs.

On November 16 – 18, Arkansas NAFSA hosted the International Student Leadership Conference at the Lake Point Conference Center in Russellville, Arkansas. This conference is held every two years. Over 40 international and American student leaders from 12 Arkansas colleges and universities participated in the event. These campuses included the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, the University of Central Arkansas, Arkansas State University, the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, Hendrix, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas Tech University, Henderson State University, Northwest Arkansas Community College, Southern Arkansas University and the University of Arkansas-Monticello. Topics presented at the various sessions included time management, educating communities through servant leadership, strategic leadership and teamwork/collaboration. Thanks in part to funding from a NAFSA grant, this year's conference featured nationally recognized motivational speaker Paul Vitale. Overall, the conference was a huge success! One of the main goals of the leadership conference is to provide meaningful training for college students that will enhance student leadership on our campuses, in our communities and, even, in our world. A big thank you to the committee whose hard work made the event possible, Wayne Garner, Chairperson (SAU), Andrew Faulkner (UCA), Allyson Hughes (UALR), Dale Montgomery (NWACC), Veronikha Salazar (UAF), Anna Schumacher (ATU), Drew Smith (HSU), and Tricia Wempe (OBU).

In other news, Andrew Faulkner (UCA) has resigned as State Whip. He has worked tirelessly in all areas of advocacy in addition to serving on the committee that succeeded in pushing for a joint resolution in support of international education in Arkansas. A huge thank you to Andrew from all of us that you represented so well...you will be missed! On a positive note, Takeo Suzuki (UAFS) has very graciously agreed to serve as the new Arkansas State Whip. Takeo currently serves as the Executive Director for International Relations at the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith and has a great deal of experience in governmental relations. We wish you well and offer you our support.

It was really nice to see a large Arkansas contingent at the Regional Conference in Austin, TX. Especially nice, was the large number of newcomers! We are always excited to welcome new faces to our group. Also, thank you to all who donated items for the state basket.

Finally, the state meeting will be held on Friday, April 18, 2008, in Russellville, Arkansas, at the Lake Point Conference Center. Please mark this event on your calendar and encourage your campus colleagues interested in advancing international education initiatives to attend. Registration forms and the conference schedule will be available in January.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of our Region III colleagues!

State Reports

Oklahoma State Report

-- *Sunny Garner, Oklahoma State Representative*

More than 65 international educators from Oklahoma higher education institutions attended the State Conference on April 19, 2007. This year's conference was held in the Will Rogers Room of the Nigh University Center on the campus of The University of Central Oklahoma.

Outgoing State Liaison Sunny Garner from Oklahoma City Community College opened with an advocacy update and introduced incoming State Liaison Glenn Freeman from the University of Central Oklahoma.

Oklahoma City attorney Larry Davis opened the morning session with an immigration update while Gerry Auel from Oklahoma State University held a concurrent session on "Funding for Study Abroad".

Officer Tommie Nicholas from the local District USCIS Office updated everyone on changes relating to reinstatement procedures and other immigration matters. Officer Van Stephens updated attendees on ICE issues and reporting requirements. Jessica Hinson from SSA and Ken Miller from DMV gave presentations on international students interacting with their respective agencies. The coffee break was sponsored by The Language Company and lunch was provided by insurance provider Macori, Inc.

Afternoon sessions covered SEVP and employment options for international students. Diane Currie, SEVP Adjudicator, came in from Washington, D.C. to give an informative presentation about the latest developments with SEVP. Monica Sharp, Danika Hines, and Lin Goldston from the University of Oklahoma finished off the day with presentations on employment options for international students. Special thanks go to the University of Oklahoma for serving as Registrar for the conference.

After the State Conference, House Concurrent Resolution 1041 was introduced by Oklahoma State NAFSA Members and passed by Representative Shane Jett and Senator Cliff Aldridge. HCR 1041 was passed on May 21st, 2007 and supports Oklahomans studying abroad, globalizing curriculum in higher education and international students studying in Oklahoma.

