

IIE Special Webinar on Brazil Science Without Borders

Questions and Answer Session with Ed Monks

On June 12th, IIE hosted a special webinar on the Brazil Science Without Borders Program, featuring Ed Monks, Head of SWB Program & Director of Enrichment and Professional Development (emonks@iie.org), and Sidney Jones, Pre-Academic/English Language Training Programs (sjones@iie.org). The following questions were raised by those in attendance:

1. Can students decide which school they are submitted to?

-For the first two cohorts, the students did not have an opportunity to decide which schools they were submitted to. Going forward, for the next cohort, they will have an opportunity to indicate 3 institutions that they prefer to be submitted to. We obviously cannot make any guarantees that they will be accepted by those institutions, or that those institutions are actually participating in this program. But they will have the opportunity to make some requests. We are also going to give that opportunity to the BSWB coordinators, at their Brazilian universities. Each university in Brazil has a coordinator for this program, who works directly with the students, and so they will be able to guide their students in perhaps suggesting a university or a college that they feel the student would be very successful at.

2. Can we request students from specific institutions in Brazil?

-Yes. The BSWB coordinators at the universities in Brazil are going to be a part of this process going forward, and they will know what kind of partnerships they have with specific institutions in the US. We will also collect that information from you, knowing that you have specific relations with institutions in Brazil. You will also be able to indicate to us students that you might be made aware of who have indicated an interest in being submitted to your university. This will make our job easier and it will make the program more successful for everyone. I know that is something that everyone is very interested in doing, and that is the direction we will head. The process will be in place for the next group, which we expect to begin working on sometime early this Fall.

3. Do students only take STEM courses or can they take courses outside of the STEM fields?

-Most of the students want to take only STEM courses, however they are permitted to take courses outside of the STEM fields and I do know that many colleges and universities have policies where students cannot take only STEM courses. The students are made aware of this, and I think it's helpful for them to be in direct contact with their advisors prior to coming to the US and prior to arriving on campus, to discuss what courses are going to be available, so that the expectations can be set.

4. What is the English proficiency of the students? Can they take ESL classes at the same time as their academic courses?

-The students that we are placing in pre-academic English courses for the summer have TOEFL scores that fall between 61 and 78. Those students are being placed in English courses that are 6-8 weeks long. The students that are going directly into their academic programming have TOEFL scores of 79 or higher. In terms of taking ESL courses at the same time as their academic courses, that is something that we do not have provisions for at this time. We really want the students to

get the full academic year experience, and for that reason we want them to be enrolled during their academic terms in full-time academic coursework.

5. How many students can a school host?

-That depends on the size of the institution and the fields of study that are offered at that institution. Very large schools are hosting up to 20 students, and smaller institutions are hosting anywhere from 1 to 5, so it's a range, but it does depend on what the schools indicate on their registration form with IIE, there's a field there that requests how many students you're willing to review for admission. You can indicate there how many in each area that you decide. It's a decision by the schools, IIE, and the student populations we're working with. We don't want to place too many students at any one institution but there is technically no cap.

6. Does an institution have to be a member of the Common Application to host students?

-No. IIE is using the Common Application, but if the institution is not a member of the Common Application, we can e-mail you a pdf of the application, in order for you to make a decision. We do require that institutions accept the document from IIE in order to make their decision. When institutions come back to us and say that they need students to complete institution-specific forms, that complicates the process greatly. What we're asking is that institutions make an admission decision based on the information that we provide, and then after the student accepts the placement, the institution is in direct contact with the student, and then request any kind of institution-specific form to be completed.

7. Does an institution have to be a member of IIE to host students?

-No, but we do encourage everyone in the higher education community to join.

8. Do we have to appear on a list of approved institutions?

-No. There was a list of institutions published by CNPQ in Brazil for a program that they were administering that indicated universities around the world that were approved to accept students. That is not a list of schools that can accept students through this program. There is no list of institutions. You are free to complete the IIE registration form at any time, and any institution that offers a very strong program in any of the fields that these students are applying for is considered.

9. Does the university need to provide some kind of funding to the students?

-No, there is no requirement for universities at this time. IIE is paying the full cost of tuition, room, and board. They also receive their roundtrip travel and health insurance, so it's a fully funded program.

