Office of International Studies and Outreach

Strategic Plan 2013-2014

0.0 Introduction

The primary goal of the Office of International Studies and Outreach (OIS) during this period is to fully develop and begin to implement a Comprehensive Internationalization Strategy for MSUB. The new Executive Director (ED) will continue to meet faculty, students (both local and international), administration, and local community members to seek input on the mission of the office as well as practices that will support the strategic plan of MSUB. These meeting serve a number of purposes: 1) to introduce the new OIS staff and Executive Director to the faculty and administration and to acquaint them with the new goals and operations; 2) to seek a “re-start” in OIS operations with the faculty and administration in light of the poor record of collaboration and information sharing between the two parties over the past several years; 3) inform the MSUB community of new opportunities to collaborate in the international arena; 4) reinforce the message that the university’s mission is student-centered and both international and local students are treated equitably.

For the purposes of this strategic plan, there are four pillars of internationalization at MSUB: 1) students; 2) faculty; 3) administration; 4) community. All four of these stakeholders play an important role in the OIS as it seeks to align itself more closely with the MSUB Advantage -- Value, Engagement, Access and Excellence. A guiding principle of OIS will be a commitment to remain efficient stewards of tuition and taxpayer dollars as we seek to expand the scope of our work.

The MSUB Strategic Plan makes it clear that the University is fully committed to developing a robust and vibrant international orientation. Specifically, the Strategic Plan in Core Theme Three mentions: 3:D Strengthen MSUB as a well-recognized, globally-engaged university. 1. Explore opportunities for international alumni participation in MSUB activities; 2. Link and build study abroad opportunities for students with a goal of adding opportunities that have a civic engagement component; 3. Link and build faculty and student exchange programs abroad; 4. Increase program articulation agreements, joint degree programs and other university/community collaborations with international university partners. All of these areas are discussed in this plan.

1.0 Management

The first strategic goal during this period centers on the management and office structure of the Office of International Studies at MSUB. This major goal is based on MSUB Strategic Plan Core Theme Two - Providing an Environment for Learning, E.
Opportunity to Achieve: Continue to strengthen the university initiative to expand outreach and recruitment of international students. The Strategic Plan\(^1\) (2:E: 1-4), specifically references the following tasks: 1. Identify the desired characteristics and credentials for and then recruit and hire permanent leadership for OIS; 2) Design and implement an appropriate organizational structure for OIS, including streamlining international admissions into the overall university admissions processes; 3) Locate a long term home for OIS that best suits the needs of staff and students; 4) Design and implement an appropriate business model for OIS that best meets the needs of all university units that support the initiative.

Broadly following the tasks outlined in the MSUB strategic plan, during this period, OIS will seek to recruit, hire, train a new cadre of international education specialists to fully serve the growing importance of international studies and outreach at the university. Beside the new permanent Executive Director hired in early summer 2013, the office also hired a new Director of the Intensive English Language Program. Both of these individuals have Ph.D.s in their field, international teaching and research experience, knowledge of world languages and cultures, but importantly, have fully embraced the student-centered mission of MSUB. In addition, a new SEVIS and Immigration Specialist was hired in 2013 and has worked as an instructor and education administrator in East and Central Asia and is well versed in the intricacies of US immigration policy. OIS is seeking to enhance the role of the International Marketing Outreach Specialist in line with best practices in the field as well as our primary growth area of East Asia. At the time of writing, OIS is seeking to hire a full-time Study Abroad Manager to expand the scope and depth of study abroad at MSUB to include a wider audience. Finally, the office hired a permanent Administrative Assistant to manage the day-to-day activities of the office. OIS has a part-time person in the job of Student Services Coordinator, and in view of the growing importance of the office’s support of international students curricular and extra-curricular activities, it may be desirable to make this position full time.

At the same time, OIS has sought to coordinate closely with the Admissions Office. OIS has agreed to support the hiring of an assistant international admissions person until July 2014 to allow the Admissions Office to process the international applications effectively. The Registrar has been attending OIS weekly staff meetings. OIS also works closely with a university accounting specialist overseeing all of OIS.

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\(^1\) Opportunity to Achieve: Continue to strengthen the university initiative to expand outreach and recruitment of international students. (2:E), “Discovering the MSUB Advantage – Strategic Plan 2013-2018, p. 8
finances. The Executive Director has instituted new internal policies for purchasing, thereby ending the period when a number of staff had *de facto* full spending authority. The Executive Director and SEVIS/Immigration Specialist have become MSUB official SEVIS representatives and during this period, the final transfer of the Primary Designated School Officer (PDSO) role from the Registrar to the OIS Executive Director will occur.

