

MCAC Regional Digest

<http://education.state.gov/advisers>

Fall 2004.

Updates

- REAC
- ECA

Special Interest:

- Face-to-face with the competition
- New SEVIS Fee Regulation
- Advising Center Certification

Professional Development:

- Inside stories
- Upcoming Opportunities



REAC Update

Dear Advisers,

We've had quite a bit of activity over the past few months. As you'll read in the Inside Stories, many of you had great experiences during the NAFSA conference. It was wonderful to see so many of you there representing your country and our region. I was glad that you were able to take part in this important international education event. I hope to see more of you applying for travel grants next year to be able to take part in this excellent professional development opportunity.

Most of my travel lately has been to the U.S., but I'm looking forward to more regional travel in the coming months. Next month I'll make a trip down to Nicaragua and Honduras to visit Shany in Managua, Michael in Tegucigalpa, and Jessica in San Pedro Sula. In September I plan to visit Guillermo, Letty and Matilde in Mérida, México. Then hopefully in October, I'll head back down to Panama to be opening up a long-awaited advising center in Panama City.

I've included information in this edition of the MCAC regional digest that I hope appeals to all of you. We've had a lot of exchange lately on

the listserv about the issues we're facing with international competition. I hope you find that the article, Face-to-face with the competition, provides some insight to the challenges we face in U.S. educational advising. The information on the new SEVIS fee regulation is presented to you in a summary of the Federal Register notification, by our IIE intern, Marissa White. And you'll also find a brief review of the EAC certification and self-assessment that you're all filling out now.

Among all the other goodies, I hope you'll enjoy the photo gallery. Most of these pictures were taken during the Country Fair at NAFSA, but you'll also see a picture from our regional dinner with South American advisers (see if you can spot Jean in the picture), and another from our participation in the South American regional conference almost a year ago!

In our next edition of the MCAC regional digest, I'll be including a section on best practices for outreach activities and I hope to hear from as many of you as possible who would like to share with your colleagues on tips and guidelines for outreach programs for the busy fall season.

Thanks team!

~Nichole



MCAC and South America Regional Dinner

ECA Update

Dear Advisers,

It was great to see a number of you at this year's NAFSA annual conference. As usual, your professionalism and knowledge of your field was evident to all who met you in Baltimore. The conference already seems a long time ago, and the deadline for proposals for next year's conference is coming up soon — August 2. I hope that many of you will consider proposing sessions on your countries' educational systems.

As you'll read below, my office is interested in working intensively on the advising center certification process in the next few months. Although filling out the self-evaluation takes some time, it's another good opportunity to think about your accomplishments and how you want to build on them. REACs and program officers are talking about what kind of packet we would like to prepare for the certified centers, and we'll keep you up-to-date on this as we develop our ideas.

You've probably also noticed from the list serv that there have been a number of messages about the EducationUSA and EducationUSA Advisers' websites. We are lucky to have both a web specialist and a super-intern working with us who are focusing on how to enhance the sites. Thanks to all for your involvement and willingness to help with website improvement.

Announcements about training possibilities for the coming year should be out soon. Take a look at the list later in the newsletter to see what might help your professional development.

A pleasant summer to all,
Jean



Earl and Camille setting up for the Country Fair



Maritza explaining Guatemalan higher education



Cheryl setting up for the Country Fair



El Salvador at Country Fair

Deadlines

EAC Self-Assessment

Deadline: September 1, 2004

<http://educationusa.state.gov/advisers.htm>

Winter MCAC Regional Digest Article Submission

Theme: Outreach Activities

Deadline: November 15, 2004

Face to face with the competition

Throughout the decades, the United States has been the main destination for international students pursuing higher education abroad. U.S. institutions of higher education have attracted international students eager to continue their studies in quality programs, enhance their English language skills, and live and study in a country renowned for its high quality education institutions and the unparalleled standards of individual freedom. However, over the past several years, U.S. institutions have been reporting a dramatic decrease in international student applications. Many attribute this trend to heightened U.S. border security measures and steadily rising tuition costs. "In an interview, Victor Johnson, associate executive director for public policy of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, expressed fear that recent events could undermine '50 years of efforts to educate successive generations of world leaders and to make the U.S. into the destination of choice for people who want to pursue higher education outside their country.'"¹