10. We are a small liberal arts college that would not be well-known in Brazil by a coordinator nor a Brazilian student, so it would probably be rare for a coordinator or a Brazilian student to specifically request our institution, even though we're well-known here, nationally. How could we ensure that we will continue to receive a group of applications, moving forward with future cohorts? (In response to this next 3rd cohort being able to submit specific requests)

-We still expect that there will be many students that don't have specific requests. And we also expect that many of those specific requests are going to be for some institutions that are not either currently participating, or certainly not able to take the number of students that might request

them. And so, there will still be the opportunity for IIE to make a match. We will be doing that based on the information that you provided in your registration form, and obviously the knowledge that we have of you and your institution, so if you offer a particularly strong program, obviously especially in one of the STEM fields, that should be indicated on that form.

11. How does the ESL training work?

-We want the students to be enrolled in a full-time program, again for 6-8 weeks, in intensive English. Some of our students are enrolled in academic English programs, some of them are enrolled in programs that are teaching them English that is specific to the STEM field, but really the goal is that they have that period of time during the summer to focus fully on their English skills, so that when they are in their academic programs for the semester they will have already had that background to help them get to a level that will allow them to really focus on their academic training. Being that the program is only a year old, there are still a lot of things that are developing; people are making decisions to add components. There is the possibility that we would be looking to place students in ESL programs this fall, not just academic programs, and those students would then take a 6-12 week ESL program, and then begin an academic program in January. We are not certain at this time that this will happen but there's a strong possibility.

12. Does the ESL training component have to be at the same school where the academic training will occur?

-It does not have to be. This year we tried to keep the students at the same institution as much as possible, but for a number of reasons that is not always possible. There are some cases for this current cohort where the students will be switching to another institution in the fall, which is fine. I think there are a lot of advantages to both options.

13. If we are not a designated J sponsor, can we still host students?

-No. IIE is providing the J-1 sponsorship under our exchange visitor program. We provide the J-1 in the student non-degree category. At the end of the academic semester/year, we will take care of the work involved in extending them for academic training.

14. How is the strength of a program determined? Is there a rubric/matrix used?

-No rubric is used. However, IIE has some institutional knowledge about the various institutions across the country that have applied to host students.

15. Can IIE produce a list of participating institutions to provide for students?

-No, we don't have any intention of sending out a list of participating institutions to the students. That would complicate the process on our end greatly.

16. Has IIE considered using statewide organizations, such as Study Illinois, to spread information about applicants?

-Not to spread information about applicants. In the past we have used those, such as in the case of Massachusetts, to spread word to all of the institutions within the state to complete the IIE registration form to host students.

17. Do you anticipate in the future that students will need to be in ESL programs that are a minimum of 6 weeks?

-Yes. As we continue to run and grow this program, we anticipate that if anything the minimum for the program will grow rather than decrease. 6 weeks is our current minimum. We are hoping for the Fall, if we have a program, that we'll be able to place students in programs that are actually longer than 8 weeks. That's just because the lower a student's TOEFL score might be, and the longer a program is, the more it will benefit the student.

18. If your school has already submitted an application to SWB, and has hosted students but would like to make changes to the application, is that possible and how?

-Yes. We are going to be sending out an updated survey to all institutions that have signed up. We will likely be doing that in late August/early September, so that we can get the latest information from you for placement that would be taking place for January and for the following August. So we will need information from you on start dates, tuition, and room and board figures; that will be your opportunity to also add any additional information.

19. Is there an ESL list, and how do you get on it? Is there another application to fill out?

-Yes, there is a separate application for the ESL program and we do anticipate sending out an updated copy of that survey some time during the summer. E-mail sjones@iie.org to be put on the ESL list.

20. If an institution was not chosen to be a host in the past, what is the likelihood that it will be chosen in the future?

-It's not that you weren't chosen as a host institution, it was that the population of students that we were dealing with may not have made a good fit to the staff that were reviewing those applications. So there's a very high likelihood that you would be receiving students at some point in the future. We do know that the program is going to be going on for a few years, and the likelihood that all of the schools that have indicated interest of receiving students is very high. Just to give you an idea, for January we were working with and successfully placed students at a little over 100 institutions. I know that so far, and we are not yet complete, we have placed at over 250 institutions for students that would begin their program in August. As the group grows, so will the number of institutions where we'll be able to place students.