In addition, during this period, the Executive Director will continue to seek professional support for special projects within the IELP program. An ESL Manager has assumed the role of designing and managing short-term English language programs during the year, yet final HR approval for her duties in addition to her regular teaching is pending.

Weekly staff meetings have been held every Monday at 10:00 at OIS since September 1, 2013 and will continue during this period. Besides all OIS staff, the Registrar, Accounting Specialist attend these meetings. The Executive Director will create an International Studies Advisory Board as a means of soliciting input from local, regional and national constituents with a vested interest in the success of OIS. It is interesting to note that the US ambassadors to both Russia and China are both Montana natives with strong ties to MSUB.

OIS has managed to achieve better stability in internal operations with the change in management. The Executive Director is investigating various organizational structures. During this period, OIS will remain located in the first floor of McDonald Hall, which has proved sufficient for the current staff configuration and access to the main campus. As the university expands in the coming years (Yellowstone Hall), senior management should consider reserving space for OIS.

OIS is fully committed to developing a number of new, alternative funding streams to further growth in all areas of its operations, in essence, creating a new business model to finance new opportunities. Full discussion of these measures follows in the next section.

The OIS Executive Director will continue to work hard so that OIS is included in every international activity occurring on campus. In the past several years, when the office was headed by an outgoing director and then an interim director, a centralized international focus was dispersed to several loci, including administration, faculty, student organizations, individuals within OIS, and the community. OIS will seek to re-centralize all international operations within the office in a collaborative and supportive manner. This can best be done by positive actions and demonstrated successes.

### 2.0 Developing a New Business Model - Funding

OIS has benefitted from strong support by senior administrators at MSUB who have aggressively supported the expansion of OIS over the past several years. The major
funding stream for OIS continues to be the general fund, sourced from state funds. OIS fully realizes the implications of relying solely on one source of funding and to this end, has developed a robust IELP program that has the potential to not only be self-sufficient, but also provide a source of revenue for other operations. IELP and its targeted growth will be discussed below, but a trebling in size of enrolled students is planned. Similarly, ESL program budgets now include a 10% indirect cost recovery rate to allow for the expansion and sustainability of the programs. Two new ESL programs are planned for early 2014 with a total budget in excess of $70K. OIS will also submit several grant proposals to USG agencies (USAID, US Department of Education), etc. in the coming year with the goal of developing office capacity to write attractive and fundable proposals. In the coming year, such grants will become increasingly important for OIS. The MSUB Strategic Plan also emphasizes this activity: “Identify and procure increased external funding through grants, contracts and foundations, and programs (MSUB Strategic Plan, 1:E) and also “Increase coordination with MSUB Foundation and Grants and Sponsored Programs” (1:E:4). OIS will coordinate these proposals with the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs as well as the individual colleges. OIS will also seek to develop partnership agreements that could provide unrestricted income, following the model of the Xuchang University agreement whereby the partner institution pays a variable amount depending on the local enrollment. OIS will also play an active role in the development of its annual budget from university sources. The Study Abroad Manager position has been thoroughly rewritten to incorporate elements of this new strategy, principally to allow revenue-generating study abroad activities for the community. Likewise, OIS will develop new non-degree study certificate programs similar to the ESL model to allow greater numbers of students to enroll in OIS programs. The key partner in this will be MSUB’s Extended Campus office. Again, OIS is committed to being an efficient steward of tuition and taxpayer dollars.

3.0 Student Mobility – Study Abroad

More MSUB students are presently studying abroad than anytime in the recent past. The University is funding at a higher level the position of Study Abroad Manager, who will continue to support the development of study abroad opportunities for MSUB students, but will also redefine “study abroad” to include short-term programs, faculty-led programs, as well as semester-long programs here in Billings with a study abroad component. In view of the nature of MSUB students, OIS will take the lead in developing a wide range of exchange programs with selected partner institutions. These exchange programs have proven to be more financial and administratively attractive to the students (use of financial aid, transfer of credits, etc.). Other study abroad opportunities are made available by third party providers who manage the entire exchange process between universities but for a fee. MSUB may choose to partner with such a provider, but at present, has chosen not to. In 2014, MSUB will send its first student to a Chinese partner university in a unique arrangement developed by current OIS management. A Billings native, undergraduate at Wellesley University will transfer to MSUB for the spring semester
2014 and then become a study abroad student at Jilian University in China, with whom MSUB has had a partnership agreement for some time.

