

**Cerritos College**  
2020-2021 Office of International Student Services (OISS)  
SELF-STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Mission**

The Office of International Student Services (OISS) fosters the education and development of International Students with F-1 status to empower them to achieve their academic and professional goals. The OISS provides assistance with admission, academic counseling, advising, cross-cultural adjustment, and compliance requirements.

**International Student Services Program Review Team**

The Office of International Student Services (OISS) CAS Review Team included eight voting and two non-voting team members – Norma Rodriguez, OISS Director, David Tilahun, Int’l Admissions Specialist, Regina Ybanez, Int’l Admissions Technician, Joanna Alvarado, Int’l Counselor, Natasha Mejia, A&R, Lee Anne McIlroy, ESL Faculty, Lui Amador-Dean of OISS (non-voting), and Celeste Phelps OISS CAS Chair, (non-voting).

**Process**

The OISS CAS Chair and the OISS Director met to initiate the review process, to schedule the subsequent seven (7) CAS team meetings, and to select/assign specific standards for which to prepare prior to each meeting. The internal review team (OISS Classified, Counselor, and Director) gathered and uploaded the evidence to the working OISS CAS document accordingly. Each internal review team member was responsible for gathering and then introducing the evidence related to specific CAS standards and indicators during the review meetings. The external review team (ESL faculty, A&R Classified, and Dean of Student Equity and Success) observed and reviewed the evidence presented by the internal team. Both the internal and external review teams (except for the non-voting members) rated the evidence and noted any strengths and areas for improvement, finally voting on the standard placement based on the CAS criteria.

The CAS team followed the CAS self-assessment process, reviewing the twelve CAS Standards, thereby, uncovering the following findings.

**I. Accolades/Strengths**

- **OISS Mission:** The mission of OISS is clearly stated in its mission statement. During the CAS review, there was discussion about why OISS serves only students with F-1 status rather than both F-1 and J-1. Currently, Cerritos College does not have the ability nor requirements to accept J-1 students. As such, the mission statement clearly addresses only students with F-1 status. In addition, the OISS team reviews the mission statement often to ensure their services align effectively.
- **Staffing:** The OISS team works well together and has students’ best interests in mind as they plan and coordinate services. They spend time thoughtfully defining OISS student success by identifying their “Why” statement.
  - The OISS Director leads her team and delegates responsibilities appropriate for effective programming. She empowers her staff to develop professionally so they will serve OISS



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- students with knowledge and expertise. She promotes diverse perspectives and innovation. The CAS team shared evidence of leadership by the Director’s nomination of her staff as employee of the year. David Tilahun was awarded employee of the year in 2018-2019.
- *One-Stop Shop*: OISS provides a one-stop shop to international students. The OISS team ensures that students receive comprehensive services. Students begin and end with OISS.
- *Part-time Counselors*: OISS has two part-time counselors who provide academic counseling to all OISS students. With hours combined between the two counselors, they are available to students and the program for only 18 hours per week (Monday mornings, Wednesdays, and Thursdays). OISS students have specific needs and require individual academic assistance. Within these limited hours, the counselors still provide students with excellent counseling services to the best of their abilities.
- **Strategic Planning**: The OISS Director implements strategic planning as an on-going interactive process and ensures that SLO and unit planning are integrated into standing staff meetings and conversations.
- **Growth Planning**: OISS understands that student enrollment has declined. To tackle this issue, OISS Director developed a proposal of a Growth Plan (March 2020) that provides an overview of OISS, internal and external trends, and recruitment strategies to increase student enrollment and position the program to efficiently serve a higher number of students.
- **Financial Planning**: The OISS Director reviews and monitors the budget regularly and meets every two weeks with her Classified technician. The budgets are reviewed and balanced against fiscal services monthly. These occurrences enable the Director to project expenses, student services, programming, as well as prepare for unit planning purposes. OISS functions and operates creatively to meet the needs of students. This strategic budgeting allows OISS to provide a suite of services to its students in alignment to the OISS strategic plan.
- **Technology**: The content on the OISS department website is comprehensive. The website includes everything a student needs to know about how to apply to OISS, request academic counseling, and information about immigration laws. The website also includes student resources, such as housing and direct links to websites from Homeland Security and Cerritos College support services.
- **Data: Formative data**: OISS does a good job at gathering, interpreting, and using internal student data to assess its programs and activities. For example, after every workshop and training, OISS asks students to complete surveys. The results are used to determine their level of satisfaction and to ensure they meet the learning objectives.
- **Ethical Practice and Legal Obligations**: OISS is heavily regulated through the federal government branch – Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP). They are guided through the NAFSA association ethical principles. OISS adheres to these practices to ensure all students are treated fairly. Throughout the CAS review, it was evident that the OISS team provides services with high levels of integrity. The entire staff is well-versed on immigration regulations and obligations.



