

# Overcoming Challenges for Global Engagement through Virtual Exchange

November 8-10, 2021

Northumbria University , UK

Virtual Event

The Northumbria-TCNJ Virtual Thematic Forum will examine the strategic and tactical issues that Senior International Officers confront as they support faculty and administrative staff's efforts and make use of Virtual Exchange to advance global learning. The Forum will take place over a three day period early November in conjunction with Northumbria's International Training Week.

The Forum will include a Keynote presentation on the first day and two afternoon workshops. The Key-Note will feature Eva Haug, an expert in Virtual Exchange and Global Learning. She and a panel of experts in Virtual Exchange will share best practices in VE and lessons learned through COVID-19 in extending these practices. The workshops will be centered around best practice in Nursing activities and virtual exchange in professional support services, more specifically in Accessibility and Inclusion teams.

The purpose of the forum is to share best practices and lessons learnt throughout the last 18 months with attendees and create a space for discussion on the impact of virtual exchange if embedded into a university's strategy. Participants will be expected to contribute from their own experience and take away ideas to implement at their institutions to advance global learning in a very challenging environment for international travel and exchange. The forum will be relevant for Senior International Officers or similar, who have strategic responsibilities at their institutions.

Visit Northumbria University [website](#) for more information!



# AIEA Thematic Forum

## Overcoming Challenges for Global Engagement through Virtual Exchange

Keynote Speaker: Eva Haug, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

This Virtual Forum will examine the strategic and factual issues that Senior International Officers confront as they support faculty and administrative staff's efforts to make use of Virtual Exchange to advance global learning. The Forum will be part of Northumbria University's International Training Week 2021

Date: 8-10 November 2021

Time: 17:00- 19:00 GMT (UK)

For more information and to apply online: <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/ITW2021>

*\*The Thematic Forum encourages applications from Senior International Officers or similar only*

# AIEA Virtual Thematic Forum 2021

## Overcoming Challenges for Global Engagement through Virtual Exchange

November 8-9, 2021

**Hosts:** This AIEA Forum was hosted virtually by Alejandra Vicencio of Northumbria University (from Newcastle, United Kingdom) in collaboration with Christa Olson of The College of New Jersey (from Ewing, NJ, USA).

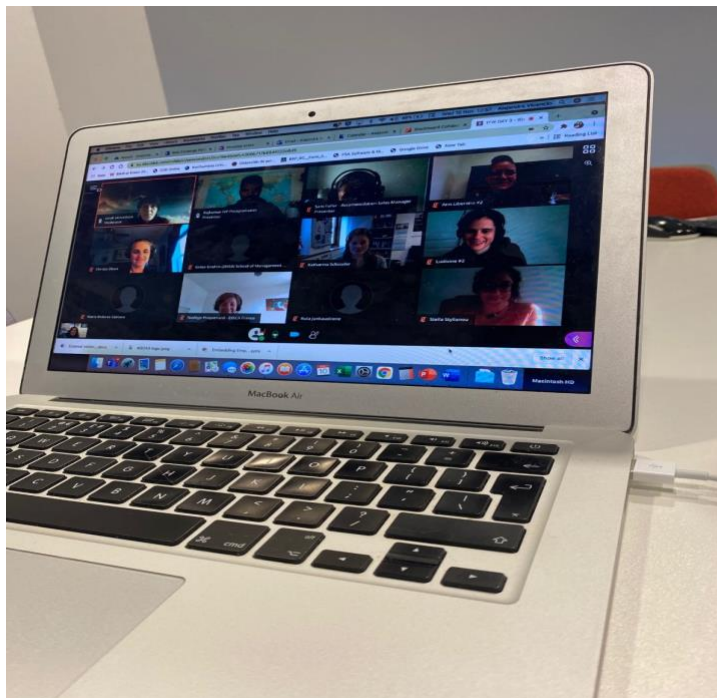


**Northumbria University**  
NEWCASTLE

**About the host institutions:** *Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. It is based in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, which is regularly voted the best place in the UK for students. The University has its origins in the Rutherford College, founded in 1880. Today, by putting students at the heart of an outstanding experience, and with world leading research and award-winning partnerships, Northumbria is a new kind of excellent university.*



*The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) is a highly selective institution that is consistently recognized as one of the top comprehensive colleges in the nation. Founded in 1855 as the New Jersey State Normal School, TCNJ maintains the seventh highest four-year graduation rate among all public colleges and universities. It is ranked by Money as one of the top 15 public colleges “most likely to pay off financially,” and U.S. News & World Report rates it the No. 1 public institution among regional universities in the U.S. northeast.*



