

OSU College of Forestry International Programs Advisory Committee Meeting Summary 8 October 2008

Prepared by Susan Morré

Advisory Committee members present: Jim Johnson, Chair (Associate Dean, International Programs); Badege Bishaw, John Bliss, and Dave Hibbs (FES); Susan Morré (International Programs Assistant, FES graduate student), Eric Hansen and Jeff Morrell (WSE), John Sessions (FERM); Shiloh Sundstrom (FES graduate student, president of OSU Chapter, International Forestry Students Association), and David Zahler (Peace Corps Masters International co-coordinator).

Other attendees: Hathai Sangsupan (new FES graduate student), Clay Torset (COF Student Services Head Advisor).

Advisory Committee members absent: Loren Kellogg.

This was the first meeting of the revived COF International Programs Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of each COF department who accepted Jim Johnson's invitation to come together to discuss:

- new and ongoing programs
- issues related to the scaling back of the COF International Programs budget and staff over the past two years
- visions for the future, and
- the role of the Advisory Committee.

Peace Corps Masters International (PCMI) Program – David Zahler

Handout: U.S. Peace Corps – OSU Master's International Program in Forestry

After an unsuccessful OSU multi-College application to become a PCMI institution in 2007, David Zahler reapplied this year with a COF-only application. OSU-COF was chosen to join the ranks of 14 other schools of forestry/natural resources as PCMI institutions. Michigan Tech is the flagship university in the PCMI program, with 20 – 30 students in the program each year in seven different tracks. OSU is the first Oregon PCMI institution. The Peace Corps/OSU Memorandum of Understanding is at the institutional level, which will make it possible to expand to other programs outside the COF. OSU is already listed on the Peace Corps website as a PCMI partner institution. Joe Hoff is the university-level lead for the program, and David and Jim Johnson will serve as co-coordinators of this program for the College. David will be responsible for developing the website and outreach materials. The current programs are:

- Forest Resources: MS in Natural Resources Education and Extension (Ed Jensen); MF or MS in Social Forestry (John Bliss); MS in Silviculture (John Bailey); MS in Forest Economics (Darius Adams and Jo Albers);
- Forest Science: MS in Forest Ecology/Biology (Barb Bond and Dave Hibbs)
- Wood Science and Engineering: MS in Wood Science or MF in Forest Products (Eric Hansen and Chris Knowles)

Students will take three terms of classes, then go on their 27-month Peace Corps tour with a leave of absence from the university, and then return for a final 1 to 3 terms to finish their degree. They will conduct their master's thesis or project during their tour.

Q & A:

Does Peace Corps provide funding? NO, the student is either self-funded or receives grant, foundation, or scholarship money. Both OSU and COF International Programs can lend their support in asking the Graduate School to contribute some money in the form of tuition waivers. Northern

Arizona University gave a \$5000 stipend for 9 months, requiring ten hours/week student work, and allows all PCMI students to pay in-state tuition. The OSU Foundation might help connect us with potential donors.

When will OSU accept PCMI students, and how many do we anticipate? Beginning in Fall 2009. Unsure how many we'll get. University of Alaska Fairbanks is in their second or third year and has two students. There are 8000-12,000 Peace Corps volunteers each year.

Is there a way to set it up so PCMI students can maintain an email account, online library access, etc., during their tour? Not under the current terms of a leave of absence, but we could discuss this type of flexibility with the Graduate School. Some international fellowships and grants are only available to enrolled students, so the leave of absence could be an obstacle. UA Fairbanks provides a 6-credit tuition waiver for 27 months as a way to keep the PCMI students connected to the university during their tours.

How flexible are our programs to meet the needs of PCMI students? Bliss and Sessions said that FR and FE tracks are flexible and courses should be doable in 9 months. Hansen and Morrell said the WSE coursework could also be done in 9 months. A variety of projects could be done during a student's tour (setting up a seedling nursery, conducting a watershed restoration project, etc.). We need to be able to facilitate their academic needs from a distance, and be prepared to take them back early if necessary for health reasons or whatever.

How does the PCMI differ from other Peace Corps programs? In the PC Fellows Program, volunteers do their PC tour first, and then go to school for their coursework. In the general PC program, students get their bachelor's or master's degree first, and then join the Peace Corps. The PCMI program is designed to bring volunteers with scarce skills to a country, so that is why the students take their courses first so they come to their tour as trained volunteers who can apply those scarce skills in their tour country.

Next steps: We need to set up a working group for PCMI, engage department heads, send out a press release as soon as the MOU is signed, develop outreach materials, and work with the Graduate School to try to build greater flexibility into the "full time student" status. The working group (interested faculty, returned PC volunteers, and graduate students) can help align current program curricula with needs of this new type of student, try to line up some GTA and GRA opportunities ahead of time, discuss details on how to extend the time period to repay student loans, and other details.

Natural Resources Study Abroad in Scandinavia – Eric Hansen

Handout: "Climate Change and Natural Resources Management: Insights from Scandinavia."

After observing that no COF students received International degrees this year, Eric and Chris Knowles developed this 15-day study program in Finland, Sweden and Norway as a way for undergraduate students to get some international experience. It is scheduled to be offered August 29 – September 13, 2009 if at least 15 students sign up to do it. Cost is \$5000-6000 per student, including tuition, airfare and ground transportation, lodging, and most meals. Students will earn 6 credits for the study abroad experience (\$108/credit summer tuition), and 2 credits for a pre-tour seminar in Spring 2009. Application deadline is February 15. The COF is offering \$9000 in scholarship funds to provide partial support for up to 9 students. Joe Hoff's office created a brochure for the program, and students can learn more about it at the Study Abroad fairs at the MU, scheduled for October 9 and sometime in January.

