**Member Attendees:**

Laura Kanney (Ashland), Angela Shirley (Auburn), Tara Standerfer (EIU), Sherie Klee (Director, GVSU), Elizabeth Kenyon (KSU), Rose Onders (KSU), Tiffany Dellard (MTSU), Joetta Browning (NKU), Frans Doppen (OU), Jane Skon (OU), Tracy Windle (UA), Robbie Ergle (UCF), Maria Busch (UCF), Anna Hiers (UGA), David Chiesa (UGA), Ellie Holliday (UKY), Jenny Mahon (UNR), Donielle Stephens (USM), Kelsey McLean (UWRF), Dianne Thompson (UWYO), Elizabeth McMahan (UWYO), Anna Abramenka (Program Coordinator, COST)

**Absent:** none, all member institutions represented

**Receiving Site Attendees:**

Denis Courtney (Ireland), Ashley Mogollon (Quito, Ecuador), Sonja van Harten (Netherlands), Lorraine Connell (Australia), Lynda Boyd (Christchurch, New Zealand), Evelin Wright (Cologne, Germany), Claudia Chapa (Merida, Mexico), Graciela Cortes (Merida, Mexico), Prakash Singh (Gqeberha, South Africa)

**Honorary Guests:**

Yolanda Eubanks (UA), Carolyn Howell (UGA), Sharon Brennan (UKY), Julie Cleary (UKY), Hans Campman (Netherlands)

**Welcome & Introductions**

We were pleased to welcome University of Central Florida (Robbie Ergle and Maria Busch) to their first COST meeting. We were also pleased to see some new faces and welcome back some of our honorary members and retirees for a wonderful COST family gathering.

**Approval of 2023 Minutes**

No edits were submitted. Find past meeting minutes on the Coordinator Portal.

Angela Shirley (AU) moved to approve. The 2023 Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Director’s Report**

Business is back to normal post-pandemic, and we are steadily increasing our placements and participation.

**Budget Report**

COST’s three main revenue streams are annual membership fees ($1,300 per institution), application fees ($200 per application), and student membership fees ($150 per student placed). Since July 1, 2023 we had 72 applicants and placed 63 students. Note on Director’s paid release not hitting our accounts, causing a slight discrepancy with beginning and ending balances. Will continue to account for release. Our balance and proposed budget remain in the black. Anna will send final balance sheet in July at end of fiscal year.

Elizabeth McMahan (UWYO) moved to approve proposed budget. Budget Proposal 2024-2025 was unanimously approved.

**Conference Fee Increase**

While the fixed rate agreed upon at our previous meeting was intended to cover all costs (meals, venue, on-site transportation, and activities) associated with hosting the annual meeting and conference, it was very tight and challenging to keep costs within that set fee this year. Sherie proposed increasing the set registration fees for stateside conferences to $300 for each primary representative and $250 for any additional representative and guests. International conferences will be $400 for each primary representative and $350 for any additional representative and guests. Unanimously approved.

**Placement Fee Increase**

Reminder that placement fee increase begins with **Fall 2024** placements to the following:

6-10 weeks ($1000), 11 weeks ($1100), 12 weeks ($1200), 13+ ($1300)

**Placement Statistics & Evaluations**

19 fall 2023 placements and 44 spring 2024 placements with 5 withdrawals. Increase of 1 placement from last year.

Evaluations show a need for more pre-departure information about handling homesickness, loneliness, and mental health abroad.

**Site Updates and MOAs**

*Galapagos Islands* will be removed from our list of receiving sites. After numerous attempts to contact Tomas de Berlenga school in Galapagos, no response has been received.

*Knysna, South Africa* has asked to be removed from our list of receiving sites after a reorganization.

See attached Receiving Site Roster\_2024 with updates.

**Receiving Site Emergency Contacts**

New liability and risk management requires ALL receiving sites to identify and share an emergency contact who can be copied on all correspondence with COST in the event we cannot reach the primary coordinator. Anna will send email soliciting contact information.

**MOA with Roles and Responsibilities**

It was brought to our attention that there is no indication of the receiving site’s responsibility to coordinate transportation to and from the placement in the MOA. However, it is indicated in the Roles and Responsibilities document shared with all receiving sites before signing the MOA. It is expected that all receiving site coordinators identify and assist in coordinating the safe transport of students to and from their placement, and the Roles and Responsibilities document remains a supporting document to the MOA.

