EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the international strategic planning process for Ohio State, key stakeholders identified Global Operations as one of the five critical areas for review and deliberation.

The global operations working group was charged with enabling Ohio State to move to a new level of international engagement by creating a high-performing global operations infrastructure to reduce barriers for international learning, partnerships, and knowledge creation and dissemination.

As outdated and ineffective administrative functions have a direct impact on an organization’s growth and reputation, it is critical that the administrative functions needed to operationalize the plans are reviewed and adjusted when strategizing for the future.

Accordingly, the global operations working group focused its discussion on the following areas:

- Finance and Procurement
- Human Resources (HR)
- Information Technology
- Legal and Compliance

In addition, feedback was gathered from a few additional area stakeholders such as risk management, office of sponsored programs, and international students and scholars.

The highly engaged workgroup members met three times and exchanged their feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with the current state of operations, as well as brainstormed on ideas that will enable Ohio State to move towards a higher functioning organization to better support its international mission.
OVERALL STRENGTHS

- Excellent institutional brand value/reputation and reach
- In-house consulting resources in the form of central compliance and legal affairs offices with broad expertise
- Partnership with OCIO and other central support areas in supporting international work of the university
- Capacity and infrastructure for handling international financial transactions
- Broad alumni base
- Centralized internationalization efforts, such as education abroad, international partnerships and immigration services

OVERALL CHALLENGES

Enrollment
- Significant reliance on China for source of international student enrollment. With the changes in the political environment and China’s increased internal capacity, Ohio State could face significant financial impact from decreases in Chinese student enrollment.

Finance, Operations and Strategic Execution
- Insufficient assessment of Return on Investment (ROI) on strategic initiatives and programming.
- Lack of clearly defined governance, processes and procedures lead to recreating and tailoring the processes for each initiative. This increases cost and risk.
- Inconsistency in risk assessment. Risk assessment for international projects (grants, sub-grantees on grants, initiatives, etc.) is left to individual units and governed through multiple avenues rather than through a centralized platform.
- Lack of global HR expertise to support the university community with robust consulting and service delivery on both inbound and outbound researchers/staff.
- In IT, tension between ease of use/accessibility and security/privacy protection across international boundaries. Safeguards required for data protection may be considered too onerous, leading faculty, staff and students to go off-grid and find their own risky solutions.

Global Gateways and Other Affiliates
- The primary affiliated entity, Global Gateways, lacks clear values, goals and metrics. The university community does not have a clear understanding of the mission and objectives of the Gateway offices and whether the objectives are being met.
- Inconsistencies in the structure and setup of affiliated entities. Global Gateways and Global One Health LLC are Ohio LLCs operating across international boundaries. The affiliated entity model adds complexity and confusion within Ohio State support offices, which create challenges in consistently providing support.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The working group agreed that tangible steps could be taken to improve global operations, as follows:

Short Term

• A governance/advisory group could emerge out of the international strategic plan working groups that meets regularly to discuss and find a way forward to the most pressing issues, review important processes that would benefit from consistency, and drive creation of standard operating procedures.
• Create an inventory of key processes within the Office of International Affairs (OIA); evaluate these processes to determine opportunities for improvement; use the governance/advisory group to obtain consensus on priorities and support from other units for needed changes.
• Create an inventory of roles and personnel in colleges and support units that drive internalization efforts; analyze effort focused towards international initiatives; connect the roles in OIA with those within the colleges/support units by way of list serves to enable sharing of information; explore tying the college liaison role more widely with other core pieces of OIA’s mission.
• Revamp policies, procedures, websites and FAQs to explain standard processes more clearly and eliminate duplication of efforts.
• Engage the Global Gateways Board to discuss the future direction of the Gateways; provide directives to establish focus and metrics of success.

Medium Term

• With over 500,000 living alumni, Ohio State has an opportunity to increase alumni engagement, giving and student recruitment by understanding alumni needs and providing networking opportunities to facilitate personal and professional connections. The Gateway offices, especially, could play a critical role in this effort due to their presence in the regions.
• Leverage the existing and strong corporate partnerships in countries like India to explore new fee-for-services programs; optimize the Facilities and Administrative cost recovery on grants, ultimately helping affiliated entities become self-sustaining units.

Aspirational

• Develop a risk assessment framework to strike the optimal balance of risk vis-à-vis speed/responsiveness and cost.
• Establish an all-inclusive governance committee and a process to convert ad hoc decision-making into a set process with consistent participants who would do the ‘return on investment’ assessment before committing resources to a grant, project or program.

SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL AREAS

Below are comments from the SWOT analyses on the various operational areas.

Global Gateways

Challenge – Because it’s an affiliated entity, it can be difficult to get help, as support units don’t know if they have responsibility or know what applies. Also, being an affiliated entity makes decision-making more difficult, as roles are not clear.
**Challenge** – The Gateway offices currently do not use a consistent process to prioritize activities and communicate progress to their university partners; the absence of clear priorities risks loss of focus in the offices and loss of support for the Gateways across the university.