International Programs Office Reorganization – Jim Johnson

When Jim was hired two years ago, he was charged with downsizing the COF IP office. Three years ago the College funded the IP office at about \$200,000 per year with a 0.5 FTE Associate Dean (John

Hayes), a 0.5 FTE Director (Badege Bishaw) and a 0.49 Program Intern (Susan Morr ). In each of the last two years of budget reductions, the IP took the hardest hit in the College, even though internationalization is an OSU priority. As a result, the COF IP is now funded at only \$29,000/year, with a 0.1 FTE Associate Dean (Jim) and a 0.25 FTE Assistant (Susan). There is a huge amount of international traffic in the College, and we have a high number of international faculty and students. This is a sad state of affairs. Jim is in the process of creating a 0.5 FTE Office Specialist position to take over the duties that Susan is doing. Many of the activities that the IP used to conduct have been discontinued or passed on to the departments to handle. A downside of this downsizing is that there is a lack of information-sharing among departments, individual faculty members, and the IP office and Dean's office about international visitors, research, or opportunities, and two of the three international forestry courses have been discontinued in the College (Global Forestry Issues Seminar and Planning Agroforestry Projects). When the Department of Forest Resources made the decision last year to cut these two courses, the reason cited was that they were primarily taken by international students. However, enrollment statistics show that the large majority of students in those classes were domestic students. Badege's position has been eliminated and he is no longer scheduled to teach any onsite classes but is still teaching online SNR courses. John Sessions will continue to teach the International Forestry course he co-taught with Badege in the past. John Bliss noted that he has two international visitors now: Dr. Melaku Bekele from Wondo Genet College of Forestry, who will be here through November, and Dr. Ikuo Ota from Japan, here through March 18.

COF International Forestry Students Association (IFSA) Report – Shiloh Sundstrom

OSU-IFSA was founded three years ago and is the only US chapter of this club that has chapters in over 70 countries. There are two chapters in Canada, and the OSU chapter received funding last year to travel to UBC to visit the other nearest chapter. This trip is planned for winter or spring 2009. Shiloh is the current president and Susan is past president of the OSU chapter. Nine new members joined at the club's first meeting of the term last week, and twelve more joined during University Club Day this week. The current membership is approximately 50 graduate and undergraduate students. IFSA holds monthly meetings with guest speakers to discuss international forestry policy issues learn about each other's international research and travel experiences. The club also hosts at least two International Luncheons each year to raise funds for the club and to donate to the Linn Benton Food Share and other community programs. Last year, the club donated \$500 to the Corvallis-Gondar Sister City organization to help fund a watershed restoration project to protect the drinking water source for Gondar, Ethiopia. Next month, Eric Hansen and Chris Knowles will give a presentation on their new Scandinavia Study Abroad program. The club may add another activity – a social mixer for international students. All faculty and students are welcome to attend any meetings. Badege Bishaw and Chris Knowles are the faculty advisors to IFSA.

COF Involvement in the International Degree Program – John Sessions

Handouts: International Degree Program Annual Report 2008 and OSU Passport to the International Degree Program. John Sessions, Loren Kellogg, and Clay Torset are the COF advisors to the International Degree Program. Students can earn an International Degree in addition to their other undergraduate degree by:

- taking an additional 32 credits of ID-approved courses, including four core courses
- demonstrating a foreign language proficiency equivalent to the third term of a four year language sequence with a minimum 3.0 GPA (four years of continuous high school foreign language or two years college-level language)

- spending a minimum of one term abroad in a study-abroad, international internship or research project, or an approved previous international experience, and
- completing a senior thesis that places the student's academic discipline in an international context.

Loren was one of the original founders of the ID program, which began in 1992 with funding from the Department of Defense intended to raise the level of student international activities. The program has had about 250 graduates and currently has 80 students, with COF students representing a lower percentage than other colleges and Natural Resources students the highest percentage in the COF. Average high school GPA of ID students was at least 3.7.

Ed Jensen sent an email asking how we can bolster COF participation. Barriers to participation include:

- additional time needed (half of students need an extra year to complete the additional 32 credits)
- foreign language requirement (many COF students don't take any foreign language and may not have had much or any in high school)
- difficulty getting into foreign language courses at OSU
- inflexible curriculum in some COF degree programs (FM only has two electives; NR is more flexible)

Students usually begin the ID program in their second year, but if we can get them started in their first year, they could get the ID with just an extra one or two terms, with tight advising. The Honors College is a good source of students, and there is a growing number of Honors College students in COF. Some jobs require international experience before hiring, so an international internship can help students get a job. However, without a competitive GPA and language proficiency, it is hard to get an internship.

Closing discussion and next steps

Ten to fifteen years ago, OSU had the highest proportion of USAID-funded projects, but OSU backed away from participation, and now has very few. It would be good to get more involved in those types of projects again.

The COF IP Advisory Committee will meet every other month, unless priority concerns warrant more frequent meetings. *What is the role of this committee, and how can it help the COF IP office, which now has so little FTE?*

- Before the next Committee meeting, Jim and David will begin to put together a PCMI working group and work to internationalize the PCMI program tracks.
- Invite Loren Kellogg, Joe Hoff (Director of ID program), and Renee Stowell (ID head advisor) to attend our next meeting to hear their perspective on boosting COF participation in the ID program.
- The Committee can help host international visitors, and help disseminate information on international visitors and events.
- Help create COF vision that prioritizes and raises awareness of the PCMI and International Degree Programs, the importance of international forestry courses and international internships, and the value of the COF International Programs office to the COF.
- The COF IP Advisory Committee can help by advocating for International Programs at the FEC and with the Dean, and can encourage department office staff and faculty to copy Jim and Susan on emails concerning upcoming international visitors or events.