

## AY 2017-2018 Assessment

### International Student Resource Center

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**Approved by: Dr. Marcus Jones**

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**Northwestern State University Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**University Affairs Mission.** University Affairs is a diverse group of innovative and talented professionals who provide quality facilities, maintenance and management services in support of education and research at Northwestern State University. University Affairs is committed to being fully responsive to the needs of faculty, students, staff and the public, as provided by the Physical Plant, Capital Outlay Office, Grounds and Custodial Services, Environmental Health and Safety, University Police, ADA Compliance and International Student Services.

**International Student Resource Center Mission:** The International Student Resource Center is dedicated to assisting international students in their transition from their home countries to becoming a student at NSU. We advise future international students and promote a welcoming atmosphere through intercultural social interactions. The ISRC also promotes opportunities for NSU students to participate in long or short-term study-abroad programs.

**Methodology:** The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the director;
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required (show cause);
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will determine and propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

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### Service Outcome Measures

**Service Outcome 1: Increase the scope of international students who are aware of options for employment, on and off campus, before and after graduation, and the application process.**

#### Measure 1.1 Direct

Have an increase from semester to semester in CPT and OPT applications, informed inquiries from students (specific questions about CPT and OPT and on campus employment options), and a general increase in students' inquiries about CPT and OPT. 90-100% of international students will be informed about their on-campus and off-campus employment options, regulations, and procedures.

#### Findings: Target not met

##### OPT Applications

Fall 2016	1 application
Spring 2017	1 application

##### CPT Applications

Fall 2016	4 applications
Spring 2017	3 applications
Summer 2017	2 applications

**Analysis:** In 2016-2017 the target was not met. Based on informal interviews with students we found that most of the students were not aware that they could work off-campus and that they did not know the regulations under which they could do so. The International Student Resource Center received nine applications for CPT (off campus employment while studying) during the academic year 2016-2017. There are 115 international students registered at NSU; however, only 9 applications were received. Furthermore, sometimes the same students applied consecutively. During the same academic year, the ISRC assisted with 2 applications for OPT (off campus employment after graduation). In Fall 2016 two international students graduated, and four international students graduated in Spring 2017. The students who graduated and did not apply for CPT decided to return to their home country or enroll in a graduate program.

Based on the analysis of the 2016-2017 results, the international Student Resource Center launched its website in Spring 2016 with information about employment options for international students, on campus and off campus. Although the website is a useful source of information for international students, it has not been enough to inform all of them about the options available for off campus employment. The ISRC does not track who visits the website, or what information visitors download, so it is no possible to track how many international students are aware of off campus employment options and regulations. Overall, the ISRC succeeded in having information available for students, and receiving CPT and OPT inquiries and applications. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that all international students are aware of off campus employment options.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the results from 2017-2018 in 2018-2019 the ISRC will conduct a mandatory CPT/OPT information session for new international students. In

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addition, the ISRC will conduct 3 CPT/OPT information sessions each semester for current students. The students will learn about regulations for off campus employment, and application procedures.

**Service Outcome 2: Increase awareness of Study Abroad opportunities available for NSU students that wish to participate in an exchange program through a NSU bilateral agreement with an institution of Higher Education abroad.**

### Measure 2.1 Direct

ISRC will have at least three students studying abroad per academic year through a NSU bilateral agreement.

### Findings: Target met

#### Study Abroad through NSU Bilateral Agreements

Fall 2016	0
Spring 2017	6 students
Summer programs 2017	11 students (3 Mexico, 8 France)

**Analysis:** In 2016-2017 the target was met, more than three students participated in study abroad opportunities through NSU international bilateral agreements. However, to continue to meet the target and improve it, based on the analysis of the 2016-2017 results the ISRC started initiatives to inform NSU students about opportunities available for them to study abroad through an NSU bilateral agreement. We made the information available on the ISRC website, and publicized information on social media. Additionally, in conjunction with Dr. Keith Dromm, in charge of the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), in Fall 2016 we conducted an information session open to all students. However, only 9 students attended. In spring 2017, we decided to change the venue to increase students' attendance. We believed that if we held the event at the Student Union we would see an increase in students' attendance. However, this time only 1 student came. We believe that since the event has held in a private room at the Student Union and at a specific time, it was difficult for the students to become aware of the information session, or to arrange their schedules around the designated time for the event. The ISRC was very successful in sending NSU students to study abroad through a NSU bilateral agreement. The goal was 3 students per academic year and we have exceeded the expectation. More work need to be done in promoting the programs at relevant venues.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the results from 2017-2018 in 2018-2019 we will implement information sessions will be set up as a table outside different locations of heavy student traffic, at the Union outside the cafeteria, outside Russell Hall, Kyser Hall, and the Library. Instead of expecting the students attend an information session we will hand out flyers with information about opportunities to study abroad. We believe we will

