



International Student Advisory Committee (ISAC)

October 17, 2019

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Telus Center 215E Boardroom

Attendees:

- Gavin Palmer (International Student Engagement Programs Coordinator)

Meeting Minutes:

1. Introduction and information about ISAC meetings

2. Starting with a discussion

Members were asked about their experience being an international student at UofA. Here are the questions for ISAC members:

2.1 What are the positive parts of being international students at UofA?

Members mentioned the following points:

- Diversity and cultural differences
- Orientation and support is strong, builds familiarity in resources, decreases alienation, allows people to fit into different demographics and support each other
- There are many events for international students that can create social environments
- Financial supports and emergency loans exist
- Employment abroad programs are helpful
- Classrooms benefit from the addition of a global mindset
- Financial supports such as an emergency loan for international students which covers an accidental trip to their countries
- There are many culture-based associations we can join
 - More opportunities to meet people from your background
- There is access to International food
- The Edmonton international community is smaller than other cities encouraging students to experience new things and push them out of their circles
- There are many festivals in Edmonton that can make this feel like home
- Different supports and events for international students

2.2 What're the negative parts of being international students at UofA?

Members mentioned the following points:

- There are some racial biases and racial discrimination on and off-campus in spite of the “integrity” training negative behaviours and macroaggressions still exist.
- Not enough scholarships and bursaries for international students
- Higher tuition fee compare to domestic students
- The tuition fee includes hidden costs and “irrelevant” mandatory costs. “We don’t know what opt-out options we have.”
- The lack of information about the student union
- Not enough advertisements about international support centers, events and resources like the campus food bank
- Difficult to make Canadian friends
- Being worry about lots of scams or fake job offers directed at international students
- Being far from the family and your social network
- Navigating some of the structures are difficult, e. g. course selection
- Catching up on English
- Not enough mental health supports (it takes too long to get an appointment). “Mental health advisors don’t know what that means to be an international.”
- Misalignment of communication strategies about centers which help you with technical writing or in case of having a conflict of interest and such as Center for Writers and Office of the Student Ombuds
- Misalignment of understanding about plagiarism
- The high cost of living on campus (there are some universities which provide cheaper accommodation and food options)
- Safety is different from country to country

3. Handout 1: International Student Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

Reading the paper, talking about it and choosing the representatives for each part

4. Financial Literacy

Members were asked if they are familiar with the concept of financial literacy, what angels they would find useful, what aspects are scary, and how it would help them.

5. Handout 2 and discussion: Financial Literacy

Members were asked to discuss the handout questions within small groups.

6. Tips and Tricks for communicating SCAM information:

Members discussed different aspects of being scammed and how we might help:

- Retitle/move website content, e. g. Creating an outline under the name of “Money and Security, Warning, Preparation to come to Canada” or “SCAM” on the top of the website.

- Put it under the categories “Be advised,” “Money and finances” or “Students’ stories”
- The following information should be included: “Signs of being scammed, how to be skeptical, and how much info one can give on the phone.” It is important to increase the awareness about the fact that no authority will ask you for your SIN number, Passwords, etc., and none of the following would ever call you: Edmonton Police Service, Immigration Canada, Canada Revenue Agency, etc.

7. Task for the next meeting:

Evaluate the ISS webpages and think about the following questions:

- What does not work for you?
- What did you not find on the website?
- What is good or bad about it?
- What is missing that you wish was there?

8. Adjournment

Next Meeting: first week after reading week in November 2019