Assessment Report for International
Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), 2012

Expected Outcomes: ISSS Obj 1
All international students, scholars, faculty and their dependents are required to have a letter of Good Standing from ISSS in order for them to apply for an Alabama Driver’s License. This is an Alabama Department of Public Safety requirement. ISSS has a goal to process these letter requests in a timely manner to ensure that Auburn University’s international population can obtain a Driver’s License quickly.

Related typical general education outcomes: None

Assessment Methods

Method: ISSS 1
Each time an international student, scholar, faculty or dependent requests this type of letter it is first recorded in the Master Log at the Office of International Programs (OIP) front desk. Once the letter is logged, then the request is delivered to an ISSS staff member to first ensure that the individual qualifies for the letter. If the individual qualifies for the letter, then the letter is processed in Microsoft Word (by using a letter format), printed on OIP letterhead and then the individual is sent an email to pick up the letter at the OIP front desk. If the individual does not qualify for the letter then they are sent an email where the reason for the non-processing of the letter is described. The individual is asked to make the corrections and then inform ISSS of this so that we can move forward in the processing of the letter.

Findings: After reviewing the Master Log to see how many of these requests we received in 2012 it was determined that ISSS received and processed 2507. As described above, each time ISSS receives a request of this nature one of the first steps is to check to see if the individual qualifies for the letter. In order to determine this ISSS first has to determine that the individual meets the timeline requirement that is set forth by the Alabama Department of Public Safety. The Alabama Department of Public Safety requires that all foreign nationals have at least 160 day remaining in their program (as noted on the I-20 for F-1 students and the DS-2019 for J-1 students and scholars) and on their passport. If there is less than 160 remaining in either instance, ISSS will not process the letter and then the individual is sent an email explaining this. This requirement is also noted on the ISSS Good Standing Letter Request Form. Then ISSS has to check various screens in the Banner system (SPAIDEN, GOAINTL, GOASEVS, SHATERM, SFAREGS and
SOAHOLD) to make sure the individual is in good standing with Auburn University. Once it is determined that the individual is in good standing, then the letter must be processed. The processing of the letter requires that the ISSS staff member log on to Microsoft Word, pick the correct letter format that is appropriate for the individual and then their biographical, program and immigration status information is typed into the format. Overall the process is very lengthy and can require 15-20 minutes per request.

How did you use the findings for improvement?
After reviewing this process, ISSS is in the process in working with the OIT department to find a solution. ISSS has come up with the idea of having computer kiosks at the front desk which would allow the individual to enter their Banner ID number into the computer and the computer would automatically check to see if the individual qualifies for the letter by checking the program timeline and then running the status check in the Banner system. If the student qualifies a letter would then print out at the OIP front desk and then an ISSS staff member would sign the letter. On the other hand, if the individual does not qualify for the letter then a transcript would print out at the OIP front desk describing the reasons that the individual does not qualify for the letter. ISSS is hoping that the implementation of this form of letter processing will be available spring 2014.

Additional comments: n/a

Expected Outcomes: ISSS Obj 2
All F-1 students will receive the authorization to participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) to give them the opportunity to work inside the U.S. for 1 year in their field once they graduate. ISSS would like to promote this training to all F-1 students, educate F-1 students on the application process and give the students the opportunity to have their OPT questions answered quickly and easily.

Related typical general education outcomes: n/a

Assessment Methods

Method: ISSS 2
The application process for OPT is be long and complicated. The application is first reviewed for accuracy by ISSS and then submitted to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) for approval. Overall this process can take several weeks for the student to assemble and it can take USCIS 2-3 months to approve the OPT work authorization. ISSS
helps F-1 students with their OPT applications by providing forms and checklists, training sessions, appointments and walk-in hours. To determine the amount of traffic ISSS receives from students applying for OPT ISSS reviews the OIP front desk Master Log. ISSS also reviewed the amount of appointments that were made for students inquiring about OPT by reviewing the ISSS Outlook appointment calendar and the sign-in sheets from the training sessions.

**Findings:** In reviewing the OIP Master Log, ISSS received 695 OPT applications in 2012. It was also determined that the ISSS staff members were spending more appointment time with students inquiring about the OPT application process. Each time a student meets with an ISSS staff member regarding OPT, the appointment time averages 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. Also on an average week, an ISSS staff member will meet with 15-20 students for individual appointments regarding OPT. ISSS offers 8-10 OPT training sessions per month. On average there are anywhere from 3-30 students in attendance at each session. The sessions are available at different times of the day, such as morning, afternoon and evening and the length of the sessions vary from an hour and a half to two and a half hours.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
With ISSS devoting so much of our time to OPT, we have reached out to other international offices around the SEC to see how they are handling this. UGA offers an intensive online training to their F-1 students that goes through the OPT application process with intricate detail. UGA also requires their students to participate in the online OPT training before accepting their applications for review. UGA does still continues to offer training sessions in the form of informal Q & A sessions. UGA has stated their new method of educating their students about OPT has really helped cut down on appointment times and student questions regarding the process. ISSS would like to also implement this process and have it available for AU F-1 students fall 2013.

**Additional comments:** n/a

**Expected Outcomes: ISSS Obj 3**
All new international students and their dependents are required to physically check-in with ISSS once they arrive in Auburn. ISSS is hoping to improve the check-in process and to ensure that students are checked in in timely manner.

**Related typical general education outcomes:** n/a
Assessment Methods

Method: ISSS 3

In the fall semester we usually have about 250-300 new students check-ins. In spring semester we usually have 100-130 new students and in summer we have about 50 new students. Check-in involves ISSS advisors to scan each student’s documents (I-20/DS-2019, passport, visa and I-94 card), enter each student’s information into Banner (GOAIN TL and GOASEVS screens), request each student’s IH hold to be removed by the Registrar’s Office (by sending an email and then the email is scanned into the student’s file), activate each student’s SEVIS record (once the record is activated then it is scanned into each student’s file), enter the student’s information into the advisor spreadsheet and then sending information to the health Insurance Coordinator so that she can enroll them in health insurance. In Fall 2012 each advisor timed each check-in to get an overall picture of how long the check-in process takes for each student.

Findings: In our assessment of this process it was determined that it can take about 15-20 per student, but if the student has dependents it can take 30-45 minutes. This process was causing a major “traffic jam” in the check-in process of our students and it was causing our students to wait to be checked in for a couple of hours.

How did you use findings for improvement?

With these findings, we determined that something had to be done to improve this process. Dr. Gillespie, who was formerly employed in the International Office at Purdue University, suggested we develop a check-in process similar to theirs. Their process involves having 20-25 students at a time fill out an electronic form at a computer lab. The form would then be checked by an advisor before the student submits the form. Once the form is submitted it will automatically update the Banner system screens GOAIN TL and GOASEVS with the needed information. This form would also automatically send an email to the Registrar’s Office to request to remove the student’s IH hold. This form submission would also create a spreadsheet for our Insurance Coordinator so that she can enroll each student in our health insurance coverage. Also, while the student is filling in the electronic form their immigration documents would be scanned by another advisor to ensure that we have it for the student’s electronic file. At the end of the day, this form will work with Banner to create a spreadsheet that will be sent to the advisors daily so that the advisor can activate each student in the SEVIS system, behind the scenes. This spreadsheet would also eliminate the need for each advisor to keep a separate advisor spreadsheet. With this process we would be able to check-in up to 25 students (maybe even more) at a time.
and would help ISSS check in the new international students in a timely manner.  

Additional Comments: Our IT Specialist is working with Central OIT to create the form and get processing going. ISSS is hoping to train with this new software in early July so that we can start using this new process for Fall 2013.