Texas State Report

-- *Maggie Pinson, South Texas State Representative*

-- *Samanthia Spence, North Texas State Representative*

"Bigger and Better" is synonymous with Texas and this was certainly evident with the volume of attendees at the Texas State Meeting at the Region III Conference in Austin, Texas held this past November. The conference was extremely successful with an attendance that surpassed all previous Region III conferences and Texas contributed significantly to the numbers. We hope to see many of you again at the Texas State Meeting Friday, February 28, 2008 in Denton Texas at Texas Woman's University. In addition to the Texas State Meeting, NAFSA Professional Practice Workshops are scheduled to begin immediately after the meeting and will end on Saturday, March 1, 2008. **Juanita Dueñez-Lazo**, Director of International Education at Texas Woman's University has graciously offered to be the local arrangements chair and has already begun working on the arrangements. Barbara Harrison, Director, Office of International Programs, from Rice University in Houston will become our newest South Texas State Liaison effective January 2008. She has already started to help with the planning and we would like to extend a warm welcome to her. Maggie Pinson, our outgoing South Texas Liaison is continuing to offer her expertise to make this another outstanding meeting. We truly appreciate our meeting planners' time and their enthusiasm in bringing the upcoming Texas State Meeting together. Look for more information regarding the state meeting on the Texas State Website and to be sent out via e-mail later this month.

Immigration Update

-Madhuri V. Kumar, Regulatory Ombudsperson for Scholar Issues

-Maka Hutson, Regulatory Ombudsperson for Student Issues

Dear fellow NAFSANS,

The Regional conference in Austin, TX was an incredible success! The attendance was record-breaking, the hotel was beautiful, and the sessions were very informative. We had several government representatives participate at the conference, they represented the Department of Homeland Security (Student and Exchange Visitor Program), the Department of State, the Social Security Administration and the Texas Department of Public Safety. We hope you all enjoyed regulatory sessions with the latest updates in immigration policy and practice. We will see each other next at our state meetings in the spring. This is a great venue to start as a NAFSA presenter, if you've never presented at a NAFSA conferences before. We would like to invite you to submit a session proposal; please watch for the proposal forms to become available online very soon.

We would like to provide you with a summary of recent immigration updates that might be of interest.

USCIS Update

USCIS Raises Filing Fees. On July 30, 2007, USCIS raised the filing fees for all petitions and applications. New fees are available at the USCIS website www.uscis.gov/forms. Please note that a lot of the forms were updated as well. We always recommend to use the most recent forms for all of your petitions and applications.

TSC I-765 Processing. Texas Service Center processing of I-765 applications slowed down considerably in August (in some cases to over 100 days from receipt date) due to the receipt of a large number of permanent residency petitions. I-765 processing is back to about 60 days from the receipt date. Since interim EADs are no longer available at district offices, our recommendation is that students and scholars apply for their EADs 120 days prior to the desired start of employment.

RFE Response Timeframes. Beginning June 18, 2007, USCIS is no longer allowing a standard 12-week response time for Requests for Further Evidence (RFE). RFE responses will be set by USCIS officers for each individual case. Students, scholars and advisors should read the RFE carefully to make sure the response is submitted by the specific deadline.

USCIS Issues New Form I-9. USCIS has issued a revised Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification (dated 6/5/07), and M-274, Handbook for Employers, Instructions for Completing the Form I-9 (dated 11/1/2007). Employers may begin using these forms now. The forms and the handbook are available on the NAFSA website at www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec.

VSC Changes Expedite and Service Error Correction Procedures. As of November 1, 2007, the Vermont Service Center (VSC) will no longer accept expedite requests or service errors via fax. The fax number currently used for expedite requests (802.527.4816) will be disabled. All customers or their representatives needing to request an expedite will be required to call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1.800.375.5283.

For employment case inquiries, schools must call the NCSC for information and ask "if a referral be taken and sent to VSC?" For problematic cases, continue to report on NAFSA Issue Net.

Immigration Update

DOS Update

Effective January 1, 2008, the application fee for a U.S. non-immigrant visa will increase from \$100 to \$131. Applicants who paid the prior \$100 application fee before January 1 will be processed only if they are scheduled and appear for a visa interview before January 31. Applicants who paid the prior \$100 application fee and appear for visa interviews after January 31, 2008 must pay the difference — \$31 — before they will be interviewed.

For more information read the Dept. of State announcement: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/dec/97384.htm>

DOS Guide For ROs and AROs of Exchange Visitor Programs. The Department of State (DOS) Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation prepared this Guide to assist Responsible Officers (ROs) and Alternate Responsible Officers (AROs) in carrying out their responsibilities. The Guide provides helpful reminders about the Exchange Visitor Program regulations and the use of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), and answers some commonly asked questions. The guide is available on the NAFSA website at www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec.