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be able to inform more students if we give them information as they go, instead of trying to make them attend an event in a room at a specific time.

### Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results.

The actions taken to improve the awareness of off-campus employment regulations and possibilities amongst international students were:

- Implemented information sessions about off-campus employment regulations for international students in one of the rooms assigned for the ISRC office.
- Informed new international students during the Welcome Orientation about the possibility to work off-campus and briefly mention the regulations.
- Sent e-mails to the international student population about the options they must work off-campus while studying and after graduating.

Having the information sessions about off-campus employment in one of the rooms assigned to the International Student Resource Center office was crucial to make students aware about the office and the people they need to contact on campus to learn about off-campus regulations for international students, and the steps to apply for off-campus employment. Prior to the creation of this office students did not have a clear check point where they could gather the information and apply for off-campus employment.

Also, having specific sessions about off-campus employment regulations for international students, and announcing those by e-mail, helped students become aware of this possibility. Thus, even if not all students were able to attend, they would stop by another day and ask about the meeting.

This academic year we observed an increase in CPT (Curricular Practical Training) applications and OPT (Optional Practical Training) applications.

#### OPT Applications

Fall 2017	0 application
Spring 2018	6 applications

#### STEM-OPT Applications

Fall 2017	0 application
Spring 2018	1 application

#### CPT Applications

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Fall 2017	1 applications
Spring 2018	4 applications
Summer 2018	6 applications

Regarding efforts to increase Study Abroad Awareness amongst NSU students, we implemented a new approach to inform students about Study Abroad opportunities.

Instead of deciding on a specific date and time to call for a meeting, we decided to bring the information to the students. The actions taken:

- Distributed posters in every building on campus promoting Study Abroad with contact information.
- Distributed flyers in different departments on campus, such as the Foreign Language Lab and the Library.
- Announced Study Abroad opportunities on Student Messenger.
- Set up an information table outside the cafeteria.
- Attended campus-wide activities for newcomers, such as Freshman Connection and N-Side View.
- Visited specific classes where we considered we could find students interested in studying abroad, based on their major and graduation requirements.

This new approach was more efficient because we could inform a larger number of students about Study Abroad opportunities. They had the option of talking to us if they had time, or just grabbing information and contacting us later. We also were able to inform interested parents about the Study Abroad opportunities NSU offers.

This academic cycle we had more students stopping by to ask about Study Abroad opportunities. However, less students applied to Study Abroad through a bilateral agreement, only 1 for Spring 2018, and 2 for Fall 2018. The target number of students was met, 3 students studying abroad each academic year through a bilateral agreement, but no increase was registered.

### **Plan of action moving forward.**

In summary, this academic year the ISRC informed enough international students about off-campus employment options and recruiting NSU students to study abroad. However, we plan to enhance our efforts to inform students about off-campus employment options,

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and Study Abroad opportunities to increase the numbers of students applying for CPT and OPT, and Study Abroad through an NSU bilateral agreement.

- We will continue to offer information sessions about off-campus employment regulations for international students. However, we will send a poll to inquire the best day and time to do it, to increase attendance.
- We will continue to send e-mails at the beginning and during the semester to inform students about off-campus employment options for international students.
- We will create trifolds or flyers that we can distribute to international students during the Welcome orientation session and hand out when they stop by our office.
- We will continue to use this approach, to bring the information to the students. We will use the same venues and more will be added, such as having an information session in all University Experience class, to inform all freshman students early on about Study Abroad opportunities.
- We will also start exploring how to set up a Study Abroad fair in an area of heavy foot traffic.
- We will announce through Student Messenger the scholarships created for students to Study Abroad. We expect to see an increase in the number of students studying abroad if they have some financial support to cover part of the expenses to study in a foreign country.