

## MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

International Advisory Committee (IAC)

# Event Report and Next Steps

## Strengthening Global Research, Collaboration, and Institutional Support

March 4, 2026 | Student Center Ballroom, Montclair State University

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<b>~40</b> Faculty participants	<b>4</b> Breakout groups	<b>6</b> Campus offices represented	<b>1/2 day</b> Interactive forum
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## 1. Executive Summary

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This report summarizes the March 4, 2026 internal workshop “Strengthening Global Research, Collaboration, and Institutional Support,” convened by the International Advisory Committee (IAC) in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, the Office of International Academic Initiatives (IAI), the Office of Global Engagement, the Office of Research, and the Office for Faculty Excellence (OFE).

Drawing on notes from four small-group working sessions, a moderated faculty roundtable, and a campus resources spotlight featuring remarks from Provost Fatma Mili, this document highlights key themes, cross-cutting challenges, and concrete recommendations to advance international research at Montclair State University.

The workshop surfaced strong faculty commitment to international scholarship alongside persistent structural barriers—from procurement bottlenecks and limited seed funding to questions of equity, ethics, and institutional visibility. The recommendations below are organized around four thematic areas and are intended to inform the IAC’s action agenda for AY 2026–2027.

## 2. Event Overview

<b>Date</b>	March 4, 2026
<b>Time</b>	8:30 AM – 1:00 PM
<b>Location</b>	Student Center Ballroom, Montclair State University
<b>Organized by</b>	International Advisory Committee (IAC) in collaboration with the Office of the Provost, IAI, Office of Global Engagement, Office of Research, and OFE
<b>Format</b>	Moderated faculty roundtable + four small-group working sessions + campus resources spotlight

The event was designed as a highly interactive forum rather than a series of formal presentations. It combined a moderated faculty roundtable on international research experiences with small-group working sessions focused on ongoing projects, potential collaborations, and the structural and institutional conditions needed to sustain international research. The workshop concluded with brief, targeted remarks from key campus offices and an informal networking lunch.

### Roundtable Moderator and Panelists

The opening roundtable was moderated by Elizabeth Emery, PhD (World Languages and Culture, CHSS), with panelists:

- Livia Alexander, PhD — Art and Design, Dean's Office, College of the Arts
- Benjamin Nienass, PhD — Politics and Law, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Luis Portes, PhD — Economics, Feliciano School of Business

### Campus Resources Spotlight

Provost Fatma Mili, PhD delivered remarks, followed by representatives from:

- Office of International Academic Initiatives — Tim White, PhD
- Office of Global Engagement — Cristiana Kunyczka, PhD
- Office of Research — Stefanie Brachfeld, PhD
- Office of Sponsored Programs — Ted Russo
- Office for Faculty Excellence — Emily Isaacs, PhD
- Research on Interdisciplinary Global Studies (RIGS) — Sangeeta Parashar, PhD

## 3. Key Takeaways from Working Sessions

Four parallel small-group sessions were facilitated by IAC members. The themes and primary findings are summarized below.

## **Theme 1 | Building and Sustaining International Research Collaborations**

*Facilitator: Daniel Mengara, PhD (International Advisory Committee)*

Participants reflected on both intentional and organic pathways into international research collaboration, and on what sustains those partnerships over time.

### **Key discussion points**

- Collaborations arise through a mix of deliberate strategy and informal relationship-building; both pathways are valid and deserve institutional support.
- Sustainability beyond a single grant cycle often depends on personal relationships (“friendship as infrastructure”) rather than formal agreements alone.
- Faculty highlighted the absence of a university-wide mechanism to connect researchers with shared regional or thematic interests.
- Some research areas involving sensitive or politically contested topics abroad encounter particular difficulties in gaining institutional traction or visibility.

### **Institutional support needs identified**

- A dedicated international research faculty directory or searchable profile page to enable peer discovery.
- A support system for faculty who lack established international networks, particularly early-career researchers.
- Institutional frameworks that recognize the value of relationship-based and long-term partnership models alongside grant-driven collaborations.

**Suggested Lead Stakeholders:** Office of International Academic Initiatives (IAI); Office of Global Engagement; Research on Interdisciplinary Global Studies (RIGS); Office for Faculty Excellence (OFE); International Advisory Committee (IAC). IAI and RIGS are best positioned to host the proposed faculty directory and peer-discovery tools, while OFE can develop mentorship and onboarding support for early-career researchers. The IAC should coordinate across units to formalize partnership-recognition frameworks.

## **Theme 2 | Institutional Procedures and Challenges**

*Facilitator: Ruth Kunstadter (International Advisory Committee)*

This session surfaced some of the most urgent and concrete challenges, with a striking example illustrating the real cost of unresolved procedural barriers.