21. How do the course equivalencies work for the students to get credit at their home institutions?

-That is something that is the responsibility of the student and their coordinator, and the professors in Brazil, working with their advisor on the US campus. I do know that many of them work before they arrive to look and communicate with their advisors here in the US, to see what courses are going to be offered, and which ones they will be able to use to transfer back to their university in Brazil in order for them to graduate on time. IIE is not playing any role in that, we are leaving it up to the students and their coordinators in Brazil, and their advisors here in the US.

22. If you are not selected to be a host institution in one year, do you have to keep reapplying to stay on the list?

-Yes. You will have to keep updating your information. We will send you the surveys in 2013 as we did this year.

23. Will the cohorts only be for 2-semester programs, or will you ever offer one semester options?

-Right now the Brazilian government is only offering 2-semester programs. However, there is the possibility that one semester or a short semester will be just for English training, and the 2nd semester will be for academic coursework. Right now, there isn't the option for a student to come for one academic semester.

24. Do the translations of the transcripts have to be certified by an official translator in Brazil, or can the university provide a transcript translated in English with the stamp of the university?

- The university can provide a transcript translated in English with the stamp of the university. They can also work with Education USA representatives in Brazil on those translations.

25. Are community colleges eligible for the program?

-Right now, the cohort of students that IIE is working with, are junior or senior level students in Brazil. However it is my understanding that there is a community college initiative being developed, and community colleges will be participating in the near future.

26. How many different schools are the dossiers sent to?

-Currently they are sent to one institution, and if that institution gets back to us and says that we might have made a mistake or that the program that the student is interested in is full, or we don't offer exactly what it is this student needs, then we will submit the student to another institution. So it depends, but in the great majority of cases we do only submit to one university and it works out, but there is a small percentage for which we need to look for a second option.

27. Please explain what is meant by "after one year study, followed by internship or academic training."

-The students are going to be taking academic coursework for 2 semesters. Typically, at the end of their second semester, they would be taking an internship. They would hopefully be able to find an internship opportunity, and we are asking the colleges and universities that host these students to make available to them all of the resources that they can in order to help them secure an internship. However, we are also at IIE collecting information and coordinating with many different companies, and posting those opportunities on our website that the students can apply to. We're also sending out e-mails to those students in those various fields. So if a particular company says that they have opportunities for electrical engineering students, IIE will send an e-mail to all of the electrical engineering students, inviting them to apply.

28. Will there be any changes to the intensive language policy for students with a TOEFL over 78 but do not meet a sub-score requirement?

-At this point, no. If your institution has a sub-score requirement that the student does not meet, we would most likely submit their application to another institution.

29. Are students required to go back to Brazil after the program? What if they want to continue their studies in the US?

-They are absolutely required to return to Brazil after the program. All of these students need to graduate from their university in Brazil. One of the requirements for them to be accepted and approved by CAPES and CNPQ is that they have completed a minimum amount of credits in Brazil,

but a maximum as well, so that they are not completing their program in the US, and able to stay on. I think that one of the goals of the program is to create interest for these students in perhaps pursuing graduate studies at a university in the US, and so eventually maybe they would be able to return and pursue a graduate degree. When they have completed their 2 academic semesters and internship, they must return to Brazil. IIE will not transfer sponsorship.

30. Is there a list of participating Brazilian institutions? Is it possible to get a list of the coordinators in Brazil? For purposes of meeting up with counterparts if travelling in Brazil.

-There is no current list of coordinators, but we can work on it. It will either be posted on the website or e-mailed out.

31. Someone spoke with a Brazilian researcher who said her students are receiving only \$800 a month while in the US. Is this accurate?

-We can't be sure how accurate that statement is. If this is a student who is just doing research at a US university and came on the program before IIE was involved, we can't speak to their financial situation. The group of students who came in January, who are either in an internship or staying at their university over the summer months to engage in a research program with a professor, are receiving either: IIE is paying for their room and board and they are receiving \$300/month spending money, or they are receiving \$890/month and a \$400 travel allowance, for the summer months.

