

Berkeley

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020

July 2020 Progress Report

GOAL 1: Build and Strengthen Partnerships

Collaborate with key campus units to enhance student, scholar, and faculty experiences.

- Moved quickly to collaborate with GEO and the VPAP on several fronts after it was announced that BIO was moving to the portfolio of the Vice Provost for Academic Planning and the Senior International Officer effective July 1, 2020
- Worked with the Office of International Relations to provide immigration slides to present at overseas international student welcome events
- Collaborated with CAPS, L&S Advising, and Career Center to host “Navigating Uncertainty and Planning for the Future as an International Student” panel at the end of the Spring 2020 semester
- Collaborated with LLM program for Fall, Spring enrollment models
- Consulted with Fulbright program regarding student conduct cases/policies
- Conducted VSIS Training with Summer Sessions, presented Summer Sessions webinars for affiliates
- Presented Cultural Awareness Training to Resident Directors and Assistant Resident Directors
- Trained Career Center Peer Advisors
- Participated in Summer Opportunities Fair and Mongolian delegation meet and greet
- Held discussions with LLM regarding Field Placement & CPT
- Provided training for CSS Visa & Onboarding Teams
- Participated in DACA Rescission Scenario Planning meeting

Build alliances with campus and community partners to leverage human and financial resources.

- Partnered with Basic Needs Center and other campus units, including Graduate Division, FASO, and EOP on COVID-19 Relief efforts
- Collaborated with YWCA and other campus and community partners to provide International Spouse and Partner Reception in February 2020
- Established partnership with Night Out, Night Off! in order to promote events to international grads and co-host iMix reception
- Operations Manager built new working relationships with the HR generalist who serves BIO, our VCR financial analyst, and made new contacts in the Controller’s office

Collaborate with external partners, including other UC campuses and professional associations, to build upon synergy and advocate for our client populations.

- BIO Director commenced his role as a 2 year appointed member of the Leadership Development Committee for NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- BIO Director presented at the EURIE Conference in Istanbul, Turkey strengthening our relations with high education professionals in that region. This led to a special invitation to conduct a webinar for professionals in the EURASIA region on how BIO was handling the pandemic

Collaborate with on and off-campus entities to improve user experience with technology.

- SEVIS team advocated for ISSM improvement with Ellucian - opened 8 cases to report issues, defects, and ideas for enhancement
- Advised Berkeley Online Advising (BOA) team on international student visa status appearing in BOA
- Began attending SEVIS Batch User/Vendor Meetings to better understand and plan for upcoming SEVIS changes
- Coordinated closely with ISD users to troubleshoot technical problems

GOAL 2: Enhance Effectiveness of Products, Services, and Internal Processes

Streamline, standardize, and automate processes.

- Created and implemented new remote processes for document issuance for initial and continuing students, including updating request forms and creating several new email templates to notify students of document delivery options
- Frontline team worked with Operations Manager to streamline IOF process
- Frontline team worked with BIO IT to make updates to ISSM that streamline Frontline processes by preventing the auto-creation of duplicate tasks and by creating new users in ISSM such as “Ready to Approve” and “Ready to Print” to ensure a smoother mail out flow.
- BIO IT worked with Scholar team to build J Scholar Portal and the new form groups Scholar Arrival Confirmation and Scholar Update Contact Info. Together these allow scholars to perform many actions online that were previously only available in-person
 - BIO IT added Scholar datapump to move data from the above forms into ISSM

- BIO IT re-worked timing on datapumps to solve some occasional issues with moving data from Mercury to ISSM
- Increased efficiency for scholars and staff by revising the address reporting system
- Student team further developed team approach to SEVIS Registration/Arrival Confirmation/SEVIS Reporting
- Piloted use of Asana as a tool for tracking semesterly SEVIS registration tasks
- SEVIS team worked with J scholar team and BIO IT to automate pre-arrival communication to J-2 scholar dependent spouses
- SEVIS team designed targeted messaging campaigns for students on SEVIS's revised OPT unemployment alert list
- Implemented L&S online Late Drop form review
- Employment-based team continued to implement PAF (Public Access File) reform by eliminating personal information and redundant documentation to only disclose to the general public information required by the Department of Labor (DoL), and to conform to various data/privacy information standards. 80% of our PAFs are now personal information free
- Transitioned 100% of internal records of H-1B employees to paperless and successfully transitioned the paper IOF process to an electronic platform
- Employment-based team implemented "electronic" online department posting notice in connection with LCA filings
- Updated Undergraduate Family Financial Statement for clarity and to make evergreen
- NIF team and BIO IT worked to upgrade NIF performance
- Operations Manager redesigned and improved the Cybersource credit card payment claim process (a business process) by meeting with the supervisor of credit card payments in the Controller's office and downloading and sorting Cybersource data for the VCR financial analyst to make deposits easier and on time

