

Center for Global Engagement

College Council Report

October 21, 2021 - Zoom Platform

Remarks by Stephen Ferst

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the College Council. I'll keep my remarks brief yet still try to give you a sense of the work we do and how we have been doing pre- and post-pandemic.

For some background, and although many of you know this, the anchor of the Center's mission is to promote the internationalization of academic life at the College. Those efforts include promoting and administering study abroad programming, ensuring the regulatory support and education of international students, providing English language programming to aspiring CSI international students, creating programming on campus that delivers global awareness to CSI students, assisting CSI faculty in welcoming and supporting international scholars, supporting CSI faculty in international research, collaborations, and grants, and promoting a globalized curriculum.

Since the adoption of the College's strategic plan in 2017, the Center has aligned our efforts with the pillars of that plan. In fact, we've argued that although we serve as one pillar, our efforts support each of the other pillars including greater student success, borough stewardship, and creating a destination campus. Indeed, since the adoption of the strategic plan, we've sent over 850 students abroad, hosted over 250 international scholars, enrolled over 350 English language learners, and run over 500 campus workshops and events focusing on global engagement and learning. In addition, we've more than doubled the study abroad opportunities for our students, brought in over \$75,000 in grant funds, and assisted faculty in creating more Collaborative Online International Learning courses than ever before.

Other notable initiatives developed in the past four years include the English Online Teaching Program, the AASCU Global Civic Literacy Project, the International Student Consultant Program and the Peace Corp Prep Program of which we are one of only 150 in the U.S. That last program, the Peace Corp Prep program is a collaboration between CSI and the U.S. Department of State Peace Corps to develop a set of requirements for CSI students to follow that will best prepare them for entry into the Peace Corps through ensuring competency in four areas:

1. Training and experience in a work sector
2. Foreign language skills
3. Intercultural competence
4. Professional and leadership development

It would be remiss not to recognize the impact of COVID-19 on our operations. Indeed, we have completed much of this work in the context of COVID-19. In January of 2020 we received our first indication that COVID-19 would impact our work as China began reporting their struggles. With students studying in China at the time we immediately prepared for program closures and possible evacuations. As COVID spread, our students studying abroad were forced to adapt to the many changes both abroad and at home if they returned. Programs closed yet much like in the US a month later, moved to on-line instruction. International students and scholars were also now restricted from entering the U.S. However, the work we did for students and scholars alike, much as it was here on campus continued, and, in many cases, increased. Students needed greater levels of support and the rules and regulations, constantly changing, needed explaining. Through the remainder of 2020 and 2021 international mobility slowed but never stopped. International students remained eligible to come to the US under a National Interest Exemption and many did. Others chose to enroll from abroad. Study abroad students, while unable to attend CUNY sponsored programs still found their way abroad and needed our support. In fact, throughout the pandemic, interest in programming never waned significantly and students continued to apply for programs abroad. Unsure of the future, CGE continued to prepare these students for study abroad while at the same time preparing them to stay at home. All of our other programming – English language courses, globalizing the campus, working with overseas institutions, etc. – moved online. The key takeaway here is that while mobility was halted during the pandemic our work here never stopped. If anything, it increased.

Throughout this current academic year, in addition to our usual programming and visiting international groups we have several new initiatives planned including:

- The launch of the Peace Corp Prep program which I referenced earlier
- An International Poetry Slam focused on identity
- A Global Civic Literacy project that includes a lecture series, changes in the study abroad orientation, and the planned creation of a CSI LibGuide for Global Civic Literacy
- A grant supported workshop and funding for faculty to develop new programs abroad
- The expected restart of study abroad programming this spring (SUNY relaunched last weekend and we expect to have news any moment from CUNY).

Again, thank you for the time to address this body and to update you on the progress CGE has made over the last four years.