**Challenge** – Values, goals and metrics are not clear.

**Challenge** – Lack of expertise in international HR—this requires some specialization and country-specific knowledge, and Ohio State does not have the right personnel.

**Step for improvement** – Define the Global Gateway role in international student recruitment—what is the goal and how is it measured? This could be a part of the Ohio State enrollment plan being developed.

**Global One Health**

**Challenge** – As an affiliated entity with a complex structure, support and decision-making can be inconsistent and require a lot of effort.

**Step for improvement** – Address privacy and security for IT. Under the current practice, Ohio State provides email, but all other IT decisions and purchases are left with each individual. This is a very risky situation, especially in countries where data is vulnerable to theft. However, addressing the IT risk as a cost of doing business could be expensive.

**Compliance**

**Challenge** – The university currently relies heavily on individual units/colleges to evaluate risk in research and partnerships, rather than consistently looking to an appropriately centralized process.

**Challenge** – Our lack of a clear governance model for international programs. We have ad hoc decision-making, which is exhausting. Key processes have not been mapped. Governance over advancement, student enrollment and corporate engagement components of the international mission is unclear.

**Step for improvement** – Define roles and apply consistently, particularly in areas of collaboration such as with college liaisons.

**Step for improvement** – Convert international strategic plan working groups into ongoing governance improvement groups. They could identify the most important processes that would benefit from consistency and then develop SOP’s for the “top ten.”

**Step for improvement** – Revamp policies, procedures, websites and FAQs to explain standard processes more clearly.
Legal

**Challenge** – Understanding the legal risk in international grants and projects. Legal advice is often sought after initiatives are underway; the legal partner may not be identified; and legal advice is not consistently converted into ongoing process separate from the specific transaction or decision for which it is sought.

**Step for improvement** – Convert ad hoc decision-making into a set process with consistent participants that would address the threshold question before starting a grant or project: is it worth the cost, time and focus to pursue?

**Step for improvement** – Develop a checklist to indicate which Ohio State office (TCO, ODEE, Academic Affairs, etc.) needs to review specific types of proposals.

**Step for improvement** – Re-examine Ohio State’s conservative approach on compliance regarding immigration cases to determine if we have the right balance of risk vs. speed/responsiveness.

International Students and Scholars

**Challenge** – Our lack of assessment of student recruitment efforts.

**Challenge** – Our over-reliance on China as a source of students.

**Step for improvement** – Analyze the cost of various efforts in a range of locations, compared to successful student recruitment, to develop an ROI.

General OIA Business Operations

**Strength** – Travel office, Skype.

**Challenge** – This recurring pattern occurs at Ohio State: risk assessment leads to increasing the cost and effort to comply with the “right” way of doing things, which leads to individuals getting frustrated and going “off-grid” and hoping they don’t get caught, which leads to more risk.

Office of Sponsored Projects

**Challenge** – State law requirements on agreements are a barrier, not just an impediment, to some international engagements, particularly in the European Union.

**Challenge** – Assessing risk associated with sub-grantees on grants.

Human Resources

**Challenge** – Lack of expertise on global issues in central HR exposes the university to risk, including in the areas of inbound and outbound researchers and teaching.
Challenge – Advancement of technology and ability to work remotely may enable more staff to work from around the world possibly exposing the university to liabilities generated out of non-compliance of tax treaties.

Step for improvement – The restructuring of HR at Ohio State and embedding of HR business partners, can lead to HR positions with expertise in international issues and appropriate internal controls.

Finance

Challenge – Our understanding of ROI (strictly economic, but strategic/rating/reputation as well) is limited.

Challenge – Heavy dependency on China for international student enrollment and the potential impact on revenue streams.

Step for improvement – Identify industry partnerships in each Global Gateway country and demonstrate their value to us, our asks of them, and our current partnership efforts.

Step for improvement – Diversify/shift risk portfolio to other countries by optimizing Gateway locations.

Risk Management

Challenge – Lack of understanding amongst university community of Global Gateways mission, role and services offered; no specialized training on protocols offered to local Gateway employees to address an emergency.

Challenge – Lack of a central access to information on Ohio State’s top research collaborations: who they are with, where the work occurs, who is in lead, etc.

Challenge – Changes to regulatory requirements and immigration laws can significantly affect operations, student and faculty mobility. Costs will rise lending to unsustainable business model.

Accommodations

Challenge – Visiting scholars experience difficulties obtaining quality short-term and medium-term lodging or obtain accommodations remote from campus and outside of the academic environment.

Step for improvement – Work with Purchasing to identify rooms or apartments for rent close to campus with amenities for international visitors (short-term). Work within the university capital planning process to construct or repurpose housing on campus (longer term).