Minutes - ISC meeting - December 10, 2008 (submitted by Sherry Bohonowicz)

Attended by: Pat Vokbus, Donal Carbaugh, Frank Hugus, Erika Schluntz, Nigar Khan, Steve Forrest, Tayeb El-Hibri, Elena Khatskevich, Lorna Peterson; and guests Linda Honan (CPE), Daniel Greenberg (Living Routes), and Roger Rideout (Music)

1) Approval of the November 12th 2008 minutes. A motion was made to approve the minutes; it was seconded, and the minutes were approved.

2) Announcements
Frank Hugus reported that Rick Taupier will be hosting a visit by a Mongolian University on December 19th.

Frank also reported that IPO is exploring entering into an MOU with Hong Kong Baptist University and is also considering entering into an exchange with Hokkaido University of Education.

Erika Schluntz reported that the situations in India and Greece have not affected U Mass study abroad programs or other study abroad programs from other providers or universities. We do not have any students at the universities where the protests are taking place.

The International Programs Office sent an email to all Indian students regarding the situation in Mumbai and offered assistance and help to any students who may have been affected.

3) Action Item
A motion was made to review the proposed Living Routes Program in India: “Low-Carbon Living at Sadhana Forest.” This is a winter-term program, and participating students would receive 4 credits.

The purpose of this course is to develop each student’s understanding of the role that communities play in the face of global changes such as peak oil and climate change. The course work and field study experiences offered will help students gain the capability to guide and educate others while envisioning a future that encompasses the needs of society and reflects the principles of sustainability. This course has been created to instill in and teach students a respect for the various approaches needed to achieve a more sustainable future. This unique program will help students understand how various techniques are being applied in India at the ecovillage of Auroville, while simultaneously considering how to assist communities here in the United States through the transition to a post petroleum world.

Students will study ways to measure and reduce their carbon footprints and demand for energy while experiencing and working with indigenous seed and tree planting, contour bunding for water conservation, organic gardening, natural building, compost and soil management, and other ecological approaches. Both theory and practice of ecological living and habitat regeneration will be emphasized along with community building and personal development.
There will be opportunities for putting theory into practice and learning practical strategies for living in a low energy future.

Discussion followed:
Questions were raised about health and safety given the current situation in Mumbai, India. Daniel Greenberg assured Council members that Living Routes has an extensive health and safety program and that they closely monitor all situations and will take any necessary steps to insure the health and safety of students participating in Living Routes Programs. Living Routes has an extensive student handbook. Both Living Routes and the University of Massachusetts carry liability coverage, and students have adequate health and emergency-evacuation insurance. The maximum number of students able to participate is twelve. 6 students are interested so far.

4) Approval:
A motion was made to approve the program; it was seconded and voted unanimously

5) Action Item
A motion was made to review The Music 597Z, “African Drum & Dance Cultural Field Study in Ghana.”

In this 3-week intensive cultural immersion course, students will be introduced to a wide range of topics related to African culture, philosophy, and daily life. Using the indigenous Ghanaian culture as context, students will live for 2 weeks in the coastal village of Kopeyia, receiving practical training from local artists in drumming, dancing, singing and a variety of arts & crafts. Through studio classes and interaction with families, artists, chiefs and governmental art institutions, students will perform, analyze, construct, critique and demonstrate their acquired skills in these various African artistic mediums.

The group will also participate in traditional festivals, visit local schools and markets, observe daily life in the village, and make trips to Ghana’s historic sites: the slave castles, museums, cultural and art centers, as well as Kakum National Park rainforest preserve. In the capital city of Accra, students will visit the world famous live music clubs, sample local cuisine, tour the workshop of a Master Drum Maker, and participate in an exclusive performance-workshop with the internationally renowned National Dance Company of Ghana. All of this will help to put into historical and cultural perspective the similarities and differences between African traditional and popular culture, engendering a greater understanding of both indigenous and contemporary artistic expressions in West Africa.

Discussion followed:

Professor Roger Rideout from the Department of Music and Dance explained how music is integrated culturally in the village. This course will help students learn how Ghanaian music is bound to culture and values. The students will be moved emotionally by this unusual experience of participating and/or observing village rituals. This is a 3 week- 6 credit intensive program with a high number of hours spent in immersion in the music culture. This course has an orientation portion and a wrap up debriefing.
Members of the Council asked several questions: Is the cost too high? Will students be able to afford to participate? Professor Rideout responded that a dozen or so students were interested based on workshops held last year. However, the majority of the participants will be teachers (they receive professional development points).

6) Approval:
A motion was made to approve the program; it was seconded and voted unanimously

7) IPO Director Report
Frank Hugus told ISC members that Wednesday at 4:00 PM would not be a good meeting time for the spring ISC meetings. Frank suggested that the first or second Monday of the month at 4:00 PM might be better. Frank will send an email to all ISC members.

Frank is still looking for more volunteers to serve on the Boren Scholarship Committee. If any ISC member is interested or knows of any faculty who might be interested please contact Frank.

8) Report by the UMass/Living Routes sub-committee
The report will be tabled until the February 2009 ISC meeting.

9) Discussion item: ISC and IOC
There is nothing to report as the IOC has not met since the last ISC meeting.

10) Discussion item: Recruiting undergraduate students abroad
Frank reported that the Admissions Office, formerly under the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Campus Life, is now in the Provost’s area.

Frank Hugus will be meeting with Kevin Kelly Director of Admissions to discuss recruitment of more international undergraduate students for the 2010/2011 academic year.

Pat Vokbus reported on a meeting that several IPO staff members attended with Kathy Ryan and Stephanie Chapko from the admissions office. The current admissions procedure is not to consider international students for admission unless they have sent financial proof along with their application. IPO would like Admissions to consider all applications from foreign students, and they could be provisionally accepted pending acceptable financial documentation. The Admissions Office said this would not be possible as they do not have the staff to handle that volume of work.

Frank Hugus, Pat Vokbus and Richard Yam from IPO had a meeting with Education USA, an organization that has 450 worldwide informational offices. For a fee of $850 EdUSA would advertise The University of Massachusetts on its website with the view toward increasing the number of international applicants. It appears to be something The University should consider doing.
International students are full fee-paying students most often with high academic standings and they represent an influx of money and talent, so why wouldn’t the University want to attract more international students? (One reason might be that their application is more labor intensive and admissions does not have the time or staff.) To attract more international students, UMass should highlight the strength of programs like SOM, Engineering, Computer Science and Public Health as compared to what is offered at undergraduate liberal arts colleges.

Lorna Peterson noted that the private colleges in the Five College Area have been very successful at recruiting undergraduates from abroad. Perhaps UMass could recruit and market itself jointly with the Five Colleges to increase the number of international applicants; Frank will contact the Five College Consortium.

Could the IOC help The International programs office convince the University to accept and admit more international students? This should be addressed at next IOC meeting.

The subject of International Recruitment should also be addressed again at the next ISC meeting.

11) Other business
Frank thanked the ISC committee members for their dedication and hard work over the past semester.

12) Meeting adjourned 5:08 PM