See attached Roles and Responsibilities document for reference.

**New Site Presentation and Proposal**

*Presented by Anna Hiers (connection made through Kent State University)*

Solomon Amuzu, Accra, Ghana

Solomon is a practical teacher and would act as coordinator, placing in two identified private elementary schools in Accra. Currently no secondary placements (only elementary-middle, ages 4-15). Looking to develop more if program gets off the ground. English is official language in Ghana and the language of instruction in schools. However, many other languages are spoken in Accra. Content areas: Math, Science, Social Studies, ESL, French, Spanish, PE, Art, Music, Ag Ed, Technology.

Students would be housed in an apartment-style room/ bathroom in Solomon’s compound shared by his extended family and a few other tenants (about $100 per week). No hot water, no AC, and generally no washing machine (Solomon has stated he could make one available, but students would learn how to wash their clothes by hand). Students would likely be placed in Ghana during the rainy season, which would be different than what Anna experienced in the dry season. Students would be very welcomed in the home, school, and community. Not necessarily a good choice for LGBTQ+ students. Accra is a vibrant city and a placement site with much to offer adventurous COST students.

Students would need to be aware of and advised on the CDC recommendations/ requirements for travel to Ghana and make appropriate preparations. Single entry visa required.

Elizabeth Kenyon (Kent State) moved to add Ghana to our list of possible placement sites beginning as early as Spring 2025. 16 voted to approve.

Sherie will seek official MOA from Solomon Amuzu. Anna will add Ghana to the Program options on the website and within the application available for Spring 2025 applicants.

**23-24 Side Visits**

No side visits were conducted this year.

Members are encouraged to visit existing sites or form new relationships while traveling for other purposes. If traveling and want to do a side visit for COST, contact Sherie to request up to $500.

**Prospective New Sites**COST will support one official site visit to assess a potential new site.

Sherie will seek recommendations from members for prospective sites.

Auburn University (Angela Shirley) is next up on the site visit schedule. Angela will work with Sherie to plan and coordinate site visit if pre-vetting process proves the site will be a good fit for COST.

**Upcoming Conferences**

2025 University of Wyoming May 19-23. UWYO received $10,000 grant to extend our meeting into conference activities for a total of 5 days.

2026 International location TBD. Merida, Mexico (Claudia Chapa and Graciela Cortes) has volunteered as possible location. Sherie to seek interest from any other sites in the consortium before confirming.

**Revisit COVID Policies and Protocols**

COVID protocols and policies are no longer seen as needed by receiving sites. All can place without vaccination requirements or additional considerations or concerns. Although not required for confirming placement, please continue to advise students of the need to remain flexible and aware of the possible changes in requirements as their placement dates approach. Tara Standerfer (EIU) moved to remove all policies and protocols starting Fall 2024. Anna Hiers (UGA) seconded. Unanimously approved.

**Placement Cancellations**

In the event of institutions requesting new placement site after university has determined current site is unsuitable for placement, we will proceed case-by-case with an evaluation of the situation and finances associated with the institutional withdrawal and replacement.

**COST Application Considerations**

* Reminder for all US coordinators to carefully review all information before approving.
* Make sure each application states the number of weeks the student is seeking for placement. Ensure the earliest start and latest end dates provided are at least that long to accommodate the weeks required. Use the Coordinator Notes section to communicate if beginning and end dates are of greater importance than number of weeks in school, if number of weeks stated account for any school breaks or are in addition to any breaks, etc. Do not approve applications missing dates and/or number of weeks.
* Make sure the applicant has listed *age ranges*, not grade ranges, when indicating their teaching area(s).
* Please communicate with students about their location selections matching their specific placement criteria. For example, some locations cannot accommodate secondary placements, others cannot place early childhood. Check the COST website for placement locations organized by teaching areas.
* Make sure students are including information about their professional/ liability insurance. Please include name of insurance and amount of coverage. If date ranges provided, include that information as well.
* If an application requires edits, contact student to make the edits and leave application in “unapproved” state until all edits are made. Do NOT deny the application for editing purposes.
* Last year we extended the national application deadlines to September 15 for spring placements and March 15 for fall placements. Please set internal application deadlines earlier to allow for time to review and work with students to make edits before approving applications by the national deadlines.