Utilize assessment to ensure high-quality products and services that meet evolving client needs.

- Employed extensive use of data to inform our work and keep our clients updated, including:
 - Spreadsheets to track OPT approvals by USCIS
 - Spreadsheets to track visa processing wait times
 - Campus climate survey.
 - COVID-19 survey

Monitor and adjust internal processes to best serve clients in a changing environment.

- Created Electronic I-20 issuance process and updated request forms
- In collaboration with student team, SEVIS team designed, tested, and trained student and frontline staff on virtual student advising platform through Zoom in response to COVID-19
- Assisted visiting scholars who were unable to depart the country due to COVID-19 with extensions of their visa documents while waving the extension fee
- Updated J-1 Academic Training template letter to include COVID-19 requirements

Increase accessibility and reach of products and services to target audiences.

- Redesigned Financial Aid webpages to make information more accessible and user-friendly
- Programming: Hosted Orientation for new EAP students and Orientation Leader appreciation event; developed and scheduled OPT Doc Check Workshops, Grad Meetups, BIO Bear Meetups, Coffee Break
- Created BIO workshop request form for departments, student groups
- Employment-based team presented H-1B orientations for UCB H-1B employees

Expand the documentation of internal processes and availability of training and reference resources.

- Updated NIF Wiki with instructions for NIF Coordinator tasks
- Improved documentation of SEVIS/Data team tasks and developed plan for coverage during SEVIS Coordinator's leave
- SEVIS team Received training in BIO's database structure and SQL from BIO IT Manager to allow SEVIS/Data staff to more efficiently manage data

Create and implement a proactive and robust external communications strategy.

- Quickly created COVID-19 FAQ webpage and made frequent updates as COVID-19 situation rapidly unfolded; sent frequent COVID-19 messaging to students, faculty/staff
- Conducted live COVID-19 Q&As for students and campus staff
- Informed affected populations about regulatory changes, government procedural changes, executive orders and other government actions via email, newsletters, listserv and website updates
- Updated pre-arrival webinars and email series to include COVID-19 information

- Created Advocating for International Education webpage to inform clients about immigration policy changes and resources for advocating for international students and scholars
 - Created FAQ webpage and sent messaging informing clients about the new Public Charge rule
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GOAL 3: Provide an Agile Response to a Changing Environment

- Created and implemented a mail out process that has enabled us to mail out hundreds of documents per week to new and continuing students during office closure
- Formed orientation working group to transition Fall 2020 orientation to virtual format
- Formed virtual programming working group in order to design an entirely new suite of virtual events/programs for international students
- Quickly transitioned all existing workshops/programs to virtual form (included Coffee Break, OPT Doc Check Workshops, tax workshops, etc.)
- Rapidly created Scholar Information Meeting (SIM) online webinar and revised arrival reporting methods to replace in-person SIM
- Submitted UC Berkeley COVID-19 Procedural Adaptation Updates to SEVP for Spring and Summer

Establish internal protocols to respond to government requests for information and changes in policies and practices.

- SEVIS team produced reports to keep BIO and campus partners updated on populations affected by COVID-19 and identified and managed SEVIS records of impacted students/scholars
- Coordinated submission and mailout procedures for automatic J-1 extensions issued by Department of State
- Discussed I-20 delivery policy guidance from SEVP with Summer Sessions and updated BIO's summer I-20 delivery policy and procedures; made required updates in VSIS
- Responded to SEVIS data requirement changes announced for Feb 2020 SEVIS release (F-1 City of Birth, "Other" gender option) by making sure NIF/VSIS are collecting necessary information and soliciting data from ~800 students missing City of Birth data
- Submitted I-17 updates to SEVP in advance of recertification application.
- Employment-based team further expanded H-1B filing documentation and adjusted filing strategies to effectively respond to changing USCIS adjudication practices and preempt RFEs
- Implemented CIP code changes for Agricultural and Resource Economics PhD and Master of Real Estate Development and Design

Maintain a supportive environment for affected populations in the face of changing governmental policies and practices.

