Berkeley
INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020

2018 Progress Report

GOAL 1: Build and Strengthen Partnerships.

Strengthen liaisons with student service and academic units to promote student and scholar success.

- Partnered with Senior Consultant for Advising on development and launch of NewBE, an online training platform for new UC Berkeley academic advisers
- Partnered more consistently and effectively with major student organizations (ASUC, BCSSA)
- Held meetings with several departments to discuss CIP codes issues and RFEs
- Worked with multiple graduate departments undergoing or considering CIP code revisions
- Continued partnership with Center for Student Conduct, initiated BIO meet and greet with new staff, and increased support/education regarding international Graduate student conduct cases
- Consulted with graduate and undergraduate programs to revise CPT enrollment courses to better align with regulatory requirements
- Met with key campus partners to strengthen partnerships and share updates
- Strengthened liaison with Berkeley Postdoctoral Association

Collaborate with key campus units to enhance student, scholar, and faculty experiences.

- Met with key campus partners to strengthen partnerships and share updates
- Established new partnership with iHouse Cafe for coffee break hosting
- Worked closely with new and existing campus partners to facilitate new exchange visitor groups and programs
- Worked with SIS group to handle student fee setup
- Worked with SIS to share Visa data with advisers on campus
- Further streamlined internal Employment-based processes and procedures to strengthen partnerships with CSS
- Engaged in UC Path implementation discussion and provided HR with visa expertise

Build alliances with campus and community partners to leverage human and financial resources.

- Maintained ongoing sponsorship relationships and generated new ones
- Obtained support from Student Financial Aid to increase our annual scholarship fund by $100k

Collaborate with external partners, including other UC campuses and professional associations, to build upon synergy and advocate for our client populations.

- Collaborated and engaged with UC campuses, other universities, and NAFSA to build up best practices
- Attended cross-campus One IT events

Collaborate with on and off-campus entities to improve user experience with technology.
- Served on Ellucian working groups
- Participated in Ellucian user experience research sessions

GOAL 2: Enhance Effectiveness of Products, Services, and Internal Processes

Streamline, standardize, and automate processes.

- Set up and refined automatic email alerts and other scheduled email communications for Arrival Confirmation, end of program, and OPT reporting
- Established more robust follow-up for OPT employment reporting, resulting in a more than 70% reduction in the number of students on the "no current employer reported" SEVIS Alert list within four months
- Incorporated J Scholar SEVIS Audit into existing F/J Student SEVIS Audit process and increased the frequency of audits
- Created "Grab and Go" employment presentations
- Streamlined annual SEVIS audit following H1-B Cap Gap season
- Eliminated TN paper files, further reduced H-1B paper files
- Performed a large number of enhancements and fixes to Mercury International Office System
    - Huge appearance and access overhauls in SSU
    - Added ability to apply for OPT STEM Extension through SSU
    - Implemented Credit Card charge system for various charge types
    - Added Expedite system for NIF and VSIS
    - Auto-registration of Law Students
    - Added lots of new Mercury Reports, including ISSM Audit reports
    - Added advanced Error Tracking to Mercury, allowing for better troubleshooting of issues
    - Added I-94 Automated approval system into Mercury

- o Reviewed and improved SQL Check Jobs and SSU
- o Rewrote automated Regression testing for Release QA Process
- o Added STEM Application system
- o Added Staff-editable Tooltips to SSU and Forms
- o Added SEVIS Portal Comparison system
- o Began elicitation for E-Daily Folder project
- o Moved Mercury and ISD Visitor to new servers

Utilize assessment to ensure high-quality products and services that meet evolving client needs.

- Drafted new needs assessment
- Reviewed financial aid award distribution methodology
- Enhanced brand through communication updates
- Generated 7-part "What's Up With That?" cultural adjustment workshop series
- Re-envisioned health and safety presentation for orientation to meet student needs
- Improved the Scholar Information Meeting (SIM) Resource Guide and presentation based on scholar feedback
- Improved content and format of Scholar pre-arrival communications to clarify pre-arrival and arrival steps
- Updated minimum funding requirement for J-1 scholars and J-2 dependents to reflect increased cost of living

Monitor and adjust internal processes to best serve clients in a changing environment.

- Made major improvements to SSU hub, including one process (STEM OPT) going paperless
- Implemented credit card payments for OPT, STEM, and Academic Training
- Made substantive VSIS improvements for Summer document production and client interface
- Implemented NIF expedite fee and process
- Created Cap Gap e-form within Mercury
- Refined process for collecting undergraduate evaluations to improve J-1 regulation compliance
- Revised J-2 EAD tutorial based on new USCIS application for employment authorization
- Performed upgrades to ISSM and ISD
- Began the process of decommissioning the one remaining physical server at BIO
- Worked with Ellucian developers to fix issues and plan for the future
- Responded to emerging and ongoing SEVIS-related issues (e.g. corrections to update OPT status, correcting erroneous Change of Status auto-completions)

- Started collecting data on July 1 on everyone who enters the office to give more accurate picture of the number of people served
- Cross-trained all Frontline staff via a rotating duty model enabling them to be more agile and flexible
- Promoted select staff and modified roles to address changes to staff

Increase accessibility and reach of products and services to target audiences.