### **Procurement bottlenecks with international partners**

One participant described a situation in which a \$180,000 grant approved in October remains unusable in March due to a procurement requirement that a sole-source UK partner company register as a New Jersey business and obtain a state tax ID. This has prevented IRB submission and placed the entire award at risk of being returned.

Proposed solutions included:

- Clarifying what constitutes a “service to/in New Jersey” for international vendors.
- Creating a Research procurement category with a board resolution authorizing spending up to a defined threshold or establishing a formal waiver process.
- Assigning a dedicated staff member in OSP or the Provost’s office to assist faculty with international procurement.
- Engaging a third-party broker to manage payments to international institutions or service providers on behalf of the university.

## Institutional visibility and signaling

Participants observed that international research is not clearly positioned as a university priority in practice, despite stated commitments. Contributing factors include:

- Absence of explicit mention of international research in tenure and promotion materials and faculty communications.
- Perception that programs like RIGS are siloed within CHSS rather than positioned as university-wide resources, which hinders interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Limited leadership “signal-boosting” of events and opportunities related to international research.

Proposed solutions included greater visibility for international research in Provost and Dean communications, and hosting future events in higher-profile venues to signal institutional investment.

## Finding research collaborators

Faculty without established networks reported difficulty identifying internal collaborators with complementary regional or topical expertise. One participant’s project was stalled after international partners withdrew and no mechanism existed to identify replacements.

Proposed solution: a shared faculty directory (e.g., a listserv, Canvas space, or spreadsheet) listing research interests and geographic areas of focus.

## Funding gaps

Participants noted a general lack of dedicated funding for international research and called for new internal grant mechanisms to support this work.

**Suggested Lead Stakeholders:** Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP); Procurement Services; Office of the Provost; Office of International Academic Initiatives (IAI); International Advisory Committee (IAC). OSP and Procurement Services are the primary units responsible for resolving international vendor registration bottlenecks. The Provost’s Office should provide executive-level direction and visibility signaling. IAI can support faculty-discovery infrastructure, and the IAC should monitor progress and escalate unresolved procedural barriers.

## Theme 3 | Early-Stage Research and the Pre-Grant Gap

*Facilitator: Arnaud Kurze, PhD (International Advisory Committee, Chair)*

This session focused on the exploratory phase of international research—the period between an initial idea or partnership and the submission of a competitive grant. Participants identified this pre-grant stage as a critical and chronically underfunded gap.

## Key discussion points

- Faculty described projects that require small amounts of seed funding to become viable grant proposals: pilot studies, relationship-building visits, co-authorship trips, and preliminary data collection.
- One participant is developing an education mentoring pilot in Tunisia focused on foreign language learners; another has materials-based research involving international drill ship repositories. Both illustrate the diversity of early-stage needs.
- Study abroad as a vehicle for international research partnerships was raised, with questions about how to better fund faculty-led programs at the pre-development stage.

## Recommendations for funding structure

- Establish International Activity Grant (IAG) seed funding with clear eligibility criteria for pre-grant, exploratory work.
- Create use-case-based guidance that helps faculty understand what seed funds can and cannot support.
- Develop a lightweight application pathway for small awards (under \$5,000) that does not require full grant infrastructure.

**Suggested Lead Stakeholders:** Office of Research; Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP); Office for Faculty Excellence (OFE); Research on Interdisciplinary Global Studies (RIGS); International Advisory Committee (IAC). The Office of Research and OSP should jointly establish and administer the International Activity Grant (IAG) seed-funding mechanism and develop the lightweight application pathway. OFE and RIGS can co-develop use-case guidance and integrate seed-funding orientation into faculty development programming. The IAC should track uptake and advocate for adequate funding levels.

## Theme 4 | Equity, Ethics, and Power in International Research

*Facilitator: Ethné Swartz, PhD (International Advisory Committee)*

This session addressed the ethical dimensions of international research, including power asymmetries, equity in funding access, and the alignment of benefits across institutional partners.

### Power and positionality

- Faculty working in communities in the Global South (e.g., with girls in urban informal settlements in Kenya) described the challenge of building genuine, non-extractive relationships while occupying a structurally advantaged position as U.S.-based researchers.
- The concept of “power-with rather than power-over” emerged as an aspiration, with participants acknowledging it as an ongoing and unresolved challenge.
- Cultural sensitivity and local contextual knowledge were identified as critical conditions for sustainable partnerships.

### Equity in funding access

- Faculty reported difficulty obtaining internal funding even when applications clearly articulate benefits to Montclair students. Uncertainty remains about what additional criteria are applied in funding decisions.

- Misalignment between institutional metrics (“How does this benefit Montclair?”) and the genuine reciprocal value of international partnerships was a recurring concern.
- Financial barriers for partner institutions (e.g., student fee differentials in international programs) were raised as equity concerns that Montclair can help address.