32. Have you completed all the applications for cohort 2 for the Fall 2012 semester? When you will begin working on referrals for Spring 2013?

-We are nearly complete on the work for the Fall cohort. By the end of June we will be complete. We expect to begin placements for the Spring semester by early October at the latest. However, we can't be certain of the dates, because I'm not sure when the call for applications is going to be published in Brazil. I have heard that it will be sometime in early July but I do not know.

33. Can you explain the difference between how CAPES and CNPQ applications are being handled or administered? If a student is going to CNPQ, do they need to have their ds-2019 issued through IIE or can the school do this directly?

-CAPES is the foundation in the ministry of education and CNPQ is the foundation in the ministry in science and technology. All of CAPES students have come through IIE. The CNPQ students had several different options, and basically what they did was they applied through what's called in Brazil a quota system, where each of the Brazilian universities were able to nominate a certain number of students to CNPQ for this program. Then it was up to the students to secure an admission at a US university, and submit the proof that they were admitted to CNPQ with various other documents in order for them to then be approved. This did happen in about 45/200 applications that I know of. The proper procedures were followed by the students, by the schools that they were applying to. Those students will be under the IIE umbrella in terms of us paying for their tuition fees, room, and board. We have offered to produce the ds-2019 for those students, but it seems that in many cases the schools have already issued either an i-20 or a ds-2019 to many of them. If that's the case, we are not going to complicate the situation any more than it needs to be. And so the students are just going to proceed applying for their visas under the sponsorship of the institution, and IIE is still going to be able to pay their bills, once we have their names cleared by CNPQ. If you have CNPQ applicants, I would urge you to make sure that those students have gone through the proper procedures to be approved by CNPQ, and I know that they need to do that

before August 5th. Going forward, it is my understanding that all undergraduate students will be applying through the public call; there will be no more of this “quota system.” All undergraduate students on the SWB programs will be applying through the IIE channel.

34. Will the academic training be limited to post-completion of studies, or can it be used concurrent with course enrollment? What happens if students cannot secure an internship?

-For this first group of students, because they were here over the summer between two semesters, those that weren't able to secure an internship opportunity were able to stay on campus and take courses, or go to a different university that offered summer courses. I do not believe that that is going to be an option open to the students next year. I believe that the students who are not able to secure an internship will go home. And so there will be that incentive. It is highly discouraged for an internship to take place concurrently with an academic semester. In general, the academic training needs to happen at the end of the students' academic program, and it cannot last any longer than their academic program.

35. Does a research experience, or a student working in a research laboratory, count as internship for the purposes of the program?

-Yes.

36. What are the minimum hours for an internship?

-20-40 hours/week in an 8-12 week timeframe.

37. Do paid internships work with the SWB program?

-Yes.

38. What is the health insurance provided under the J? What institutions have stronger health insurance requirements?

-We actually prefer to purchase the university's health insurance. That is something that we are doing as part of the tuition fees/room/board; for each student we are purchasing the university's insurance. That insurance does have to meet the minimum J requirements, which most university health insurance does. There is usually one section, medical evacuation and repatriation of remains, that sometimes isn't included. If it's not, we would be able to purchase that coverage for the student through IIE, but in the great majority of cases it is a non-issue.

39. What tools or resources are being used to match a student to a specific university? For example, if there are 3 schools in New York with strong math programs, how would a student find the right fit?

-For example, we would then look at the TOEFL requirements of the institutions, student interest in an urban vs. sub-urban area, or student interest in a specific extra-curricular activity.

40. Who do we work with to get students enrolled in classes? Do we work with the students directly? Do most institutions have a coordinator?

-I am finding that most institutions are finding it useful to designate a coordinator, but not all of them do at this point. The schools would work directly with the student, to decide which courses the student should take. The student would then be responsible for communicating with their

Brazilian university, usually through their SWB coordinator, to make sure that the courses they are taking here will transfer back to Brazil. Those universities in Brazil that are sending students on this program agreed with CAPES to accept the credits; that was one of the conditions for universities in Brazil to sign up for this program.

41. What level are the students coming in as (sophomores/juniors/seniors)?

-The overwhelming majority of students are coming in as juniors. There will be a handful of seniors as well.