- Established first month student-led social events for new students, BIO Bears Meetups
- Increased number of hosts (+15) for temporary housing program, supporting 80 students
- Continued hosting recurring socials, workshops, and webinars for staff and students, including iMixes, spouse and partner receptions, Global Bears Festival, various career events, intercultural trainings, Admissions to Arrival; tax, financial literacy, travel, and employment workshops, and Express Travel Signature Days.
- Continued selecting and training Peer Mentors and Orientation Leaders for respective programs
- Enhanced website to highlight scholar housing resources and cost of living information
- Actively seeking alternate space for BIO

Expand the documentation of internal processes and availability of training and reference resources.

- Strengthened Student Adviser Manual through significant completion of majority of advising topics, updated policies and regulations for travel and employment, addition of email/letter templates for various scenarios, employment eligibility chart, documentation of intake and daily folder processes, and NIF Guide
- Established annual SEVIS communications calendar
- Enhanced Scholar internal training/reference materials by adding new content to Scholar Wiki
- Made massive updates to Frontline manuals and added them to the Frontline wiki
- Improved student assistant training process
- Created procedure manual for the Employment-based Analyst position and updated procedure manual for Employment-Based Adviser positions
- Developed SEVIS reporting calendar in wiki and continued team model of SEVIS registration/reporting

Create and implement a proactive and robust external communications strategy.

- Implemented semesterly staff workshop on immigration updates, to be complemented with semesterly staff newsletter

- Created and launched year-long 18 post social media calendar of infographics for immigration reminders
- Increased BIO's presence on social media, especially Instagram and WeChat
- Launched new Maintaining Status campaign on the website, social media, and in weekly newsletter
- Implemented communications to address major changes such as the updated Unlawful Presence policy, SEVP student portal, and new international student fee

---

GOAL 3: Provide an Agile Response to a Changing Environment

Establish internal protocols to respond to government requests for information and changes in policies and practices.

- Made substantial and frequent revisions to tutorials and web and print materials for several topics including OPT, STEM OPT and Change of Status due to regulatory and process changes
- Implemented training and changes to BIO student advising practice and policies regarding new USCIS Unlawful Presence, RFE, and Notice to Appear policies
- Updated New Student Orientation presentations, iStart to include increased focus on avoiding status violation and Unlawful Presence
- Made substantial progress on new SEVIS Reactivation process, and updates to CPT and Academic Training request forms and process
- Reviewed J-1 regulations and guidance from various government agencies at weekly J Best Practice meetings and adapted internal procedures to incorporate new guidance
- Responded to Department of State audit in a timely and thorough manner
- Kept abreast and timely informed international employees and hiring departments of various EOs, USCIS-Employment-based visa program policy guidance/memos, and DoL updates through website updates, email communications and in-person meetings
- Continued to adjust /improve our H-1B filing documentation and strategies to effectively respond to changing USCIS adjudication practices and DoL system updates
- Closely monitored campus regional model updates to understand how changes would impact our work and services to our clients
- Responded to the March 2018 launch of SEVP Portal

Maintain a supportive environment for affected populations in the face of changing governmental policies and practices.

- Provided increased Back Office advising support and critical response for complex cases including: status violation, USCIS denials and RFEs, and visa delays/denials

Expand revenue-generating strategies to support client services.

- Proposed and received approval for a student user fee for BIO services
- Implemented BIO services fee, process and communications
- Implemented new H-1B expedite services fee and increased H-1B services fee for non-academic positions
- Implemented NIF Expedite Fee

Align resources to address new trends in academic and research programs.

- Designed and implemented new "Choose Your Own Adventure" session at orientation to best engage and connect with students

Assess BIO departmental procedures for data vulnerabilities and develop necessary response protocols.

- Worked with campus on transition to a new firewall
- Initiated PAF (Public Access File) reform by eliminating personal information and redundant documentation to only disclose to the general public information required by Department of Labor (DoL), and to conform to various data/privacy information standards

---

GOAL 4: Enhance Organizational Effectiveness through Staffing, Planning and Development

Maintain high-performing staff through best practices in performance management.

- Successfully on-boarded new Communications Coordinator, new SEVIS coordinator, three new Triage Student Advisers, and trained up two new Back Office Student Advisers
- Hired and trained new Scholar Analysts and Adviser
- Hired new Web Applications Developer
- Hired and trained two new Customer Service Assistants
- Created the new Employment-based Analyst position to align with the scholar team structure in the office and to strengthen support to the employment-based team.
- Hired and trained the new Employment-based Analyst

Support staff growth through professional development opportunities.
- Attended and presented at district, regional, and national NAFSA conferences
- Held NAFSA leadership roles including Reg Bud and Publicity and Marketing Representative
- Participated in NorCal Scholar Adviser meetings to discuss best practices with colleagues
- Attended Siteimprove training put on by campus
- Attended firewall training with campus
- Supported staff development through attendance at professional conferences

Regularly monitor staff workload and make strategic adjustments to benefit the organization.
- Navigated significant staffing transitions well, providing new leadership opportunities for several advisers
- Restructured work duties and programmatic offerings in order to accommodate the increase in advising numbers
- Increased teamwork and back-up coverage during the busy season
- Changed staff roles and titles to address organizational needs

Acknowledge and appreciate diverse individual and team contributions.
- Awarded several SPOT awards to Student Advising team
- Utilized Staff Merit and Equity Program to recognized outstanding performance