But one cannot ignore the impressive recruiting efforts of international agencies being represented by educational programs in other countries. Many of you, like your advising colleagues around the world, have commented on the strong marketing presence of the British, Australians, and Canadians in promoting the educational programs in their countries. These English-speaking countries have been quick to emphasize their willingness to welcome such students not only in undergraduate and graduate programs, but also in intensive English study.

Over the past several years, the Canadian higher education system has been successful in recruiting prospective students from around the world. "A recent e-mail to schools and recruiters from Canada's Education Center Network, predicted that a 'growing suspicion toward foreign students in the U.S. would 'discourage many applicants' and benefit 'more welcoming' countries that adapt their marketing strategies to take advantage.'"² In addition, Canadian institutions do not require admissions exams, like the SAT. They rely

solely on high school transcripts and English proficiency tests (e.g. TOEFL). Canada, known for its low security measures, does not require that international students apply for visas for short-term study of less than six months.

With the increase in popularity of foreign higher education, the sudden challenge offers the United States the opportunity to revisit its marketing strategies of U.S. higher education. Awareness of recruitment policies and services offered by foreign institutions can provide tools to developing marketing campaigns that revive interest in U.S. institutions. "The U.S. government has never had to run promotions. Foreign students, hoping for degrees and jobs here, accepted no substitutes for American English. Today, studying the language's rival "brands" is coming to hold the same appeal, without all the complications."²

U.S. higher education institutions and the Department of State entrusts the network of overseas educational advisers to provide information to prospective international students on the opportunities available to the U.S. But now more than ever, we need to strengthen our efforts in promoting U.S. higher education to reach out to all students interested in continuing their education abroad.

This means that we need to learn from our competitors in how to acquire the attention of the international student community. By learning from other international English speaking communities, we can in turn develop our recruiting efforts into molding our system into a more user-friendly environment, which will in turn encourage the aspiration of international students wanting to study in the United States

New Advisers

Camille Smith, Bahamas
Cheryl Licorish, Barbados
Leslie Nisbet, Belize
Wycliffe McAllister, Guyana
Michael Harris, Tegucigalpa - Honduras
Socorro Najera; Mexico - Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas
Latoya Reid, Montserrat
Judith Dijks, Suriname

New SEVIS Fee Regulations

A Summary of Federal Register; Volume 69, Number 126

By Marissa White

Many of you are already familiar with the term SEVIS, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. SEVIS has been put in place by the Department of Homeland Security as an internet-based system in order to maintain current information on non-immigrant students and J exchange visitors (J students and J research scholars) and their dependents (those with either F, M or J visa status). The idea of SEVIS is to monitor F, M and J visa holders from the time they receive their visa documents (Form I-20 or Form DS-2019) until they complete their programs, and is in place for the duration of a student's stay in the United States.

Under the discretion of SEVIS, educational institutions are required to provide regular electronic reports to the DHS. SEVIS is needed to be informed on how far along a student is in their academic career, as well as if they have a change of address. SEVIS works through the cooperation of colleges and universities, U.S. embassies and consulates, U.S. ports of entry, the Department of State, as well as exchange visitor programs in monitoring student progress.

The new application fee for SEVIS will be implemented on September 1st, 2004. It will be applied to potential non-immigrants that are issued either a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 on or after the proposed date. Students receive these forms once they have applied to their desired academic institutions in the United States. The fee amount will be \$100 U.S., and will be required to all F, M and J visa holders, with the exception given to au pairs, camp counselors, or participants in summer work/travel programs who will be subject to a fee

of \$35. The SEVIS fee is a one-time fee for each student or exchange visitor as long as they continue to maintain their student visa status.