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- ***Inclusive and Equitable Environment:*** The OISS team practices inclusiveness and provides equitable services. Furthermore, OISS adheres to all codes, federal laws, and institutional policies. Staff participate in equity trainings and college initiatives, such as Caring Campus, to ensure their services are accessible.
- ***Relationship Building:*** OISS has good relationships with other student services. For example, OISS partners with CalWORKs to provide math tutoring, share a computer lab, study rooms, and a gathering area. Additionally, the OISS counselors collaborate with the Transfer Center and Career Center to provide workshops to OISS students. Also, OISS is working with ASCC to create an International Friendship Program that will pair international students with domestic students.
- ***Event Collaboration:*** OISS does a good job at collaborating with other professionals and programs as much as possible. They collaborate to host International Education Week, participate in Falcon Welcome Day, Festival of Asian Cultures, Artesia International Street Fair and Diversity, etc. Additionally, OISS collaborates with departments, such as ESL, to provide workshops to students.
- ***Transition to Online Services:*** OISS successfully transitioned the in-person program services to a virtual platform providing all services in a virtual environment. Staff utilized various modalities of communications with students and adding new services, such as, developing a phone tree amongst staff to call students to check on them, emails, Basic Needs Survey, providing zoom forums (New Immigration Rules and Regulations, International Education Week, Welcome back activities, etc.) regular FACEBOOK postings, and a CANVAS classroom to post important announcements and updates on college and department resources and service. This transition has proven to increase and engage students in a critical time that ensures students have equitable access to health and wellness and are meeting their educational goals.

## ***II. Areas for Improvement/Challenges***

- ***Manual Admissions processes:*** The OISS operates by way of manual processes. Prior to the pandemic work-from-home order, OISS completed new student applications with paper forms. Many times, OISS would send forms via US Mail that require signatures and then would wait until the student returned the form in order to process them. While the pandemic caused OISS to rethink their intake processes and then create fillable PDF student forms, they still operate using outdated manual processes. OISS is seeking access to CCC Apply International.
- ***Funding:*** OISS attempts to provide comprehensive services to international students.
  - The counseling budget is narrow, and lacks continuity of support services to students. There is no overlap between the counseling time to facilitate an effective transition of services from one counselor to another. International Counselors are well-versed, knowledgeable, and specialized in immigration regulations that follow USCIS guidelines and mandates. F-1 students must see an International Counselor for a variety of authorizations, such as below 12-unit authorizations, concurrent enrollment authorizations, recommendation for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), recommendation for Optional Practical Training (OPT), change of major, and extensions of I-20. In addition, International Counselors provide

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comprehensive academic services, including educational planning, career, and personal counseling while also monitoring Satisfactory Academic Progress. The current part-time model of international counseling services does not allow for continuity of services and provide for F-1 compliance assistance.

- During the review process, the team discussed important OISS activities that should be offered more regularly. Counselors facilitate these cultural adjustment workshops. Each semester, OISS hosts a cultural adjustment workshop, Tea Time, and an optional practical training workshop. It is important that OISS orient new students to the host country cultural and educational system. These trainings/workshops are meant to promote and strengthen student cultural awareness, and should, therefore, be offered more than one time per semester.
- **International Students:** Cross-cultural experiences are lacking for many international students. Some students do not know how to handle certain situations or how to work with professors. International students experience marginalization and isolation, similar to other minoritized students identified as being disproportionately impacted in an academic setting. However, international students do not “fit” in the student equity framework. This challenge presents an opportunity to explore other methods for sharing information about international students.
- **Compliance and Regulations:** Keeping records and reporting must be completed correctly as set forth by the SEVP. OISS must interpret immigration policies to the college and its community. There are opportunities to explore and develop electronic tracking measures through technology to maintain their mandated standing. During the CAS review process, the team discussed one such policy that students must remain in 12 units or their OISS standing may be impacted. This is difficult to track because of their manual processes. [PS SEVIS, Technology/Programming Support]
- **NAFSA Membership:** The College Executive Council previously approved an individual NAFSA membership for the OISS Director. In addition, the membership for the designated school official would be beneficial as the DSO serves as the main point of contact and liaison for issues related to the students, the institution and the U.S. government. NAFSA recently announced that it now offers “group memberships,” a discount for those individuals who are identified as part of a “group.” This provides an opportunity to further investigate and request approval for a group membership that would include both the OISS Director and the DSO. Additionally, the NAFSA manual may be available for purchase separate from the membership.
- **Professional Development:** The CAS team discussed the importance of professional development and how crucial training opportunities are to serving students. The OISS Director encourages her staff to attend on-campus professional development. However, the staff must rotate their PD attendance as there also must be adequate office coverage. The CAS review team discussed the importance of conference attendance for the OISS team.
- **Website:** International student programs rely on college main website to instigate high levels of interests from prospective students. While the OISS website includes important information for students to learn about its services, some have mentioned it is difficult to access. During the CAS review process, the team discussed a time when a prospective vendor confirmed that the OISS website was difficult to locate. Internet presence is critical as international students explore and shop for programs this way. If the website is not easily found, international students may not apply to Cerritos College.



