



AIEA PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

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Global Problems Call for Global Solutions

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President





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Name: Gregory P. Crawford

Title: President, Miami University (Oxford, Ohio)

Time Served as President: 5 Years

Miami University is recognized as one of the nation's most outstanding undergraduate institutions. With a student body of nearly 19,000 in Oxford and more than 5,000 on regional campuses in Middletown and Hamilton, Ohio, Miami effectively combines a wide range of strong academic programs with the personal attention typical of much smaller institutions. Miami also has a significant presence in Differdange, Luxembourg, which began in 1969.

Gregory P. Crawford is currently president of Miami University. A physicist by training, his many interests include transdisciplinary approaches, entrepreneurship, and international education. Greg spent two sabbaticals during his career in the Netherlands, one working at Philips Research Labs and the other at the Technical University of Eindhoven.



1. Taking into account all of the demands and constraints facing higher education today, how would you describe internationalization's role in higher education in general and at your institution more specifically?

Internationalization elevates both the strength of the institution and the quality of the students' education. Research and scholarship, conducted by both faculty and students, are more fruitful when they engage a range of perspectives from different nations, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. In addition to its specific academic and discovery outcomes, the pursuit of common goals together generates deeper appreciation, friendship, and respect for real people around the world, correcting misconceptions and stereotypes in a way that advances understanding and peace. Miami has a long tradition at the top of U.S. institutions whose students study abroad – nearly half our undergraduates. Global engagement, both sending our students into the world and bringing the world to Miami, is a critical value, like inclusive excellence and entrepreneurship, for preparing our students for life and work in the world of the future. It is written into our mission to equip people who “use their knowledge and skills with integrity and compassion to improve the future of our global society.” That means it is not limited to a particular office or program, but it is a consideration in all of our discussion, planning, and activity. It is an element of our overarching focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. Higher education has traditionally been associated with preparing students for work, life, and citizenship. How can internationalization contribute to this preparation?

Global engagement is vital for success in a global society of connection and commerce. It builds students' character, intellect, skills, self-understanding, and capacity to serve and lead in ways that elevate the wellbeing of individuals and the whole society. Engagement with people of other nationalities reveals in real life the indispensable truth of human commonality, equality, and dignity beyond abstract propositions. The once-strange “other” becomes known as a person worthy of respect, solidarity, and participation in the common good. Strangers become friends, differences are revealed as enrichments, and wariness of the unknown turns into welcome. Students gain heightened self-understanding by relating to others whose different cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives trigger deeper reflection, nuance, and synthesis of their own views and practices. This experience accelerates the central goal of higher education – preparing individuals for life and work where everyone can flourish. I describe the result as the eight effects of study abroad. Students encounter the unknown; manage mistakes; expand their comfort zone; gain independence; see the other side in a place where they are not the dominant culture; live liberal arts immersed in histories, cultures, languages, philosophies, and social and political systems; acquire global competence to thrive in global commerce; and develop leadership by overcoming challenges and demonstrating empathy, respect, and openness to others.



3. How do you see the role of the college/university president in internationalization? As the president of your institution, who else do you turn to lead internationalization, and what role do these individuals or groups play?

Because internationalization should permeate all of the organization, the president or chancellor must continuously uphold a vision for its expression across the campus. If they lack personal experience in this area, they should catch up by consulting with leaders in the field, on campus and beyond until they can articulate such a vision with real depth and investment. Such leadership validates the work of campus leaders, including administrators, faculty, and students, to promote internationalization and inspires an accelerated approach. Internationalization must be embedded in the university's finance and business, student life, and enrollment management areas in addition to academic affairs. It is a collaborative effort among formal and direct services (education abroad, international student support, career center), informal services (social and cultural activities throughout the community), and stakeholders (alumni, parents, community members). We turn to these groups regularly for their expertise, feedback, and input. At Miami, we have a Senior International Officer who is supported by a university-wide committee of faculty, staff, and leaders whose activities and expertise are leveraged for comprehensive internationalization.

4. How is your institution measuring internationalization's contribution to meeting its mission?

Our earlier efforts to measure and improve our internationalization's impact on mission led to a Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization last year. To accelerate those efforts, we are tracking such areas as faculty global research impact, using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as benchmarks; seeking external funding for those efforts; providing faculty visiting scholar positions internationally and presenting at international conferences; and incorporating student global and intercultural learning outcomes with evidence-based instruments. We are also assessing the impact of global partnerships on students; the number of underrepresented students studying abroad and away, not just the total that ranks us high nationally; the number of students enrolling in a foreign language; and applications and awards to students, faculty, and staff for Fulbright and other awards, as well as the amount of Miami scholarships awarded for international travel.

5. What are some of assets and resources your institution has drawn on for its internationalization? How and to what aim are you leveraging these resources?

Our new International Student Center at Miami that brings students together to engage the international student experience elevates our mission for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and our DEI efforts prepare students to be more effective global citizens. Two years ago, we launched a Voices of Discovery Intergroup Dialogue



program to bring together students from diverse backgrounds – international, domestic, and many other intersections of identity. The facilitated dialogue, and relationships that form, influence participants’ understanding of their own and others’ experiences in society and cultivate individual allyship and collective agency to effect social change. One of our first facilitated dialogues was between domestic and international students. We have won two grants for collaborations in India. We provide travel grants for faculty and staff and seed funding for faculty program development. We target high-impact activities with significant investment rather than smaller amounts to multiple projects. We encourage internationalization in promotion and tenure standards.

6. What might threaten progress toward the internationalization of higher education both broadly and at your institution more specifically?

Diminishing and uncertain resources threaten internationalization, especially our attempts to provide access to underrepresented students and to take risks at innovative problem solving in such areas as environmental responsibility and food and water security. Another challenge is the geopolitical and social volatility in the world, which impacts global partnerships, education abroad, international student recruitment and support, and many other areas. We must continue to advocate for the value of internationalization and not take it for granted.

7. What are some of the key ways in which a senior international officer can help the presidents of their institutions advance internationalization?

Communication between the Senior International Officer (SIO) and the president is critical. The president’s focus is broad, but the SIO is laser- focused on the internationalization efforts. The SIO must communicate effectively so the president understands current internationalization issues, and is thereby able to address those when interacting with students, faculty, staff, legislators, donors, and community leaders. The president can best make the case when they know related president can convene groups to stimulate internationalization efforts. The SIO should ensure that the president knows when that is necessary to motivate and set priorities. At Miami, I recently established a DEI Task Force. The SIO recommended the faculty and staff who could best represent internationalization efforts as they intersect with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with other college/university presidents and their senior international officers?

I came late to international education – my first overseas experience was in graduate school, in Italy – but I quickly became an enthusiastic advocate. Early in my academic career, I did two sabbaticals in the Netherlands – one in industry at Philips Research Laboratory and another as associate professor at Technical University of



Eindhoven in the Netherlands, where I saw the power of people with diverse backgrounds and expertise gathered from around the world collaborating to solve scientific problems. Later, I had oversight responsibility as dean for a project in Haiti aimed at advancing a World Health Organization goal to eradicate the debilitating condition elephantiasis. Science and medicine offered a solution to the problem – salt fortified to kill the parasite that causes the disease – but we needed an anthropologist to identify the people’s cultural practices, a historian to explain their origin, and a sociologist to suggest how to approach them so we could implement the practice. Global problems call for global solutions.



The Association of International Education Administrators is a member organization that equips leaders to shape the future of higher education in a global context.

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