



MINUTES

International Relations Committee

Monday, March 28, 2022

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Annette Sweeney, Vice Chairperson
Senator Kevin Kinney

Representative Terry C. Baxter, Chairperson
Representative Ako Abdul-Samad
Representative Thomas D. Gerhold
Representative Mary Mascher
Representative Kristin Sunde

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I. Procedural Business

Call to Order and Adjournment. The meeting of the International Relations Committee was called to order by Chairperson Baxter at 11:00 a.m., Monday, March 28, 2022, in Room 19 of the State Capitol, Des Moines. The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Approval of Minutes. The committee adopted the minutes from the March 21, 2022, meeting.

Opening Remarks. Chairperson Baxter informed the committee that moneys currently in the International Fund will be used to purchase gifts for future international dignitaries visiting the state.

II. International Student Enrollment at Regents Universities

Dr. Rachel Boon, Chief Academic Officer, and Dr. Jason Pontius, Associate Chief Academic Officer, State Board of Regents, provided background information and statistics about recent trends relating to international student enrollment at regents institutions. There are students from 162 countries enrolled at regents institutions. International student enrollment peaked in fall 2015. Beginning with the 2016 school year and in each successive school year international student enrollment declined, with 70 percent of the decline attributable to students from China. There were 4,374 students from China enrolled at regents institutions in 2015, and presently there are 1,330 enrolled. The international student enrollment decline from fall 2016 to fall 2021 represents 38.9 percent of the overall enrollment decline at regents institutions. The decline was attributable to China creating their own research institutions which attract their own students, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the perception that Iowa is not a very welcoming place. It was noted Iowa's four-year private institutions have also experienced a decline of international student enrollment.

III. Iowa Sister States

Ms. Karla McCollum, Executive Director, and Ms. Teresa Parmenter, Board President, Iowa Sister States, provided background information about Iowa Sister States. Iowa Sister States is a nonprofit organization that receives a state appropriation. The role of Iowa Sister States is to facilitate agreements with Iowa's Sister States and to connect Iowans through cultural, educational, agricultural, and other exchanges. The first-ever citizen diplomacy occurred in the early 1960s when Iowa farmers provided hogs to Japanese farmers whose crops and animals were destroyed by a typhoon. Iowa currently has a Sister State relationship with Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan; Yucatan, Mexico; Hebei Province, China; Terengganu, Malaysia; Taiwan; Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine; Veneto Region, Italy; and Kosovo. The current Sister State relationship with Stavropol Krai, Russia, has been suspended.

IV. Committee Discussion

The committee asked numerous questions. In comparison to other states, Iowa's steep decline in international student enrollment is attributable to Iowa's reliance on a higher percentage of Chinese students. The international student data presented to the committee did not include statistics from community colleges. The committee learned that most international students are enrolled in STEM or the college of arts and sciences at regents institutions. The committee was informed that Sister State agreements must be reciprocal in nature so it has been difficult to establish a Sister State agreement with a country in Africa. The committee also discussed the next scheduled meeting, which will address the stories of refugees who have settled in Iowa.



V. Materials Filed with the Legislative Services Agency

The following materials were distributed at or in connection with the meeting and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the link on the committee's website: www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/meetings/documents?committee=661&ga=ALL

1. International Student Trends — State Board of Regents
2. Helping Iowans Become Citizen Diplomats — Iowa Sister States
3. State Board of Regents Response to Questions