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- **Summative data:** Institutional summative data for international student success is not available currently. OISS attempts to compensate by producing their own mechanisms for capturing data. Currently, OISS staff collect “institutional” data manually which is time-consuming. Additionally, these manual methods may not produce data that are reliable or valid. IERP has informed OISS that it will soon integrate international student data to the data dashboard. This available data should support a stronger assessment plan and process.
- **Decreased Student Enrollment:** OISS student enrollment has decreased. The current enrollment is 93 students. This decline presents an opportunity to explore OISS recruitment strategies and to implement its Growth Plan, developed in June 2020. Additionally, the CAS team discussed the importance of recruitment and other colleges that employ outreach recruiters, such as Orange Coast College. OCC recruiters travel the country and world to recruit and may be one of the reasons they have a large number of international students.
- **Department/Programs:** More outreach and advisement are needed in specific departments/programs, such as Athletics. There are many OISS student athletes who must still meet international student regulations. The athletic department is not fully aware of international student requirements.
- **Advisory Board:** OISS does not currently maintain an advisory board. There is an opportunity to reconvene the OISS advisory board to provide information about OISS and to gain information about community needs.

**III. Prioritized List of Recommendations**

1. Explore with the Dean of Enrollment Services how to develop an application through CCC Apply International online application for international students.
2. Develop a strategic plan to request funding for department needs that includes part time counseling, staffing and technology.
3. Investigate the types of electronic methods and/or management systems other college international programs are using. Explore electronic processes for Cerritos College OISS.
4. In the areas of program and services, OISS experiences limitations due to the lack of technology resources. OISS will investigate the types of electronic methods and/or management systems other college international programs are using. Explore electronic processes for Cerritos College OISS.
5. Work with IERP to develop a data dashboard for international students. OISS will need to strategize how to assess and understand the critical institutional data.
6. Work with the college web master to explore alternatives to difficult website navigation. Also, utilize social media to compensate for the challenges some students may experience with the website navigation and to entice prospective international students.
7. Operationalize the existing Growth Plan and establish a benchmark for Year 1.
8. Create a professional development proposal that promotes conference and training opportunities for the OISS team.
9. Design marketing tools to advertise current academic resources for students.
10. Collaborate with CTX and HR to introduce specific training as it relates to institutional responsibility of working with international students.



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11. Explore additional opportunities to form partnerships with college faculty, counselors, and departments, specifically Athletics, so that they better understand international student regulations.
12. Reconvene the OISS Advisory Board to ensure its constituents are aware of the program. Additionally, OISS can rely on the advisory board to help steer the program to ensure its services are meeting the needs of students.
13. Develop a newsletter to better inform the campus and surrounding communities of international students and services.
14. Explore ways to reintroduce an international student club.
15. Develop an Office Code of Conduct and integrate to the OISS Policy and Procedures Manual.

Throughout the CAS self-assessment review process, the CAS review committee gained a perspective on the comprehensive support services required and offered at Cerritos College for International Students, along with the legal and regulatory requirements. The CAS self-assessment findings and data will assist the Office of International Student Services to inform future strategic planning efforts by establishing a programmatic action plan.



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**Summary of Ratings for CAS Standards**

<b>Part</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Rating</b>
1.1	Program and Services Mission	Meets
1.2	Mission Statement	Meets
2.1	Program and Services Goals	Partly Meets
2.2	Program Information and Services	Partly Meets
2.3	Program Structure and Framework	Partly Meets
2.4	Program Design	Partly Meets
3.1	Program Contribution to Student Learning, Development, and Success	Partly Meets
3.2	Student Learning and Development Domains and Dimensions	Meets
4.1	Establishing a Culture of Assessment	Partly Meets
4.2	Program Goals, Outcomes, and Objectives	Partly Meets
4.3	Assessment Plan and Process	Partly Meets
4.4	Gathering Evidence	Partly Meets
4.5	Review and Interpret Findings	Partly Meets
4.6	Reporting Results and Implementing Improvement	Partly Meets
5.1	Inclusive and Equitable Educational and Work Environments	Meets
5.3	Advocating for Access, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	Partly Meets
6.1	Leadership	Partly Meets
6.2	Management	Meets
6.4	Strategic Planning	Meets
7.1	Staffing and Support	Partly Meets
7.3	Personnel Training and Development	Partly Meets
8.1	Collaboration	Meets
8.2	Communication	Meets
9.2	Ethical Practice	Meets
9.3	Legal Obligations and Responsibilities	Meets
10.1	Funding	Partly Meets
10.2	Financial Planning	Meets
11.1	System Management	Partly Meets
11.2	User Engagement	Partly Meets
11.4	Communication	Partly Meets
12.1	Design of Facilities	Meets
12.2	Work Space	Meets