The purpose in mandating the fee is to support the costs of establishing localized personnel, or SEVIS Liaison Officers. The cost will help in providing special benefits, including the costs of enforcement, collection, research, as well as establishment of standards and regulations, when calculating its fees.

The process for paying the fee can be done so by mail, by submitting Form I-901, Fee Remittance for Certain F, M and J nonimmigrants together with a check or money order from a United States bank and payable in U.S. currency; or the fee may be paid electronically by completing Form I-901 through the Internet and using a credit card. Additionally, payment can be made by international bank money order or foreign draft drawn through a financial institution in the United States. The DHS also clarifies that any Visa, MasterCard, or American express credit card, whether issued in the United States or overseas, can be used to pay the fee over the Internet.

Need to check if a U.S. College or University is accredited?

The Council of Higher Education Accreditation is a private, nonprofit national organization that coordinates accreditation activity in the U.S. and collaborates with the U.S. Department of Education for quality assurance of U.S. educational programs.

On this site you can search by Name of Institution, State, or Name of Recognized Accrediting Body to find out detailed information about the accreditation of any U.S. institution.

<http://www.chea.org/institutions/search.cfm>

Advising Center Certification

The first step in the Advising Center Certification process is a self-assessment by the senior adviser in each advising center. The self-assessment will afford each adviser the opportunity to evaluate his/her center and to identify areas where improvements may be needed. For our part, we see this as a way for each center to grade itself against a set of objective standards of excellence. With the results from the self-assessment survey, the Regional Educational Advising Coordinator (REAC) in each region will then be able to work with you to determine how best to make whatever improvements might be indicated.

You have been asked to complete the self-assessment by September 1, 2004. I believe that this due date will allow you a sufficient amount of time to complete the assessment. The self-assessment form and more information about the self-assessment process is

available on the password-protected Advisers section of the Department of State website at

<http://educationusa.state.gov/advisers>.

Once you've completed the self-assessment forms, Jean and I will be coordinating with your PAO or CAO to certify your center. Upon certification of your center you will receive a packet of materials to help you promote your services, including a memorandum of understanding between the Embassy and your institution, a press release, and a packet of promotional materials from ECA.

Professional Development

Inside Story

Seven MCAC advisers participated in the 56th Annual NAFSA conference this year in Baltimore, Maryland. Check out their comments about this year's event.

"NAFSA, The Association of International Educators, has been quite helpful in developing and providing resources and opportunities for training and networking for me. This exposure helps to keep one current in the student advising arena and brings to the fore common issues/concerns, while providing an ongoing forum for the discussion of related developments and possible solutions.

My prime interest is on leveling the playing field for opportunities for study in the U.S. for Caribbean students. The conference provided the opportunity to sensitize admission and international recruiting personnel from U.S. tertiary institutions and other related bodies, about the unique qualities (apart from being fully educationally prepared) that the Caribbean student takes with him or her to the campuses where they are admitted."

Earl Alfred

Nassau, Bahamas

OSEAS Liaison for Latin America

"My host institution is interested in establishing an exchange program that will allow native speakers to come to our country and become part of the staff to teach EFL. During the conference I could meet people from different organizations such as Cultural Embrace, Amity, etc. I have already contacted Cultural Embrace and started talking about the possibility of establishing such a program."

Marta Carranza

San Salvador, El Salvador

"In addition to the valuable information I received from the sessions which I attended, I would like to mention that my participation at the country fair was very resourceful, as I have already been contacted by some university representatives and agencies wishing to start exploring new education markets in Guatemala."

Maritza Rodas

Guatemala City, Guatemala



Mark and Micaela representing Mexico

I participated in a communication workshop that will help me not only with my advisees but with my employees as well, being an adviser and a Director General is not that easy and the communication skills although they were focused on an international classroom, will be of very much help with my international staff."