MSUB strengths in the study abroad area include: diverse partnership agreements allowing for cost-effective exchanges of students, full-time administrator to support students, faculty and administration in the study abroad experience. Our weaknesses include: a lack of marketing to MSUB students; diverse student body who may not appreciate the advantage of study abroad or are not able to afford the experience in time or money; lack of faculty support or knowledge of study abroad. Agreements in place to allow students to study abroad in exchange arrangement that are under-utilized represents a latent opportunity. The major threats to the strategic development of study abroad are: student finances, lack of student engagement, lack of faculty support, administrative hurdles of transferring credit. Importantly, MSUB’s foreign language offering have been decimated in the past years so that students lack the foreign language background to allow them to study in many non-English speaking regions. OIS strongly recommends that the University add additional world language learning opportunities, preferably in credit-bearing degree programs in the College of Arts and Sciences. Funding for the instruction in languages related to needs of the students could be procured as part of bi-lateral agreements with partner universities and US government programs.

The key for the development lies with developing additional partnership agreements with international institutions, in English language programs with robust local language study and to market the opportunities for students widely and aggressively to MSUB students while collaborating with faculty and college administrators. OIS will also seek funding to develop small grants for students wishing to study abroad. A draft proposal for small grants to support international air travel has been submitted to the Provost for submission to the UBC.

### 4.0 Student Mobility – International Students

The presence and active participation of international students in the classrooms and on the campus of MSUB have many benefits to the local students and the academic mission of the university. Studies have shown that learning is enhanced in diverse classroom settings. Likewise, MSUB’s Strategic Plan focuses squarely on this issue, e.g., 2:E:5 “Collaborate with academic and student affairs areas to increase opportunities for MSUB students to be exposed to and gain awareness of a variety of diverse global cultures.” Of course, such interaction also occurs when MSUB students study abroad, or attend one of the many OIS-sponsored international events, but the principal locus of interaction should be the classroom. For this reason, the cultivation of a significant international student body is critical to the strategic plan of OIS and MSUB.

OIS will continue to work with the colleges and administration to determine the capacity for international student enrollment in any particular department, program, or college. It is clear that some programs have reached their limit as
evidenced by the number of faculty issues as well as the gross and relative number of students (Management, Marketing at COB, Psychology in CAS). OIS will seek to collaborate closely with the colleges, departments and faculty to ensure that programs are not over stressed by the unique demands of international students.

In the past MSUB has made use of international agents to recruit students. As recently as 2013, MSUB had dozens of such agreements, most of which had yielded no students. In the coming period, OIS will focus on developing a network of international partners to assist in the recruitment of students. Key to this strategy is hiring and training an International Marketing Outreach Specialist who will be charged with managing this network and training all member agents. OIS will also seek to train the agents onsite here in Billings so as to allow the agents to understand the specific nature of MSUB. OIS plans on developing 20 international partners representing diverse geographic areas, particularly in East Asia.

OIS also attend several EducationUSA recruiting fairs in non-East Asian locations. These fairs are developed by the US Department of State as a means to allow foreign students and their parents to meet representatives of US universities.

At present, MSUB has developed several scholarship opportunities for international students, including those housed at the MSUB Foundation (Yellowstone Scholarship). OIS will develop new criteria for scholarships that have in the past been awarded automatically. In this period, focus will be paid on the academic performance (evidenced by transcript) as well as leadership and service elements (evidenced by application and expanded essay). The goal is to award several larger scholarships to international students who will in turn become ambassadors for the larger goals of OIS. OIS will also support MSUB Foundation fund raising efforts to further develop scholarships for international students.

OIS will work with international secondary schools to recruit qualified international students to study at MSUB. The Executive Director has already visited several such schools in Europe and will seek to expand such contacts. The goal is to attract students to study at MSUB outside the use of agents.

OIS has worked informally with several faculty members to develop support structures for international students. The Academic Support Center has provided excellent counseling and support to international students in many fields. OIS will collaborate closely with ASC to develop trained cadre of tutors in specific subject areas that have been determined to be roadblocks for success. The first such pilot project in international student support will take place in Spring 2014 for Statistics as taught in CAS Mathematics Department. OIS, ASC and Chair of Mathematics have met to plan the support with the funding from the Provost’s Office.

OIS will work with the Office of First Year Retention to ensure that all first year international students are aware of the vast support mechanisms afforded to them. To this end, IELP has begun to increase the study of ESP (English for Specific
Purposes) for students in their final stages of English language study. OIS sought to develop pre-matriculation support for graduating IELP students who finished their studies in mid semester. OIS will continue to explore the idea of training graduating students in academic skills as well as content area lexicon and methodologies.

OIS believes that the opportunities to interact with international students should not end when the student leaves Billings. In collaboration with the MSUB Alumni Office, OIS has identified a number of international alumni living overseas. OIS has held initial discussion with alumni in Korea, China, and Germany about the possibility of creating Alumni Clubs or Friends of MSUB Clubs for students who have attended but not graduated from MSUB.

