

# **College of Charleston**

## **Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating International Academic Partnerships & Exchanges**

### **Purpose**

In light of the renewed emphasis on globalization across many disciplines, the College of Charleston (the “College”) strives to provide its students and faculty with valuable educational opportunities around the world while maintaining academic quality and integrity. Accordingly, faculty and staff should follow these guidelines when seeking to initiate collaborative academic activities or partnerships with foreign universities and when evaluating current programs or agreements of this nature.

### **General Considerations**

Developing and sustaining international partnerships requires tremendous time commitment and resources. Additionally, all related academic agreements must conform to applicable Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policies in existence at the time they are executed. In order to maximize the potential for success, all major players must be involved right from the beginning. Many partnerships arise out of existing faculty contacts but it is essential to evaluate whether the partnership can be expanded beyond the individual faculty research/interest; it is not uncommon for partnerships based on one faculty member’s involvement to lapse when the research funding/interest shifts to other projects or when faculty members who started the partnership leave the university. Faculty members with more limited experience with these types of projects should consult with College faculty or staff who have assisted in setting up successful international exchanges. The College’s Center for International Education (CIE) can guide you throughout the process.

### **Types of Academic Agreements**

Each international academic agreement is unique and must be reviewed individually based on the needs and expectations of the College and the foreign institution. Proposed agreements that are ultimately approved are formalized in writing in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) via the process outlined herein.

Generally, many academic exchanges involve one or more of the following:

- ◆ Student exchange agreement based on a one-on-one model; [template developed]
- ◆ Student and faculty/staff exchange; [template developed]
- ◆ Collaborative Research partnership; [template under revision]
- ◆ Collaborative teaching agreement; [template under development]
- ◆ Degree completion/articulation, student transfer agreements; [template developed]
- ◆ Joint/dual degree program; [template to be developed]
- ◆ Hosting short-term faculty-led programs; [options under consideration]

### **Preliminary considerations**

Partnerships are effective only when they achieve the outcomes as outlined in an MOU hence the most important task in developing effective international partnerships is finding the best match for the institution and program. Some of the ways to ascertain partnership interest/match include meetings with colleagues at conferences, and site visits to potential universities by a small delegation of faculty and the head of international programs after the preliminary explorations have been concluded. However, it must be emphasized that economic and financial inequality could be a barrier for meaningful international partnerships: an exchange with a university in a developing country may not be feasible if the host university cannot provide visiting international students support for housing and airfare; alternatively the potential partner university may be in a location where travel and living expenses are prohibitive. These situations should be evaluated as the details of a potential partnership are developed.

Regardless of the nature of collaboration, answers to the following considerations, with supporting documentation, should favor an MOU prior to execution of the same:

1. Is the partner university verifiably accredited by an appropriate third-party agency/organization?
2. Does the partner university's course offerings and educational mission appropriately complement the College?
3. Does the College and the potential partner institution have similar expectations and desire similar outcomes for students and faculty?
4. Is there potential for developing multidisciplinary initiatives with the partner institution?
5. Will other faculty in your department/school be involved in the partnership on a long-term basis?
6. Does the partner university offer similar academic disciplines in English?
7. Does the partner university offer language and culture programs for international students?
8. Is there a demand from the partner university's faculty or students for the project?
9. Are students from the partner university sufficiently prepared in English language skills to study in the U.S.?
10. Does the partner university currently have similar agreements with other U.S. universities?
11. Does this new proposal fit into the mission of the College, your department or school?
12. Does the new initiative duplicate or complement any existing ones and how?
13. Will the proposed initiative be sustained by a support system existing within the department/school?
14. Is there a viable plan to recruit students and/or faculty for this new initiative at the College and at the partner university?
15. If College faculty and student exchange is contemplated, are there measures in place or available to provide adequate security for these persons while at or near the partner university?

## **Approval Process**

Once the above preliminary considerations have been addressed and all related discussions have concluded among faculty within the appropriate departments and schools, a detailed proposal should be prepared and submitted to the Associate Provost for International Education. All initial proposals should include a detailed description of the prospective agreement along with responses to the preliminary considerations supported by documentation.

In addition to the proposal, the following should be sent to the Associate Provost for International Education:

- ◆ Letters of support from the relevant academic deans and the corresponding department chairs indicating that they have participated in evaluating the proposal in light of these guidelines and other relevant factors. International agreements that engage multiple departments, units, or schools are strongly encouraged.
- ◆ Supplementary agreements tailored to the specific proposal. An articulation/transfer agreement, for example, will require a separate appendix of approved course articulation and degree requirements;
- ◆ A detailed budget for the implementation if approved.

The Associate Provost for International Education, in consultation with the Associate Provost for Curriculum and Academic Administration, as appropriate, will evaluate and forward the proposal to the Provost with their recommendation. In some cases, a small committee may be convened to assist in the evaluation. If the proposal is approved, a standard and official agreement format that is approved by the College's Office of Legal Affairs (refer to corresponding links under "Types of Academic Agreements") and complies with SACSCOC related policies will be used to draft the MOU. **NOTE: Initiating programs or courses offered through contractual agreements or consortium or entering into a contract with an entity not certified to participate in USDOE Title IV programs requires 6-month prior notification to SACSCOC and/or prior SACSCOC approval for implementation.**

After the approval of the agreement and corresponding budget by the Provost (or designee), the Associate Provost for International Education will obtain the necessary signatures from the College's and partner institution's officials and other parties, as appropriate [Some universities will hold an agreement signing ceremony in order to highlight the importance and value the institutions place on the cooperation; in such cases participation from top administration should be sought]. A set of original signed agreements will be sent to the partner institution with copies to the College's respective departments/schools. CIE houses the College's original copies of all international academic agreements.

## **Renewal of Existing MOUs**

Prior to the expiration of an existing MOU, the CIE will contact the appropriate department/schools with which the MOU was initiated to inquire if there is an interest in renewing the agreement. CIE will work with all parties involved to determine the level of

mutual interest in renewing the agreement. Issues that will be considered in evaluating renewal will include:

- The level of participation in the program over the period of the MOU
- Whether there are any imbalances in participation
- Whether continuation of the MOU is financially feasible or desirable for the College
- Quality of participation and responsiveness by the designated authorities at the international partner institution
- The possible impact that other program or expansion opportunities might have on the MOU

Once the decision has been made to renew the academic agreement, CIE will coordinate the renewal of the MOU by contacting the respective institution and securing their review and agreement to sign a new MOU.

### **Termination of Existing MOUs**

Interest in terminating an existing MOU should be communicated to CIE along with the reasons therefor. CIE may also initiate termination of an MOU. The decision to terminate an MOU may be made by CIE upon consultation with the Provost's Office and the Office of Legal Affairs.