

For the 2020-2021 academic year the committee met virtually in response to COVID-19 restrictions. At the first meeting, Dr. Surendran reminded the committee of the charge to investigate, promote and coordinate all phases of international education among the students and faculty. Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year the committee endeavored to determine the state of international education on campus as it relates to the mission of the university to educate global citizen leaders, and as it relates to the students of the university.

Consistent with many other efforts across campus, COVID-19 presented a variety of challenges to the international education programs and activities. The findings of the committee point to the need for greater investment in students who come to study at Fairmont State. Especially during the pandemic, students feel lost and undervalued. Students relay their experiences to their home institutions, thus introducing stress and concern to our international partners.

The committee determined that there are three areas that need to be addressed most urgently.

1. The EPICS Director position.
2. English as a Second Language education
3. Status of International Partnerships.

Currently the university has no EPICS director, this vacancy has been detrimental to the sense of community among the students, and has added to the strain on our international partnerships. The EPICS director is key to fostering relationships between the students, with the university, and with the community at large. Additionally, the EPICS director is instrumental in developing and maintaining partnerships with institutions abroad.

Currently the university lacks formal English as a Second Language academic programs. Formal programs with full-time faculty are necessary to address the needs of international students. Formal programs with dedicated faculty also provide opportunities for international partners to send students to Fairmont State specifically for these programs.

The committee asked that the status of the established relationships with university partners, and those that were in the early implementation/pending stages be reported to the committee. Additionally, the committee requested that we be informed of the process for implementing international partnerships. The status of the relationships was not provided by the university.

Respectfully,

Philip Freeman, Chair, International Education Committee