### **About the Attendees.**

- 25 Attendees participated.
- Fifteen participants from the Dominican Republic, Israel, Peru, UK and the US joined in discussion with nine presenters from the Netherlands, the UK and the US.
- The Attendee job titles included: Executive Director, Global Education Initiatives, Director of Global Engagement, Associate Director, Institutional Mobility Program Director, Senior Director and Erasmus Coordinator, Associate Professor Nursing and Public Health



## About the Thematic Forum Schedule and Description.

*Day 1: Monday 8 November 2021*

*16:00 - Keynote Speaker with Eva Haug, Educational Advisor for Internationalisation of the Curriculum and COIL/Virtual Exchange.*

The Forum opened with a greeting from Kathryn Rosenbaum from AIEA and a keynote by Eva Haug from the Netherlands. Eva's presentation featured an overview of Virtual Exchange (VE), problems VE can help us to solve, and how it can be a powerful tool for fostering intercultural engagement and advancing student global learning. Her presentation included practical lessons learned on the effective use of technology that is accessible to all involved, and the importance of faculty buy-in and leadership in building sustainable and inclusive VE.



**About the Key-Note Speaker.** *Eva Haug works as Educational Advisor for Internationalisation of the Curriculum and COIL in the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Eva was elected as Steering group member of the Expert Community Internationalisation at Home for the 2020–2022 term. Eva has an MA in Spanish Literature and Culture from the University of Amsterdam and did a Postgraduate in Higher Education. She's worked in higher education since 1992. As the Coordinator Internationalisation, she's specialised in internationalising the curriculum and campus experience of the students at AUAS. As COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) coordinator, she provides entire cohorts the possibility of experiencing international teamwork by pairing Amsterdam students with students from around the globe. Lecturers and students collaborate, at a distance, on real life challenges. She's presented about COIL at conferences in Brazil, South Africa, and the US, as well as the EAIE Conference, and is regularly invited by universities to train staff in intercultural and online collaboration.*

*17:00 - Academic and professional lessons learned on the design and delivery of a 'Nursing virtual mobility experience'.*

An overview of Virtual Exchange (VE) and a critical review of underpinning evidence was presented, highlighting the benefits for staff and students (e.g. enhanced cultural awareness and personal and professional growth). These benefits provided the rationale for the implementation of a VE option for students on the Nursing and Midwifery undergraduate programmes at Northumbria University, at a time when the global pandemic was preventing physical exchanges abroad. The VE aimed to enable completion of programme learning outcomes on global issues and to promote cultural awareness and learning. The design of the VE involved collaboration with 10 partner universities in 6 countries including Europe and the USA and the recruitment of 60 students. Students were allocated to Transcultural Study Groups which incorporated a mix of nationalities with similar professional backgrounds, which enabled

collaborative working in and between 3 virtual seminars. Supporting materials were provided to guide the student learning. Evaluation demonstrated positive student experiences and evidence of liminal learning leading to cultural awareness and greater cultural competence. Lessons were learned about the recruitment, organisation and technical aspects of the VE that will be taken forward for future deliveries. It is hoped that VE will be used in a variety of ways going forward, including blended approaches to exchanges and to widen participation. Formal evaluation is currently on-going by means of a mixed methods research study involving all partner countries.



**Moderator:** *Alejandra Vicencio, Head of International Mobility at Northumbria, has been working in International Education for nearly 20 years in several countries in the Americas and in the UK. In the last 10 years she has developed international partnerships and projects for three higher education institutions in the UK and has recently led on the centralisation of international mobility for Northumbria University which included embedding international mobility activity into Careers and Student Employability and raising over £1M in funding for outward mobility activities, 50% of which to support disadvantaged students. Alejandra also works for Chevening Scholarships as a Regional Assessor and EAIE as a Mentor. She has presented at international conferences such as NAFSA, EAIE and UUKi's Higher Education Forum.*