Final Rule on EVP Fees Effective December 3, 2007. The final rule implementing new and increased fees for Exchange Visitor Program services is effective December 3, 2007. The new fee “For filing an application for program designation and/or redesignation (Form DS-3036)” is **\$1,748**. The rule affects the fees and charges for Exchange Visitor Program services, but does not affect fees charged by the separate Waiver Review Division.

Pay.gov Mandatory as of August 31, 2007. DOS no longer accepts checks for fees for program extension, change of category, reinstatement, etc. Program sponsors must make these payments through their pay.gov accounts. Detailed instructions and a NAFSA practice advisory on obtaining a pay.gov account are available on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec.

US ICE SEVP Update

SEVP Posts I-515A Tool Kit. On October 4, 2007 SEVP posted a 4-page “I-515A Tool Kit” that encourages students to carry proper documentation when traveling, and other tips to reduce the number of I-515As issued and the delays experienced by students at ports of entry. The toolkit is available on the NAFSA Regulatory Information website at www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec.

SEVP Changes SEVI Hit Removal Procedure. Students whose SEVIS status is Active or Initial and who have valid immigration documents sometimes experience a delay in visa issuance or entry to the U.S. due to a SEVI Hit as a result of a previously terminated record. If a student is experiencing repeated problems with re-entry, DSOs can call to remove the hit. Information to be included in the e-mail: student’s name, DOB, SEVIS ID, airport and date when student entered the U.S.

Immigration

SEVP Updates F-1 Transfer Advisory. The Student and Exchange Visitor Program posted an important revision to its FAQ on F-1 student transfers. Two highlights of the revised FAQ include: 1. New rule for transfer of terminated SEVIS records. [FAQ 2.3 and 5.5.2] In a reversal of the position SEVP took in its prior FAQ, SEVP now confirms that it is possible to transfer a terminated SEVIS record to another school. The FAQ also provides the procedures to do so. 2. Limitation on the transfer of new initial records. [FAQ 2.4] The prior FAQ set forth procedures and justification for transferring the SEVIS record of new initial students who requested a transfer without ever enrolling at the original school. The revised FAQ retains that procedure, but now says that a student is eligible for such a transfer only if he or she has been accepted by another SEVP-certified school with a program start date that is within 30 days of the student's initial admission into the United States. If the new program start date is not within 30 days of entry, the student must study at the original school until eligible for a regular transfer, or withdraw from the program and have his or her SEVIS record terminated for reason "Authorized Early Withdrawal," leave the United States within 15 days, and reenter later with a new I-20 from a new school. Read the full text of the SEVP transfer advisory: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/f_1_transfers.htm

SEVIS Release 5.4 Effective as of June 29, 2007. Training slides from telephone DSO/ARO trainings conducted by SEVP in June 2007 are available online at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/outreach.htm#>. DSOs and AROs who did not have an opportunity to go through the telephone training are encouraged to study the slides for the information presented in the training.

Employment-based Immigration

H-1B Cap Reached for FY 2008. USCIS announced on April 3, 2007 that it has received a sufficient number of H-1B petitions to meet the congressionally mandated cap for fiscal year 2007 (FY 2007). The "final receipt date" for H-1B petitions subject to the FY 2007 annual cap was May 26, 2006. The additional cap of 20,000 for graduates of U.S. masters and higher degree programs was reached on July 26, 2006.

No I-485 Receipt Needed for H and L Nonimmigrants Who Travel. Effective November 1, 2007, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) removed the requirement that certain H and L nonimmigrants returning to the United States following a trip abroad while their adjustment of status applications are pending must present an I-485 receipt notice to avoid having such applications deemed abandoned. Showing the I-485 receipt notice is no longer required.

End of Backlog in Permanent Labor Certification. The Department of Labor reported that "As of September 30, 2007, the Backlog in the Permanent Labor Certification program has been eliminated, with nearly 99% of cases completed. Both of the Backlog Elimination Centers (BECs) have started a transition and shutdown phase that will continue through December. The BECs will continue to use the general information email boxes as the communication source for a limited period. These addresses are: info@dal.dflc.us (Dallas BEC) or info@phi.dflc.us (Philadelphia BEC). Case status can be checked at <http://pds.pbls.doleta.gov>."

As always, we enjoy serving you, and we hope to see you all at the upcoming state meetings in spring 2007!