

2019-20 Office International Education Annual Report Beloit College

Staffing

At the start of the 2019-20 academic year, the Office of International Education transitioned from a staff of six to a staff of three (director, study abroad advisor/assistant director, international student advisor/assistant director. Positively, Kathy Landon was promoted from program coordinator to study abroad advisor, although the elimination of her previous position meant she continued in that role while also taking greater on greater responsibility for study abroad operations.

In response to the reduction in staffing, the remaining staff members increased their collaboration with the goal of ensuring continued support for students. As examples, all three staff members assisted with the August international student orientation and with the November study abroad orientation, and Kathy Landon and Shannon Jolly engaged in cross-training. Additionally, a project-based approach to student employee work increased productivity and job satisfaction.

ILO Development

- Students in IDST 201 created digital portfolios to demonstrate ILO development during study abroad.
- Online international internships were added to 2020-21 study abroad options. Applicants are asked to discuss how the internship may help them develop one or more of the ILOs.
- Post-study abroad reflective writing was analyzed and showed evidence of intellectual agility and resilience.
- IRAP added ILOs to its 20-question survey, which will make it possible to compare international student and domestic student ILO development.

Career Development

- Collaborations with Career and Community Center and the student-led Beloit International Student Career Services organization supported career preparedness for international students.
- Alumni stories of career development influenced by international engagement were published on the OIE website and shared with Channels.
- Donna Oliver and Betsy Brewer held two 2-part workshops on internationalizing channels courses in July, attended by 16 faculty and staff. Participants have been asked to present the results of their course or program development in the November 2020 international symposium.

Study Abroad

A cross-section of students continues to see study abroad as important to their education and invest considerable time in developing plans for integrating it into their studies. This said, fewer students are incorporating semester or year-long study abroad into their educational plans. Just 67 students applied to study abroad in 2020-21, an historically low number even when taking reduced class year enrollment into account. Under the COVID-19 pandemic and current geopolitics, study abroad participation levels are likely to remain low for several years to come.

To add to this negative picture, most students who studied abroad in spring 2020 were forced to cut their study abroad short as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The disruptions that led to this development were confusing, challenging, and disconcerting, and had negative financial repercussions for many students. Spring 2020 students are to be congratulated for weathering the pandemic storm as well as they did; most completed their coursework remotely from home when their universities transitioned to on-line instruction.

Fall 2020 prospective study abroad students were informed about potential risks due to the pandemic; most chose to cancel or defer their study abroad plans. As a result, just five students will study abroad in fall 2020, one of them remotely. Students studying in-person were required to sign a statement acknowledging risk.

Conditions for study abroad in spring 2021 are uncertain. Some countries are restricting entry to limit the spread of COVID-19, some universities are placing new restrictions on course enrollments in order to prioritize access for degree-seeking students, and at least two of Beloit College's partner universities will not allow students to leave their campuses between initial arrival and the end of the final examination period.

Online study abroad and international internships. As an alternative to in-person study abroad, students accepted to study abroad in fall 2020 were offered the opportunity to engage in online study abroad courses or internships as part of their fall 2020 course load. One student will do so full-time; two students will take online language courses, and six students will each earn 3-4 credits for an online international internship. This pilot project will continue during the spring 2021 semester. Fall 2020 online study abroad students will be asked to complete reflections on their experience; their responses will help determine the viability of this form of study abroad at Beloit College.

International Students

International student enrollments robust in 2019-20, comprising approximately 17.9% of the student body. Moreover, the year was marked by high international student participation rates in student governance and student activities, investment in career development, and high academic achievement as signaled by participation in the Student Symposium, study abroad, summer internships, and receipt of academic honors.

Continuing international students were variously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One hundred and sixteen (116) out of 205 international students remained on campus during the spring semester after most domestic students left campus in mid-March; gradually many of these students returned home, with just 49 still on campus as other students began to arrive on campus for the fall 2020 semester. Departures were delayed for many of those who returned home due to home country restrictions on entry and limited flights.

Approximately 69 students who returned home were unable to return to Beloit for the fall semester, either because they could not obtain visas to return and/or because entry into the U.S. from their country of residence has been barred. Roughly 60 of these students have elected to fall 2020 courses remotely, with 9 taking vacation terms. Time differences and access to the technology required for online learning, however, will be challenging, with access to online learning platforms a particularly vexing issue for the 23 continuing students and the 2 new students who remain in China.

Forty-seven international students graduated in May 2020, an unusually large number. Of these, 21 graduates remained in the U.S. to take advantage of post-completion optional practical training (OPT). While 2 applications remain pending, 19 were successful and 12 OPT participants have secured employment. The 7 still seeking jobs face a less than ideal job market. Once OPT applications have been approved, the graduates have 90 days to secure positions, after which they must return to their home countries.

Thirty-five new degree-seeking students were scheduled to join the college for the fall semester, plus one exchange student. Just two of the new international students (1 degree, 1 exchange) were able to obtain visas to enter the U.S. They are joined by 2 additional incoming students who had remained in the U.S. to transfer from another institution or complete high school. (As seen in the accompanying data tables, the new degree-student figure in 2019 was 45 and the number of exchange students was eight.) Significantly, the composition of the international student population has changed in the last years. While 83% of Beloit College's international students come from Asia, enrollment from China has seen a dramatic decline, with just 3 students from China in the fall 2020 new student cohort.

Of the new international students outside the U.S., 15 will take courses remotely and 17 are deferring enrollment until the spring or fall 2021 semester. Deferring students have been given the opportunity to enroll in an AMP course on a non-credit basis; this enrollment is intended to help forge ties between the students and Beloit College.

Other measures to help international students who cannot come to Beloit to cultivate a relationship with fellow students and Beloit College include a buddy program and on-going outreach from the admissions office.

In short, International student presence on campus in fall 2020 will be much reduced over prior years. Positively, the 2019-20 year provided evidence that international students very much feel a strong sense of belonging at Beloit College, and many at the college are committed to continuing to ensure that international students can thrive at Beloit College.

International Education at Large

The pandemic has made abundantly clear that reliance on student mobility (international student enrollment, study abroad participation) is not a viable strategy. Further, continued racial and social injustice in and beyond the U.S. demand that attention to international education as an inclusive practice. These will be the focus of the work of the Committee on International Education in 2020-21 as well as the Office of International Education.