- Responded in a very agile and nimble way to the many Presidential Executive Orders in recent weeks. We quickly analyzed them, put information up on our website, and communicated out to affected stakeholders. BIO's responses and website are seen by many schools as a model to follow thanks to the great teamwork within the office
- Used data from student COVID-19 survey to collaborate with campus partners to put together a package of almost \$500k that we allocated to 531 students through 3 rounds of calls. This was accomplished in large part through a highly dedicated Financial Aid Committee led by Tatiana Djordjevic

In conjunction with campus partners, establish and maintain protocols and contingency plans for emergencies, tragedies, and disasters.

- Adapted very quickly to a new advising model almost overnight as Alameda County moved to shelter in place on March 16th. Advised 222 individual students and about 72 students in a group room on the very first day of sheltering in place
- Employment-based team implemented virtual advising appointments for the international scholars and campus units and provided remote department administrator training via video conferencing
- Moved quickly to conduct a snap survey of our students in order to be more informed about where they were, what they were experiencing and their future plans
- BIO IT proactively worked with staff to ensure that they could access necessary services remotely before the Shelter-in-Place order was implemented. Worked with staff after the Shelter-in-Place order was implemented to help them access services and troubleshoot issues that occurred
- BIO IT worked with staff and campus to make office move as smooth as possible, quickly adapted to last minute changes regarding the way that the network would work in the new location

GOAL 4: Enhance Organizational Effectiveness through Staffing, Planning and Development

- BIO executed a successful move to its new location. This was accomplished according to schedule and within the projected budget. Additionally, the physical move itself was executed within a day and a half minimizing the time the office remained shut.

- Collaborated with VCR in advocating for the Chancellor to commit to permanent funds for BIO in lieu of the temporary student fee which was phased out.
- Operations Manager built next fiscal year's financial projections for BIO so that Director can plan next steps for BIO
- Hired, onboarded, and trained new Assistant Director, Employment-Based Services

Maintain high-performing staff through best practices in performance management.

- Conducted the final round of equity increases for staff who were below market. This was essential to retain a high performing team.

Support staff growth through professional development opportunities.

- Staff attended many workshops and trainings: Virtual Graduate Student Town Hall, People & Culture Managers' Forum, NAFSA's Government Connection: Advising in Place: Keeping up with Agency Guidance in a Changing World, NAFSA E-Connection, BA-PIER/NAFSA Northern District Panel Discussion on Online Orientation, NAFSA SEVP Q&A, H-1B Registration Procedure & Updates webinar, and NAFSA Town Hall: Responding to a Worldwide Health Crisis and Travel Restrictions
- BIO IT software developers attended the first virtual version of Microsoft Build, a developer conference showing best practices and upcoming changes to the Microsoft development stack we use for Mercury

Regularly monitor staff workload and make strategic adjustments to benefit the organization.

- Updated Student Advising drop-in staffing to respond to high traffic shifts
- Trained student workers on Zoom advising sign-in, freeing up Frontline staff time for NIF, DF, and emails during the busy season
- Trained student workers on, and had them take over, remote mail out management
- Onboarded and trained new triage advisor and Frontline team member (January 2020)
- Trained Temporary NIF Coordinator
- SEVIS team received training from BIO IT Manager to transition IIE Open Doors reporting to SEVIS/Data team
- Redistributed work in light of a Scholar Advisor's departure and the simultaneous campus hiring freeze

Acknowledge and appreciate diverse individual and team contributions.

- Planned Staff Retreat (postponed due to COVID-19)
- Eight staff members from two teams received Spot Awards during this period, these included the moving team and the Scholar Arrival Online Reporting team.
- Anna McCreedy was recognized for being a recipient of the NAFSA: Association of International Educators Rising Star Young Leader national award.