**New State and University Requirements**

With the shift of many states requiring extended number of weeks for in-state student teaching, COST candidates may need shorter placements commencing at later dates. It is understood with fall and spring breaks overseas that this could further impact the time students are in the classrooms.

University of Central Florida (Robbie Ergle) requested the opportunity to recruit students from their internship 1 or practicum semester prior, which occurs one semester prior to the official student teaching semester. Students will have had field experiences and would be expected to participate in full week placements abroad. This provides additional opportunities to universities with strict state requirements prohibiting longer placements. University of Central Florida to pilot this concept beginning with Spring 2025 placements. Policies for this type of COST participation will be evaluated after review of pilot.

**Mental Health Abroad**

Discussion on how to support students pre-departure and while abroad who experience an increase in mental health concerns. Due to FERPA laws, unless a student self-discloses, sending universities are unable to share information with receiving sites or decline a student based on mental health concerns. It is imperative that we dialog with students pre-departure about the possible strategies for coping with culture shock, homesickness and mental health while abroad and away from supports. It is further imperative that receiving site coordinators communicate all concerns with US coordinator as early as possible. All agreed to highlight the importance to students of communicating their mental health needs to all involved. Anna to add verbiage to pre-departure checklist regarding preparing for mental health abroad.

**Subcommittee Reports**

***Marketing*** Joetta Browning (NKU) and Laura Kanney (Ashland)

Resources for marketing including logos, PPT templates, brochures, and social media prompts are located for download on the Coordinator Portal.

***Homestays*** Claudia Chapa (Merida, Mexico)

Team standardized general homestay documents to help both sending and receiving sites follow a similar (with exceptions) protocol for issues surrounding homestay preparation and living. Documents to be shared with Anna and made available on the website and to all members and receiving coordinators.

***Post-COST Experiences*** Tiffany Dellard (MTSU)

Updated the information currently available on the COST website “After you Return”, received 7 responses from receiving site coordinators detailing opportunities or national programs that COST alumni can pursue if interested in teaching abroad after COST, and created an interview prep document to help COST alumni articulate their experience and its application to future job(s). Documents to be shared with Anna and made available on the website.

***Search Committee*** Sherie Klee (GVSU)

Welcomed University of Central Florida as 16th member of COST. Proposal to increase membership cap to 17 was approved via virtual vote: 14 yay, 1 nay following the October 2023 virtual meeting. Bylaws have been amended to reflect increase (see attached). While runner up to UCF was contacted to provide more information, the response did not meet criteria. We remain with an opening for a 17th member.

See bylaws attached.

**Receiving Site Presentations & Updates**

**Christchurch, New Zealand**

*Lynda Boyd*

Reminder that times and seasons are reversed in NZ. When it’s day in the US, it’s night or the next day already. Takes 36-40 hours of travel to reach NZ. Places at Elmwood Norm school where having student teachers is part of the culture, and Aruri Amorn school, which is small with 60 kids in 3 rooms (student teachers can’t hide or “opt out”). Whaitaha school is for young people with high needs. Ashburton college for Agricultural education. NZ children are generally active, outdoors a lot, and outspoken. Homestays are NZ$250/ week ($155 USD per week).

**Darwin & Melbourne, Australia**

*Lorraine Connell*

Placing primarily in Darwin for the time being (it’s HOT in Darwin). Alawa primary school and Nightcliff primary school, roughly 500 students. Homestays are $350 AUD/week ($230 USD/ week).

Will try to get contacts in Melbourne back up and working again. Housing is the main issue for Melbourne.

**Gqeberha, South Africa**

*Prakash Singh*

Gqeberha was previously Port Elizabeth, Airport remains PLZ and for traveling purposes can still use PE. Located about 500 miles from Cape Town. Four schools frequently used for placements: 2 primary, 2 secondary, and one special education. Elementary schools have private school feel with effective special needs education, sports departments and music departments. High schools offer diverse range of subjects as well as extramural activities. Secondary subject options: Eng lang arts, natural, physical, life science, math, technology/ computer, life orientation, history/ social studies, geography, economics/ business/ accounting, visual arts, design, music.