MSUB has particular strengths and competitive advantages as it seeks to manage the growth of its international student population, including: academic and extra-curricular support for international students; expert recruiting strategies; well designed and implemented partnership agreements; a growing reputation among international students as a sound academic institution offering small classes, personalized relationships with faculty and administration and an opportunity to study in the “real” America. There are, however, several critical weaknesses to MSUB’s program for international students: it is highly dependent on just two geographic areas (China and Saudi Arabia); and continued lack of awareness of the role and function of international students at the university. At the same time, OIS is fully aware that a single geopolitical event, or a single act of aggression or misunderstanding could usher in the wholesale curtailment of student recruitment from one of the two countries referenced above. For this reason, OIS will continue to market aggressively, widely and using new media the opportunities of MSUB: mainly, that MSUB is a safe, American university where internationals students can study, intern, and achieve high proficiency in English and American culture. Finally, the economic benefit of international students to the local economy is significant and should be widely publicized.²

5.0 Faculty Involvement

During this period, OIS will work hard to improve the faculty’s perception of the office. Indeed, the ED has met many senior and junior faculty, deans, directors and administrators to explain the new mission of OIS as acting as a full partner with faculty. In fact, OIS intends to make faculty involvement one of its four pillars of its internationalization strategy.

OIS will continue to provide leadership and support for MSUB faculty wishing to incorporate international content into their courses, curricula and programs. OIS will work closely with CAS in the International Programs minor to expand course

² According to the latest NAFSA report for the 2012-2013 periods, our international students contributed $2.8M to the Billings economy. The full report for Montana is here: http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/eis2013/Montana.pdf
offerings and awareness of this minor and qualification. OIS will involve faculty in the development of new partnership agreements and utilize senior faculty as representatives on international visits. Likewise, OIS will develop a new process whereby MSUB faculty can invite international colleagues to Billings for short or long periods for joint research, training, observation, teaching and similar academic pursuits. Four such international visitors are projected in this period.

Following national trends and best practices, MSUB would be well served by adding an international component to the promotion and advancement dossier for faculty. To incentivize faculty involvement in OIS programs, we have proposed the creation of a new award for faculty member that demonstrate a commitment to the internationalization of the university.

Select senior faculty with international experience are keen to assist OIS in collaborative growth, yet it seems that many faculty have chosen not be involved in international programs. The reason for this probably lies in the recent past, when OIS developed partnership agreements and recruited students without the participation, oversight or collaboration with the faculty. OIS will work with all faculty to ensure they are aware of the personal and professional opportunities available to them, including joint research opportunities for faculty with international colleagues and the fact that OIS can assist faculty in inviting international colleagues to MSUB. OIS will work to understand how widespread the perception is among faculty that OIS is an artificial construct of the administrative branch of the university interested only in recruiting full-tuition paying students. Again, such misconceptions are best rejected by positive examples of collaboration and creating opportunities for faculty to benefit in the development and implementation of the internationalization strategy.

6.0 Agreements with International Partners

MSUB has a handful of important partnership agreements with international universities. The majority of these were developed by senior administrators during an earlier period, while several newer ones were developed during the past several years. The agreements vary widely in their goals and modes of implementation, yet most seem to serve generally the goals of OIS. Some, however, are deeply flawed structurally and have partnered MSUB (a state-funded, public university, teaching-focused) with dubious partners. Some of the partners may not even be accredited by their national accreditation bodies, therefore it is an important goal during this period to formally end partnership agreements that do not serve the broader international goals of MSUB. At the same time, OIS will seek to expand the geographic diversity of MSUB’s partners by focusing on the emerging democracies of post-socialist Europe and Central Asia as well as Latin America. The development of such agreements will begin in a number of ways: 1) partners identified by faculty based on common programs and research; 2) partners identified by administration based on similarity of mission, size and fitting into the wider strategic plans of the university; 3) partners identified by OIS and its partners.
During this period, the Executive Director and other university representatives will visit several key international partners to demonstrate continued commitment to the partnership and explore new areas of collaboration. Such face to face visits are crucial to maintaining good personal relations. OIS will also work with senior administrators to coordinate their international travel to further such agreements. MSUB will continue to host representatives of international partners.

7.0 English Language Preparation Programs.

An important part of OIS is the English language programs, first the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) and now the increasingly-important ESL (English as a Second Language) programs. MSUB was wise to develop its own robust IELP and ESL programs both as a means of recruiting international students (graduates may remain at MSUB as undergraduates or students may study only English as MSUB and then transfer to another institution); and a means of increasing language-learning capacity in house; but also as a revenue stream to fund office operations.