**Presenter:** *Gill Smith is a Senior lecturer and Erasmus Coordinator at Northumbria University where she completed her MSc in research methods. Gill's research interests include Women's preferences for participation in a Midwifery Led Unit & Community Hub, Midwifery care and Student experiences of study abroad. Gill has methodological expertise in the use of case studies, questionnaires and focus groups. Gill has a growing profile related to peer review publications and research related income e.g. as a Co-researcher for a research study using a case study approach entitled "Facilitating student engagement in the development of the undergraduate curriculum; a case study approach", is a PhD supervisor, and was Joint researcher on "Implementation and evaluation of a transformative learning framework to enhance learning during study abroad". In addition, Gill is a bid winner and Joint researcher on "Maternity service user views and preferences for the development of a community hub in South Tyneside" and has recently completed a funded consultancy with Testimony college in Tanzania. More recently Gill has commenced a mixed methods study evaluating student experiences of a Virtual Exchange for student nurses and midwives. Gill is passionate about the student experience during teaching and learning and has recently won several student led teaching awards. Gill's teaching expertise is with nurses and midwives largely around complex health care needs. Maternal health and well-being is a general area of interest, currently in early development. As Erasmus Coordinator Gill has established, developed and maintained relationships with partners in both nursing and midwifery in Denmark, Italy, Spain, Finland, Malta, Portugal, Germany and France. Gill is involved in the on-going development of partnerships for study abroad and elective placements within nursing and midwifery, including international exploration e.g. with K4C. Further development of partnerships are being explored with Canada and Grenada.*



**Presenter.** *Dr. Sharon Byrne is an Associate Professor in the Department of Nursing and Public Health at The College of New Jersey. She received her Doctor of Nursing Practice from Drexel University, MSN and Post Master's Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) Certificate and Certificate in Health Care Administration from Widener University, BSN from La Salle University, Certificate in School Nursing from Rowan University, and Diploma in Nursing from Helene Fuld School of Nursing. She holds national and international certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Educator, and Global Health Consultant. She currently practices as a nurse practitioner at MD Anderson Cancer Center at Cooper. Dr. Byrne is a Virginia Henderson Fellow of Sigma, the International Honor Society of Nursing and was a Faculty Fellow in Israel, with the Jewish National Fund in Summer 2019. She has served as a participant-observer for the North American Region Global Advisory Panel on the Future of Nursing (GAPFON), and Nursing Delegate on a Cultural, Healthcare & Nursing Journey's to Cuba & India. Dr. Byrne's program of research focuses on health disparities and participation related to cancer screening, cancer survivorship, cultural humility and global health.*



**Presenter.** *Dr. Katie Hooven's academic history includes graduating from West Chester University in 2002 with her Bachelors in Nursing (BSN), graduating with her Masters in Business Administration (MBA) with a focus in finance, and her Masters in Nursing (MSN) with a focus on nursing administration. Dr. Hooven graduated from Villanova University in 2016 with her PhD with a focus on nursing education. Her dissertation included tool development on collaboration in the clinical learning environment, along with a mixed methods national survey on clinical education. Dr. Hooven has been a nurse for over 15 years and has worked with pediatric to adult patients. Dr. Hooven is an associate professor of Nursing at TCNJ and has been there since 2011 and in her time here she has received \$450,000 as a Project Director for the Robert Wood Johnson foundation on her work with population health. She has also been a co-investigator for a \$100,000 grant from Novo-Nordisk focusing on obesity in the Trenton schools.*

*Day 2: Tuesday 9 November 2021*

### *17:00 - Workshop Rendering Global Engagement Accessible for All.*

The second day workshop included the impacts and lessons learned through two case studies. The first case, presented by SIO hosts, Vicencio and Olson began with the revelation that their collaboration has been almost exclusively virtual since a brief meeting at a NAFSA meeting over 4 years ago. It went on to discuss how they approached their engagement with the intention of optimizing their partnership through virtual exchange and how they leveraged the work underway at their respective institutions to help each other move these efforts forward. For example, Olson explained how she drew upon Vicencio's Concept Piece on Virtual Exchange for Global Learning to invite faculty at TCNJ into conversation about virtual exchange. Vicencio noted the role that SIOs can play in garnering overarching institutional support and external funds for specific projects led by faculty and other teams.



**Moderator.** *Christa Olson, Executive Director Global Engagement, The College of New Jersey Christa Olson has been working in international education for over 20 years. She began her professional career as a Professor of French and Intercultural Studies, before shifting into internationalization as Associate Director for International Programs at the American Council of Education from 2001-2011 and as Vice Provost for International Programs at Drake University from 2011-2016. Now at The College of New Jersey, she is responsible for leading the Center for Global Engagement, developing new and maximizing existing partnerships, overseeing the administration of education abroad and coordination of international support services, and managing global risk mitigation and crisis management. A longstanding member, Christa has chaired the professional development committee and served on AIEA Board.*

The second case study for this workshop featured TCNJ Assist VP, Meghan Sellet and Accessibility Resource Specialist, Kyla Tucker. For their presentation, they addressed how they received the invitation to engage in a staff exchange with their counterparts at Northumbria, what observations were inspired by their initial engagement and what they envision will happen going forward. Their excitement and curiosity about this staff exchange was quite evident as they shared what they observed about the status of accessibility work, the structures of their respective offices and the approach they are taking in interfacing with students at each of their offices. Their aspirations for the future include keeping the lines of communication open, facilitating a mutual in-person student-staff exchange and growing exchange opportunities moving forward.