Cape Racife (special educational needs). Pre-primary – grade 12. Follows mainstream curriculum, but supports learners who require specialized programs or facilities and relevant therapy to meet the same curricular and examination standards as mainstream. Uses flexible system to integrate students back to mainstream and/or partnering with sports and clubs.

Housing is generally homestay with mother and adult son (Greg) who picks up and transports students. R300/ day (R2100/ week) includes meals. Additional transport R70 per day. (about $15/day or $110/week, transport $3.50 per day)

**Cologne, Germany**

*Evelin Wright*

Been with COST since 2005! Places at KLS, secondary English Lang. Arts and History. German is official language of instruction. Elementary placements in BiLingo, a bilingual school, and Cologne International School can basically cover all subjects in English (5 years old and up). Housing is typically apartments that run about 650 Euro a month. Food and transportation are not included. Can take 2 placements a semester or up to 5 a year.

**Merida, Mexico**

*Claudia Chapa*

Been with COST since 1997! Places at multiple schools in Merida including Spanish speaking schools and private bilingual schools. If fluent in Spanish, can place in special ed. Homestays are abundant and very excited to host COST students. $175 per week includes everything.

**The Netherlands**

*Sonja van Harten*

Places in multiple schools where language of instruction is Dutch. But at 10 years old, students begin some lessons in English. Can also place foreign language placements (Spanish, French, German), PE, Arts, Music. Can also explore 16 bilingual schools in the Netherlands to see their interest in placing COST student teachers. Note: It is pretty universally expected that COST students will bike to work/ school.

**Ireland**

*Denis Courtney*

Places in multiple (12) schools in Kerry/ Cork area. Ireland schools are all pretty much set on the traditional Catholic system. However, participation in religious activities of the school is not a requirement of all students or staff. Many are still boys’ or girls’ schools, some are becoming co-ed. Can place special education. A Irish police vetting form is required and sent to students ahead of time to complete at no charge. Homestay is 220 euro per week. Includes full board and transportation to school. Note: Mentor teacher might not be the Cooperating Teacher.

**Quito, Ecuador**

*Ashley Mollogon*

Placements at American School of Quito which has a National section (bilingual) and a smaller International section (English with Spanish as a special class). Can place early childhood from 3 years old to secondary 18 years old. Placements in fine arts, PE, Spanish literature. Many foreign hires and a great place to learn Spanish. Working on designing and building a new campus! Homestays are $200 USD per week. Note: Ecuador uses the US dollar, so not exchanges necessary.

**Subcommittees 2024-2025**

The following subcommittees were formed:

***Evaluation Document and Process***

Tasked with collecting evaluation resources and needs from sending institutions to inform curation of COST evaluation tool.

Members: \*Sherie Klee, Denis Courtney, Ahsley Mogollon, Robbie Ergle

***Marketing***

Tasked with developing generic marketing resources that can be used by any sending site to market COST.

Members: \*Joetta Browning, Maria Busch, Leslie Rush, Laura Kanney, Tara Standerfer, Tiffany Dellard

***University of Wyoming Conference***

Tasked with helping UWYO team design and organize 2025 meeting and extended conference: \*Dianne Thompson, Prakash Singh, Elizabeth McMahan, Robbie Ergle, Jenny Mahon, Sherie Klee

***New Member Recruitment***

Tasked with determining recruitment method and new member solicitation.

Members: \*Sherie Klee, Angela Shirley, Tracy Windle, Lorraine Connell, Elizabeth McMahan, Leslie Rush, Donielle Stephens, Jenny Mahon

***Pre-Departure Course/Materials***

Tasked with curating resources and recommendations for institutions interested in developing or growing a pre-departure course for COST students.

Members: \*Anna Hiers, Dianne Thompson, Elizabeth Kenyon, Sonja van Harten, Claudia Chapa, Evelin Wright, Jane Skon, Lynda Boyd, Lorraine Connell, David Chiesa

A huge **THANK YOU** to Ellie Holliday for all the work she did to coordinate and keep things moving forward for the conference and Sharon Brennan for guest and social programming!!

**Meeting adjourned** at 11:27 am, Friday May 17