

## **Report of the Internationalization Committee on an investigation of matters relating to the Solidarity Experiences Abroad (SEA) to Latin America.**

Report Date: January 27, 2012

### **Committee Members:**

Dr. Karen Bordonaro, Brock University Library.  
Dr. Thomas Dunk, Dean of Social Sciences  
Dr. Gary Libben, Vice-President Research  
Dr. Murray Knuttila, Provost and VP Academic (Chair)  
Dr. Mike Plyley, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ms. Sheila Young, Director of Brock International

### **Background**

The Woman's Studies (W.I.S.E.) Program Committee passed a motion on November 25, 2011 recommending that Brock University terminate its relationship with the Solidarity Experiences Abroad to Latin America program. The motion reads:

Whereas there have been documented cases of physical and psychological abuse, classism, sexism, racism and homophobia in activities related to Solidarity Experiences Abroad to Latin America, the Centre for Women's Studies strongly urges Brock University to cease support for the Solidarity Experiences Abroad trips to Latin America and remove all ties to local partners of these trips (i.e., the Sodalit Family, Sodality of Christian Life, Solidarity in Action, Christian Life Movement, etc.).

On November 30, 2011 the Department of Sociology passed a similar motion, differing only with the words "the Department of Sociology" replacing "the Centre for Women's Studies".

A subsequent document, "Centre For Women's Studies Summary Report: Solidarity Experiences Abroad, Latin America, Investigation 2011-2012" was presented as the Centre for Women's Studies, Summary Report on the matter. It contained the following recommendation:

As a publicly funded, secular university, one would expect Brock must be duly attentive to any officially sanctioned experiences undertaken by our students, either in a volunteer setting or in a course work setting. **Hence we respectfully suggest that Brock University consider phasing out the organization of international volunteer work through the SEA program and move to build partnerships with volunteer placement**

**organizations that support international declarations on human rights.** (Emphasis in original)

**Committee Actions**

Although the motions and the allegations therein were not sent directly to the Office of the Provost, they were circulated within the University Community and as a result came to the attention of the Provost. Given the seriousness of the allegations in the motions, the Provost convened a meeting of the Internationalization Committee as soon as the motions came to light. At an initial meeting of the Committee on December 19, 2011 the Committee discussed the motions and decided to ask the Units that had passed the motions to provide supporting evidence with regard to the allegations. In the opinion of the Committee the relationship between the SEA Program and Br. Raoul Masseur, the Catholic Chaplain in the Brock Faith and Life Centre, made Br. Masseur an interested party in the investigation. As a result the Committee decided that Br. Raoul Masseur be informed that the Committee was discussing the motions and that he be offered an opportunity to respond.

The Provost subsequently requested the Director of the W.I.S.E Program and the Head of Department of Sociology to provide any and all the evidence from whatever sources they had at their disposal that might have informed their actions in passing the motions. As noted, Br. Raoul Masseur was deemed an interested party in the investigation; therefore he was informed that the Committee was investigating the allegations and was invited to present evidence to the Committee should he so wish.

The Committee took every step possible to ensure that the investigation adhered to the tenets of natural justice. In this regard the Committee considered that the evidence before it was confidential; however it recognized that natural justice requires that any individual accused of wrong doing or malfeasance has the right to confront and address the evidence on which an accusation or allegation is made. Accordingly, all parties were informed that all material would be made available to and shared among all interested parties.

The date of January 4, 2012 was set as a date for the receipt of evidence and information. The evidence was placed in binders housed in the Office of the Provost and all parties were provided ample opportunity to access all the materials received. The Committee met again on January 18, 2012 and heard from a delegation led by the Director of the W.I.S.E program and the Head of Department of Sociology, and then from Br. Masseur and a colleague from the Faith and Life Centre. The Committee began its deliberations following the departure of the delegations; however it determined that some additional information was required. The Provost was instructed to collect additional information on other complaints, the

consent form that individuals applying for the SEA Program sign, and the question of granting credit for experiential learning.

A final meeting of the Committee was held on January 25 at which time several decisions were made.

### **Committee Findings**

- 1) To the extent that the motions and Summary Document from WISE suggested that Brock University sever all connections with Solidarity Experiences Abroad to Latin America program, the Committee determined that there was no compelling evidence to support such an action and further affirms its support for this partnership subject to the conditions below. In the opinion of the Committee no substantial evidence was presented that participation in the SEA program posed any substantial or immediate risk to mature consenting adults. For those trips that had already been arranged at the time of this memo, the Committee recommends the trip proceed subject only to condition 2 below. In this regard the Committee recommends that an additional letter go to all students with the information suggested in item 2 below. Going forward all trips must meet conditions 2, 3, 4 and 5 below.
- 2) In the interest of ensuring that participants are fully aware of the nature of all partners in experiential educational programs, including the SEA Program, the Committee instructed the Provost to ensure that the application form include a clear statement of the partner's mandate and affiliation. In the case of SEA, the Committee suggests the application provide a statement equivalent to:
  - The Solidarity Experiences Abroad Program is affiliated with the Christian Life Movement affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church.
  - No religious affiliation is required for participation; however students might encounter others with attachments to a variety of faith traditions.
- 3) In the interest of ensuring the welfare and safety of both student participants and the local populations in recipient communities, and to ensure adherence to Canadian ethical standards and requirements, the Committee instructed the Provost to ensure that all partners utilize the ethical guidelines provided in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. (<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>). The Committee particularly notes the importance of the terms and conditions of Article 8.3(a) that focus specifically on Multijurisdictional research.
- 4) The Committee instructed the Provost to ask all partner organizations that include photo use permission forms to make

sure there is clarity between permission to take photos during the field experience and the subsequent use of any such photos. The Committee was concerned that permission granted in advance of a trip does not offer an adequate opportunity for individuals to control the use of photos in which they appear.

- 5) The Committee urges all partners to examine the use of the word “placement”. In a number of academic settings placement has a specific meaning, as in clinical placements, which may not correspond with its use in some of the information relating to experiential learning situations.
- 6) The Committee heard an argument that all student experiential and educational trips involving students from the so-called “geo-political-economic North” to the “geo-political-economic South” were inappropriate and extensions of colonialism. In addition it was suggested that secular universities such as Brock should not entertain partnerships with faith-based organizations. The Committee recognized that while there are academic debates about these issues it is beyond the scope of the committee's mandate to declare an institutional position on them. Moreover, it determined that these issues were not germane to the specific matters relating to the motions before it.