*Micaela Martinez
Saltillo, Mexico*

"Attending the NAFSA conference afforded me the opportunity to meet with various professionals in education. I learned quite a lot from the sessions that I attended and from conversations with other attendees. I was stimulated by the fresh strategies and solutions that were posited by participants. My level of awareness was greatly heightened and my knowledge base was increased by the information presented. This opportunity to participate in the 56th Annual Conference has armed me with additional skills related to my profession, and has renewed my commitment to assisting students as they try to access higher education abroad."

*Cheryl Licorish
Bridgetown, Barbados*

"The workshops provide a wealth of information and bibliography and personal contacts (with the presenters). There are abundant opportunities to meet new people in the field who often share a specific interest or goal with me. The OSEAS and State Department representatives are my closest colleagues and this meeting gives me an opportunity to know them and learn from them."

*Mark Leyes
Oaxaca, Mexico*

Alphabet Soup!

SEVP

Student and Exchange Visitor Program

SEVIS

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

-Technology used in SEVP

DHS

Department of Homeland Security
-Formerly INS – Immigration and Naturalization Service

BCIS or CIS

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services

-Formerly part of INS -

-Handles Immigration Adjudication

BICE or ICE

Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement

-Formerly Border Security

-Handles SEVIS program

Upcoming Opportunities

NAFSA PDP – Online Workshop on Overseas Educational Advising for U.S. Study

Description:

- 8-week course offered twice a year via Internet
- Review the basics of EducationUSA advising and the tools and resources available
- Network with other EducationUSA Advisers around the world

Requirements:

- Up to 1 year experience in EducationUSA Advising
- Internet Access
- Participation in online classroom activities for an estimated two hours per week
- Written consent from Supervisor/Director



South America Regional Conference

U.S.-Based Training (USBT) Program

Description:

- 3-week training program in the U.S. for mid-level overseas educational adviser
- Workshops on advising topics and
- Tour a variety of U.S. colleges and universities
- Attendance at a national or regional NAFSA conference

Requirements:

- At least 2 years experience with EducationUSA Advising
- Nomination from REAC and PAO or CAO
- Written consent from Supervisor / Director

Professional Advising Leadership (PAL) Fellows Program

Description:

- Self-designed training program for senior-level advisers
- Proposals will include a combination of short-term training, conference attendance, independent research, and/or on-site shadowing/internship.

Requirements:

- At least 5 years experience with EducationUSA Advising
- Written proposal outlining adviser's professional development project
- Nomination from REAC and PAO or CAO
- Written consent from Supervisor / Director

What is Inter-L?

Inter-l@yahoogroups.com (Inter-I) is a networking group for those involved in the many facets of international education. There are almost 1500 participants in the listserv, including admissions officers and international student advisers at U.S. college and university; EducationUSA advisers and REACs, and members of other professional associations such as NAFSA. Individuals send emails to their colleagues requesting information on a range of topics from student visa processing to foreign educational systems. Inter-I provides the perfect platform for advisers and REACs to promote EducationUSA and ensure that U.S. colleges and universities are aware of the indispensable services provided at advising centers.

If you are not yet receiving emails from Inter-I, send an email to inter-l-subscribe@yahoogroups.com, and type "Subscribe" in the subject line. You don't need to include any text in the message. After you send your email, you will get a confirmation request email from Inter-L. Follow the instructions to start participating in Inter-L.

There are anywhere from 3 to 15 messages sent out daily by Inter-L participants. If you would rather avoid the influx of emails, you can request that you receive one email per day from Inter-L with a list of all messages submitted that day. To choose this option, once you've already subscribed, send a message to inter-l-digest@yahoogroups.com, and type "Digest" in the subject line.



From left to right: Barbara Keenan, Nichole Johnson, Rafael Castellanos (BNC Director), Maria Elena Saucedo (PAS Guadalajara), Eva Mejia, Leticia Rendón and assistant.



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