Memorandum to Presidents

Date: October 26, 1979
From: Office of the Chancellor
Subject: Policy for International Programs in Sensitive Areas

A Policy for International Programs in Sensitive Areas was adopted by the Board of Trustees at its meeting of September 19, 1979. An earlier version was reviewed by the Faculty Senate and the Council of Presidents.

The statement provides us with much-needed guidelines for determining the appropriateness of University involvement in International Programs. It takes effect immediately.

Please note in particular the final section which calls for the establishment on each campus of an appropriate mechanism to review international programs and to determine their conformity with these guidelines.

Policy Statement

The State University of New York is committed to an involvement in the world. Indeed it has an obligation to provide students with an international perspective, to host foreign students and scholars; and, increasingly to use its resources to aid other countries in their development.

International programs involve our University with countries which have different forms of political and academic governance. It is inevitable that sensitive issues involving academic freedom, freedom to travel, and other basic human rights will arise in the operation of these programs. When they do, the University and its participating faculty, students and administrators have an obligation to see that programs which we co-sponsor or participate in do not condone or directly promote the abrogation of basic human rights or the academic freedom of participating university personnel.
Furthermore, SUNY international involvement should have real value to the University's academic program and to local people in host countries. It is in keeping with the philosophy and tradition of the University to be concerned with the needs of people, to render productive service when desired and feasible, and to seek new knowledge about important problems and processes such as those in other areas of the world. SUNY's international involvement should emphasize the desirability of academic feedback—bringing the experiences gained abroad to the classroom and to the continuing professional life of the faculty. It should also stress activities which will be of genuine assistance over the long run.

Faculty members are encouraged and free as individuals to establish their own individual relationships wherever they feel such to be useful and appropriate. The following considerations apply when the University or any of its campuses become engaged in programs abroad as an institution.

The guidelines should enter into decisions on the acceptance and management of international projects in politically sensitive geographic areas or fields of endeavor. They have been issued to assure the University, its staff members and students, satisfying and productive international relationships.

Guidelines

1. International involvement under University jurisdiction should support and enhance the integrity and reputation of the University and command the respect of other institutions.

2. International activities should have a potential for significant contribution to the programs of the University.

3. To the extent possible, international activities should lead to the development of reciprocal relationships with foreign institutions and activities, fostering faculty and student exchanges on a continuing basis.

4. Information pertaining to relevant aspects of international activities administered by the University shall be fully disclosed to all participating faculty members and students. The University shall not undertake any activity that has concealed funding and/or undisclosed purpose or is classified in such a way as to restrict publication and general dissemination of all facts of this activity.

5. University international exchange relationships will be encouraged with any research and educational institutions in any
country of the world and in any discipline or field in which SUNY has competence.

6. The willingness of SUNY to accept contract obligations in a foreign country will depend on the availability of personnel in the particular fields involved and in the type of assistance to be rendered as well as the nature and characteristics of the institutions to which SUNY personnel will be attached directly.

7. The flow of knowledge and of scholarship should not be inhibited by political or ideological boundaries. Thus, the University is prepared to enter into formal agreements with institutions in countries of various political persuasions.

8. SUNY will enter into funded cooperative programs and technical assistance projects in any country in which (a) the conditions of work permit performance up to the professional standards of the faculty; (b) there exists the opportunity to contribute toward social, economic, cultural and developmental goals; and (c) SUNY resources are available and personnel are interested in participating.

9. No international program should be initiated or continued if it (a) requires SUNY to violate the laws or regulations of the United States, the University, or those of the host government; (b) subjects U.S. participants to undue physical danger or harassment; or (c) restricts academic freedom of SUNY program participants.

10. If on the basis of experience, it becomes clear that a contractual activity imposes unacceptable burdens that hinder SUNY personnel from pursuing professional activities in the course of work or study and/or if conditions of work or study are such that SUNY personnel could not pursue activities up to professionally acceptable standards, the University would not enter into or continue the program.

11. SUNY wishes to engage in the introduction and strengthening of educational and developmental efforts in other countries.

12. SUNY will not engage in activities that will directly strengthen the elements of repression, provide aid to the deprivation of civil liberties of local citizens, or become an instrument of revolutionary activity of a government.

13. By entering into educational programming or technical assistance contracts with a foreign country, SUNY is no way endorses the government or any other component of a society.
Procedure

International programs involving study abroad, formal exchanges of faculty, staff or students, or international assistance which are conducted as official programs of the University or any of its entities are subject to review and approval by the Chancellor or his designee.

Each campus should establish a mechanism for the review of all proposed University international programs to determine that they are in conformity with the foregoing guidelines before formal approval and initiation. The mechanism shall be determined by the Campus President with the advice of the appropriate campus faculty body. Existing and ongoing programs need be reviewed only if there appears to be a clear indication that they may no longer be in conformity with the guidelines. While it is expected that campus review will suffice in most cases, campuses are asked to provide information to the Office of International Programs, Central Administration, on the conclusions of each review.

We appreciate your cooperation on the preparation and the future implementation of this policy.

Clifton R. Wharton, Jr.
Chancellor

This memorandum addressed to:

Presidents, State-operated Campuses
Presidents, Community Colleges

Copies for information only sent to:

Deans, Statutory Colleges
President Neville
Vice President Cook