*As the Disability Specialist, Kyla works primarily with first year students and students who are newly connected with the ARC. In her role, she reviews student documentation and facilitates the accommodations process by establishing reasonable and appropriate accommodations. Kyla completed her B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Architectural Engineering Technology at the University of Hartford, and her M.Ed. in Administration of Higher Education at Suffolk University.*



*Meghan Sellet is currently the Assistant Vice President for Accessibility Resources (ARC) at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). Meghan collaborates with members of the TCNJ community to facilitate access and promote disability as a piece of human diversity. Prior to coming to work at TCNJ, Meghan served as an Access Consultant at The University of Arizona's Disability Resource Center (DRC). She also spent time working with the Penn State Ability Athletics program (an intercollegiate adapted athletics program) as an advisor to student athletes. Meghan received her Master's degree in Counselor Education (with a concentration in Rehabilitation Counseling) from Penn State University and her B.S. degree in Rehabilitation Services from Wright State University in Dayton, OH.*

The Forum closed with observations by our keynote speaker who offered constructive suggestions to participants on methods for further optimizing their virtual engagement, highlighted the need for SIO's to be partnering with IT to secure good IT support, and urged attendees to reflect on how to best capture what is happening through virtual exchange. Participants were also encouraged to reflect about what action items they would take away from the forum for drawing upon virtual exchange to advance global engagement at their respective institutions.

## **Thematic Forum Outcomes.**

***Lessons Learned or Insights for Senior International Officers.*** Eva Haug's keynote address explicitly noted the role that SIO's can play in supporting academic and staff virtual exchange. Points that she highlighted which resonated with attendees included:

- Present Virtual Exchange along with the problem that VE can help solve such as addressing sustainable development goals.
- Listen to what students, leaders and administrations are saying about what skills are important and highlight how VE helps to develop these skills.
- Be attentive to supporting platforms that are broadly accessible; less is more; simpler is better.
- Capture and communicate what is happening through virtual exchange.

During the forum Olson, Vicencio and other SIO attendees dialogued about:

- Leveraging work underway at their respective institutions to help each other move these efforts forward.
- Garnering overarching institutional support and external funds for specific projects led by faculty and other teams.
- Backing into good practice with training for faculty and staff engaged in VE and partnering with the IT team for support for those involved with VE.

***Evaluation.*** Following the workshop, the hosts sent out a communication with a link to the recordings to those who participated in at least one session of the workshop and invited participants to complete the AIEA evaluation. Evaluations noted the following insights/piece of knowledge gained:



- Addressing access to online learning
- Challenges and risks of virtual education
- Impact and medium term disruptions in global learning
- Beyond helping facilitate the virtual exchange program, this was my first and only introduction of global partnerships so it was nice to hear the various perspectives.
- How to engage our teachers to develop VE.
- The difference or similarity between COIL and VE.
- Learn about good practice from Nursing virtual mobility experience.

### ***Dissemination for Additional Impact.***

In addition, each of the presenters were asked as part of their engagement for the Forum to prepare a proposal for further disseminating what they have learned through their virtual global engagement. Each presenter was awarded a small stipend from the AIEA Thematic forum budget to assist with the costs involved in their engaging in this additional dissemination.

- 1) TCNJ Professors Katie Hooven and Sharon Bryne received word on December 20<sup>th</sup>, that the following proposal for the Sigma's 33rd International Nursing Research Congress has been accepted for an in-person presentation 21-25 July.

### ***Working Together through the Pandemic-- Creating Global Partnerships***

The COVID 19 pandemic brought on a whole new set of academic challenges. Face to face learning went virtual and all clinical experiences were halted for a set time. Moving forward, some sites had restrictions and varying definitions on “essential personnel” so it was imperative to think outside of the box for our students to meet their course and clinical objectives. Drawing from our firsthand experience this presentation will introduce the global partnerships that were formed to serve as an experience for the students to increase cultural awareness and count for clinical hours.