During this period, OIS will focus on several initiatives. IELP will redesign its curriculum to meet the needs of its students. Currently, IELP offers five levels of intensive English study including courses from beginning to advanced levels. Two levels will be added in the program: additional lower level (literacy foundation level) and higher levels focusing on academic literacy skills in specific content areas such as business, science, and law. Academic vocabulary and technical terms in specific content areas will be included in IELP curriculum. As mentioned previously, more attention will be paid to the short-term ESL programs. This program provides approximately 3-6 weeks' English instruction and cultural enrichment activities. It facilitates learners' English skills and understanding of American culture and society. The projected number of the programs will be increased to 6 times from the present 3 per year. Importantly, OIS has developed a new budget model for the programs including indirect costs. Similarly, OIS plans to develop summer immersion programs for younger learners, specifically high school students. This project is designed for high school students of diverse nationalities to learn English rapidly and better understand perspectives that confront high school students in American society. The significant amounts of the day will be dedicated to the explicit teaching of the English language. Students are expected to speak, read, and write in English. Sessions will also combine discussion classes and lectures that explore values, ideals, and debates that young adults encounter in the United States. The course also provides high school students with weekly cultural activities and field trips. IELP has also instituted certain innovations in the teaching methodology to increase the students’ performance and aid in their transition to full time students. During each session, IELP provides students with opportunities for credit-bearing class observation. This project is a dynamic for students’ academic socialization and English learning motivation. Extra-curricular language learning opportunities are also being designed and implemented. The Global Connections Program aims to facilitate IELP students' language and academic socialization. The weekly activities
include introduction of campus and community resources, culturally speaking, academic presentation, guest lectures, learning strategy workshops, conversational partners, etc.

OIS is also collaborating with the College of Education to create TESOL programs. These activities were discussed at an earlier time and the hire of the new IELP Director was in part predicated on the need to develop such programs. The Executive Director and IELP Director have met with the Dean of the COE to discuss this and IELP Director has developed a model TESOL certificate and MA curricula. She has also presented her plans to the faculty in the COE and there is a general agreement on how to proceed. OIS is firm in its belief that MSUB could begin a pilot project in offering a TESOL certificate program in September 2014 and a TESOL MA program in September 2015. OIS stands ready to be a full partner in this activity.

OIS plans on increasing the number of full time students to 100 in its IELP program by the Fall of 2014. The current program has the capacity to enroll this number. The increase could also allow the program to increase the professional opportunities to the English language instructors and fund the expansion of the ESL program.

**8.0 Other Activities**

OIS will continue to develop its network of professional support during this period. We have identified and contacted a number of local, regional and national organizations and institutions whose task is to support the internationalization of higher education in the US. For example, the director of the Montana U.S. Export Assistance Center in the US Department of Commerce visited OIS recently to discuss how his office can support OIS’s international work. Similarly, OIS is a full member of NAFSA and sent a large delegation to the NAFSA regional conference in Bozeman this year. OIS is investigating the feasibility of hosting this conference in 2015 or beyond. The ED has met with his counterpart at the Northwest Community College in Powell, Wyoming to discuss how international students can transfer to MSUB upon completion of their two-year degrees. OIS is also collaborating with language schools in the US to allow qualified students to apply to undergraduate studies at MSUB. OIS has met with schools in SD2 in Billings to explore ways that our office can support their international activities (language classes, clubs, visits by our students, etc.). These efforts will continue in the coming period.

OIS is committed to protecting the legacy, reputation and brand of MSUB. As the MSUB Strategic Plan states: Opportunity to Achieve: Enhance efficiency, awareness and operations across campus – 3. provide impeccable service to students, faculty, administration, community and 4. Enhance cultural/global awareness of all faculty, staff and students through communication and training plans. OIS will continue to work with all university units to ensure that our programs are not misused. In the past period, much effort was focused on dealing with the large influx of applications from Bangladesh.
OIS will also develop community engagement opportunities for our international students. We will work with local businesses, NGOs and other organizations to create outreach initiatives for students. We will also continue to work with MSUB student government to ensure full participation and support of our international students.

9.0 Conclusion

The internationalization strategy for MSUB will continue to move forward in the coming period. OIS will seek to collaborate widely with all units on campus and to involve the community in its work. In addition, OIS will continue to work closely with its counterpart in Bozeman and establish clear lines of communication with its colleagues in Missoula. In conclusion, OIS is fully committed to the tenets of the MSUB Advantage of Value, Engagement, Access and Excellence.

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