42. What are some of other types of programs, outside of the STEM field, that students are able to apply for?

-We have seen art history, advertising, film, music, fashion, business, and media-related fields. I don't know if they were specifically advertised in Brazil, if these are unique cases, if students have combined some sort of interest in these areas and somehow got their application approved. My understanding was that these fields were not going to be part of the program, but it does seem that they are. Another point to make is that obviously the US is not the only receiving country; there are countries like the UK and Germany and France and Portugal that are receiving students and in those various countries I believe there were other fields that were designated as possible for the students. Depending on when they applied and how they got their application approved, it's possible that those students then requested to switch to the US.

43. Are there SWB programs for undergraduates just to come do research in the US for a year?

-Yes, currently there are but there are not very many. There are probably between 10 and 20, mostly through the CNPQ channel.

44. How many years is it anticipated that the program will be continued?

-Between 3 and 5 years most likely.

45. When we get the Common App, can we start collecting the student e-mail on that dossier? I was told that initially we should not contact the student directly, since they do not know where they are being placed by IIE. It now sounds like that is a changed policy and we are encouraged to talk to the students.

-The policy has not changed. We do not want the colleges and universities contacting the students before a placement is finalized. That will complicate the process greatly. Although you can copy the student's e-mail address from the application, we ask that you do not send them admissions decisions, do not send them deposit forms/housing information, until after you receive confirmation from IIE that they have accepted the placement.

46. Most of the students are in the various parts of engineering and computer science. Do you anticipate any of the other STEM areas being of interest later?

-I think there probably will continue to be an imbalance in engineering related fields, but yes as the numbers grow those other fields will naturally increase.

47. Can we recommend students to go through IIE if they come to us through CNPQ?

-Yes, but if you're recommending to the student to go through IIE, that would mean that the student has not secured an admission from your university. And so, if they haven't secured an admission from your university, they're not going to be approved by CNPQ. But, you can tell the student, if you have already offered them admission but they haven't been approved by CNPQ, to follow up with CNPQ to find out if and when they are going to be approved. If they're not going to be approved by August, ask that they be allowed to defer admission with you, so they can get approved by CNPQ and perhaps start in January.

48. Can the school discuss a particular applicant with the Brazilian coordinator prior to IIE admitting the student?

-Well that is very similar to being in direct contact with the student. It would cause quite a bit of confusion with the process. I would initially say no, but if there is a question about a particular student, I would recommend that you reach out to someone on the team at IIE so that we can talk about the individual case, and perhaps then be able to pull in the coordinator in Brazil. I wouldn't want to make this a common part of the process, because all of the coordinators in Brazil would be receiving all sorts of inquiries about various students.

49. How does IIE inform the students of their acceptance? How does it inform the schools that the students are coming?

-Once we receive confirmation from you that the student has been admitted, we generate what is called a "terms of award," which basically outlines their financial award, the institution that has accepted them, the important contacts at that institution, and other legal requirements of the grant, which is e-mailed to the student and we copy either CAPES or CNPQ on that message. We indicate to the student that they have a week to review those terms and decide whether or not they are going to accept them. When they accept them they sign and e-mail them back to us, and then IIE e-mails them to you. So when you receive a copy of the signed terms, that is finalization that the student has accepted placement at your institution.

50. After we have accepted a student and sent notification to IIE, what are the next steps?

-Once we have notified you that a student has accepted placement at your institution, the next step would be for you to be in direct contact with the student. You would perhaps start discussing the courses that are going to be available that semester, arrange for them to be able to register for those courses, be able to discuss with them housing options, be able to fill out whatever forms they need in order to sign up for housing, and all of the institution-specific requirements. Again, it's very difficult if the institutions are not set up to accept payment from IIE, this can also cause some confusion. The students are not expected to send in any sort of deposit for tuition/room/board; IIE is responsible for making those payments. What we can do is issue sort of a promissory letter, saying that we will be paying the bills on behalf of the student, which can be helpful to the institutions in order to get these processes going. It causes a lot of confusion when the students are asking if they have to make a deposit in order to secure their spot. We have a finance manager on the team at IIE who is responsible for coordinating and paying all of those kinds of bills on behalf of the student.