TCNJ's Nursing Leadership course is situated at the end of the curriculum. It is offered each year to senior level nursing students, who, after this course and upon the completion of the program, sit for the NCLEX- our national licensure exam and begin to practice in their first nursing job. Typically, within the nursing leadership course, students split their clinical hours between two experiences. The second component of the clinical was shadowing a nursing leader and this experience proved to be difficult during COVID. No hospital wanted “extra” bodies in their clinical site, so although

students could still participate in part one of clinical hours, none of them had been able to secure a nursing mentor for the spring semester.

Our school was approached by an international school to offer a virtual exchange program. The program had around 60 students from six countries. They were divided into groups to work collaboratively over the course of four months. The student perspectives from the school (n=14) are divided into categories such as: process, outcomes/take-aways, and challenges. This presentation will focus on the program overall, give tips on how to involve other schools of nursing as well as discuss the student perspective.

This program could be offered after the need for virtual clinical has ended because of the opportunity it gave students to experience an international exchange without the time and resources that are typically required from an immersion or study abroad program.

- 2) TCNJ Assist VP, Meghan Sellet and Accessibility Resource Specialist, Ky Tucker plan to present the following presentation at TCNJ as well as at the AHEAD (Association of Higher Education and Disability) national conference, which occurs every summer in July.

*Mirror Images: Virtual Staff Exchange Between Northumbria University and The College of New Jersey (TCNJ).*

In the Spring of 2021, Northumbria University and TCNJ forged a partnership (through a virtual staff exchange) to learn more about common practices and trends in supporting students with disabilities. This presentation will outline the following: How the partnership between Northumbria University and TCNJ began, common themes in the approaches to providing support to students with disabilities and next steps for facilitating an in-person student-staff exchange between Northumbria University and TCNJ.

- 3) Northumbria University Professor Gill Smith and Debra Watson presented at the NET Conference focused on Nursing (September 2021) and intend to submit an abstract early Jan 2022 to present at The RCM Education & Research Conference.

Northumbria Professors Smith and Watson continue their mixed methods research study to formally evaluate the student experience with VE in collaboration with the partners who took part. When the study is complete (Questionnaire is complete, focus groups underway), they intend to prepare a paper for publication and dissemination. The following is a brief abstract of that paper:

Study abroad and student exchange facilitates positive learning outcomes, such as personal and professional growth, attainment of cultural learning outcomes and developing an understanding of global health (Ruddock & Turner, 2007; Keogh & Russel-Roberts, 2009; Maltby et al., 2016; Morgan, 2018, 2019). Immersion in a culture (Edmonds, 2010; Loretta et al., 2014) and experiential learning are linked to such development (Greatrex-White, 2008; Murray, 2015), therefore most studies focus upon learning in the formal context of clinical placement (Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2004; Sandin et al., 2004; Adamson, 2018). However, a limited number consider learning in other, informal, contexts (St Clair & McKenry, 1999; Green et al., 2008). Review of these studies suggests the informal context is an important yet under explored aspect of the study abroad experience (Levine, 2009; Morgan, 2012; 2018; 2019).

The Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Health offers yearly approximately 40 inbound and outbound student nurses and midwives an opportunity to undertake a placement abroad. However, due to the Covid 19 pandemic all student exchanges were suspended, and the implementation of an alternative experience via virtual exchange (VE) was explored. The EVOLVE Project Baseline Study (2019) described VE as an evidence based sustainable technology-enabled project, encouraging constructive intercultural communication between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, supported by educators or facilitators. A further EVOLVE study evaluating the impact of VE on student learning in HE (2020) highlighted the factors which impacted on the student's ability to appreciate VE such as clarity of tasks and integration into programmes. The study also captured perceived benefits such as working with peers within culturally diverse groups; communicating effectively and easily; developing intercultural skills; gaining knowledge and skills associated to disciplinary contents; and engaging critically. Therefore, based on evidence a VE was designed involving 60 student nurses and student midwives from 5 countries, and 10 partner universities across the EU and US. Students were allocated to work virtually in small (4-6) transcultural peer groups. The learning centred on exploring each other's countries and cultures and undertaking a professional clinical case study to explore nursing and midwifery practice from a transcultural perspective. The aims of the virtual exchange mirrored those of the standard traineeship, these are: for students to develop personally and professionally, to develop toward cultural competence and to develop as global graduates and global citizens. A mixed, methods research study has been undertaken to formally evaluate the virtual exchange programme. The results to date demonstrate positive learning experiences concurrent with other studies. The findings will be presented along with recommendations that will inform the delivery of virtual exchange programmes in the future.