

CISS Meeting – January 31, 2025 | 11:00 AM

Present: Kate Kirk, Christine Shaw, Veronique Barnes, Madelyn Bilbrey, Annette Burris, Lescia Gonzalez Rivera, Alexa Lee, LD Newman, Cody Marschalk, Jada Mitchell, Cheryl Park, Tammy Rosner, Paul Sargent, Erin Steinmetz

Chair: Kate Kirk, Georgia Tech

Vice Chair: Vacant (Christine Shaw as note-taker)

Member at Large: Prathibha Joshi Beck, Gordon State

Member at Large: Dustin Anderson, Georgia Southern

Call to Order & Introductions – Kate Kirk

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes – Kate Kirk

- A copy of the previous meeting's minutes is located here. The minutes were reviewed.
- LD Newman asked that the name of Augusta State University be corrected to Augusta University. There were no other edits, and the motion was passed to approve the agenda, pending the one edit.

USG OIE Updates – Kate Kirk/Tammy Rosner

Kirk took the advocacy questions from the last meeting to Rosner at the USG Central Office and sent out the responses to the group via email. She asked for any current questions.

Lawful Presence – This was a key advocacy question mentioned above. Each institution requires their students to show lawful presence. There have been challenges with this being processed consistently. Rosner recommended that any requests for more consistency or lawful presence guidance go from each institution to senior SIOs and then to the USG central office.

ESL Program and English Proficiency Review – Rosner reported that this will be taking place in March and will capture ESL program and English proficiency information. ESL directors have been emailed that a meeting will be held on 7 February 2025. P/DSOs, Provosts, and Directors will need to sign off on the final form. Rosner has been working for 10 years to codify ESL to ensure that executive leadership is aware of these programs and that they can be used for recruitment purposes.

Student-Focused Discussion

- **Spring 2025 trends**

- Shaw mentioned that new enrollments at Columbus State University were down, about half the usual number. Several others experienced the same issue, but the cause was not known.
- It was asked how others were educating students on travel during the current political climate.
- Gonzalez Rivera reported that enrollments at GA Southern increased, but a number of students transferred to technical colleges due to lower costs. They also saw more visa denials, many in African countries. Students reported that denials were due to lack of funding such as Graduate Assistantships and scholarships. Regarding the transition due to the new presidential administration, GA Southern is suggesting that students always have their documents on hand, or at least a photo of them on their phone.
- Newman reported that enrollments were lower, also due to the inability of students to get visa appointments and visas. Augusta University has not emailed students regarding current immigration issues, but they have emailed employees who hold visas to tell them to be cautious when traveling.
- Burris reported that the visa wait times website has changed to a global table rather than a searchable database for some reason.
- Kirk – Georgia Tech will wait for official news of a change to come out before sending communication. Any communication would be reviewed and approved by Institute Communication. Rosner was asked if Central Office had any input on this. Rosner stated that whether the USG sends out communication is still to be seen. Burris indicated that they are focusing less on a ‘warning’ email to more of a ‘reminder’ email.

- **Spring 2025 Challenges**

- Some students had questions and concerns about entry into the U.S. due to the new presidential administration. It was suggested that they contact immigration attorneys for assistance.
- Shaw asked if others were experiencing issues with international students not being afforded any leeway regarding payment of tuition/fees even though many must have funds wired from their home country and therefore have delayed payments at times. Also, even with the online payment process, it can take several days for international payments to be processed. Instead, the administration responds that international students should be prepared to pay since they were required to show available funding to receive an I-20. She also asked if the payment deadline was the first day of classes USG-wide. Kirk said their payment deadline is the Tuesday after classes begin at Georgia Tech.

- **Open discussion**

- **NEXUS degrees** – Park asked if Shaw was able to find out about adding these to an I-17 and where they should be placed (under Associate's, Bachelor, Other, etc.) Shaw responded that she is placing them under 'Other'.
- **Refusal to pay international student salaries** – Burris stated that some departments on her campus are refusing to pay international student salaries if their visa is expired. The departments are quoting 'USG Policy' but are not able to show which policy that is. She informed the departments that an expired visa has nothing to do with status, their I-20 is their proof of lawful presence, but she is still getting push back.

Scholar-Focused Discussion

- Open discussion – N/A

Announcements

- UGA is hiring a Director of International Initiatives, link shared in the chat.
- Next CISS meeting – September 2025

Meeting ended at 12:00pm