### **Ethics clearances and institutional guidance**

- Managing dual ethics review processes—complying with both U.S. IRB standards and the requirements of international research sites—was identified as a practical challenge for which faculty receive little institutional guidance.
- Faculty expressed a need for clear, centralized information about which university units to consult for guidance on international research ethics.

### **Recommendations**

- Offer Fulbright grant-writing workshops in small, hands-on formats that allow participants to work on actual applications.
- Run broader grant-writing workshops for international research funding.
- Appoint college-level grant-writing support staff, ideally one per college or school.
- Use the NEST portal (or equivalent) to integrate opportunities for faculty to access grant databases and funding alerts (currently on OSP page).

**Suggested Lead Stakeholders:** Office for Faculty Excellence (OFE); Institutional Review Board (IRB / Office of Research Integrity); Office of International Academic Initiatives (IAI); College Deans’ Offices; International Advisory Committee (IAC). OFE is the primary unit for grant-writing workshops (including Fulbright) and college-level support appointments. The IRB / Office of Research Integrity should develop dual-review guidance and centralized resources for international ethics compliance. IAI can coordinate dissemination and the NEST portal integration. College Deans’ Offices are key for equity in funding decisions and for embedding reciprocity principles in internal grant criteria.

## **4. Cross-Cutting Themes**

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Across all four working sessions, several themes recurred with notable consistency:

- Infrastructure before incentives: Faculty need functional administrative pathways—particularly around procurement, IRB, and international vendor engagement—before incentive-based interventions can be effective.
- Visibility as institutional signal: Events, communications, and physical venues convey implicit messages about whether international research is genuinely valued. Faculty noted the gap between stated and demonstrated commitment.
- The pre-grant gap: The exploratory phase of international research—before a competitive grant is viable—is chronically underfunded. Seed mechanisms and low-barrier internal awards are needed.
- Equity and reciprocity: Questions of who benefits from international partnerships, how power flows, and whether university criteria sufficiently recognize the value of reciprocal collaboration emerged as persistent ethical and structural concerns.
- Discoverability: Faculty lack tools to find colleagues with complementary expertise across departments and colleges, limiting organic collaboration.

## 5. Proposed Action Plan for AY 2026–2027

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Based on the working session findings and the IAC's ongoing strategic priorities, the following initiatives are recommended for near-term implementation. Items are organized by a responsible unit and anticipated timeframe.

### Administrative and Procurement Reform

- Convene a working group with OSP, Procurement, and the Office of the Provost to review and revise international vendor registration requirements.
- Develop a formal waiver or expedited pathway for sole-source international partners named in awarded grants.
- Assign a dedicated liaison in OSP to assist faculty navigating international procurement issues.

### Faculty Discovery and Connection

- Launch a searchable international research faculty directory, housed on the IAI or RIGS website, listing research interests and geographic focus areas.
- Create a low-barrier communication channel (listserv, Canvas community, or equivalent) for faculty to post collaboration needs and opportunities.

### Funding Access and Seed Mechanisms

- Create International Academic Grant (IAG) availability and develop clear guidance on eligibility for pre-grant, exploratory activities.
- Establish a lightweight application pathway for small international research awards (under \$5,000).
- Explore alignment between RIGS and OFE programming to create a joint grant-writing support offering for international research.

### Institutional Communication and Visibility

- Integrate international research highlights into Provost and Dean communications, including explicit mention of international engagement as a tenure consideration.
- Profile international research activity more prominently on university-facing web resources.
- Host future IAC events in University Hall or similarly prominent venues to reinforce institutional endorsement.

### Ethics, Equity, and Faculty Development

- Offer Fulbright grant-writing workshops in a hands-on, application-focused format (OFE, IAI, IAC collaboration).

- Develop brief guidance materials on navigating dual IRB/ethics review processes for international research sites.
- Explore college-level grant-writing support appointments in coordination with the Office for Faculty Excellence.

## Promotion and Tenure Recognition

- Work with the Office for Faculty Excellence and college-level Promotion and Tenure committees to ensure international research, partnerships, and field engagement are explicitly recognized in reappointment, promotion, and tenure criteria.

## 6. Conclusion

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The March 4 workshop demonstrated that Montclair State University has a committed and active community of internationally engaged scholars. Faculty came to the table with concrete projects, genuine partnerships, and a clear-eyed view of the structural obstacles they face.

The conversation also made clear that much of what is needed is not new programming but better infrastructure: procurement pathways that work for international contexts, seed funding that meets faculty where they are in the research cycle, and institutional signals that consistently affirm the value of global scholarship.

The IAC is committed to carrying these findings forward into concrete action. We welcome continued engagement from faculty, campus offices, and senior leadership as we work to build the institutional conditions for international research to thrive at Montclair.

*This report was prepared by the International Advisory Committee (IAC), Spring 2026.  
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