



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

Participant Insights: 2015 AIEA Annual Conference
February 15-18, 2015
Washington, DC

I. General trends in international education

Participants referenced learning about general trends in international higher education. Some of these included that leadership is more challenging now than in the past decades given today's entrepreneurial and decentralized campus setting, technological trends such as online education, and shifting trends in mobility that demonstrate that the U.S. is no longer the destination of choice for international students. The need to function in an interconnected world market was also highlighted. Other participants' insights included the sentiment that the status quo is alive and well in the field of international higher education.

II. Awareness of organizations in the field

Participants came away from the conference with a greater awareness of the structure, role and resources of several organizations in the field, including EducationUSA, IIE, AIEA, and COIL, and programs such as Tuning and Pathway Programs.

III. Using technology

Participants gained insight on the use of technology in international education, including ways to collaborate through technology and specific information about the COIL model. There was also a strong sentiment that the field still needs to "come to grips with technology and its role," and that universities are "largely unprepared for innovations required to meet the crises and challenges ahead."

IV. Research and Data

Participants came away with increased knowledge about current research and data in the field. Several studies were mentioned specifically, including the CAPA study on international education and careers, the International Association of Universities' 4th Global Survey, and AIEA's Survey of the Senior International Officer Profession. Participants mentioned sharing this data at their institutions, learning where the key sources of IE data stem from, and learning how to connect IE and research.



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V. Regional and/or International perspectives

Participants came away with increased “international perspectives” and understanding of international interests, including knowledge about higher education ecosystems in different regions, insights into the importance of reviving the idea of regional integration in regions such as the Americas, and understanding that different regions have different perspectives, priorities, and challenges with internationalization.

VI. Shared struggles, values, and opportunities among Senior International Officers and institutions

Many participants commented on learning that others’ in their positions at different institutions had similar struggles—such as functioning within constrained-resource environments, “growing internationalization pains,” strategic partnerships and MOUs, and that perspectives on internationalization often shift with changes in university leadership. There was a sense that many participants at the conference shared the same values, and can learn a great deal from shared knowledge, experiences, and best practices with other senior leaders.

VII. Diversity of Institutional Priorities or Issues

Conversely, participants also gained a sense that different campuses have different challenges and struggles that often vary based on institutional commitment to international education and institutions’ unique programs.

VIII. Role of the Senior International Officer and International Office

Participants came away with a variety of insights into the SIO role: that most SIOs have been in that position for less than five years, insights into different structures of international offices and the SIO role within them, and women’s leadership. There was also a call for a “document that delineates the functions and purpose of the position of SIO, and that poses common ways institutions situate the position within the organizational structure.”

IX. Internationalization of the Curriculum/Working with Faculty

Participants noted the importance of internationalizing the curriculum and assisting academic programs to develop global learning outcomes, and that student mobility is not enough because of the low number of students who are able to study abroad. Global learning must also occur in the classroom through the formal curriculum, and faculty should collaborate with practitioners. International students and language faculty can be used as tools for providing connections between content and culture or language. Professional development is needed for faculty for these initiatives to be successful, and engaging faculty is crucial.



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X. Strategic Partnerships

Participants gained insights into metrics for assessing partnerships, steps necessary to create strategic partnerships, exemplar strategic partnership plans and other best practices, and details that can be applied at their institutions. Reciprocity is a challenge for many schools, and participants noted that many other international education leaders struggle with strategic partnerships.

XI. Finance/Funding

Participants gained a sense of the overall financial situation for international education, as well as specific strategies or best practices on investing in enrollment marketing, funding strategies, and program budgets. Participants also noted that to do internationalization properly and with integrity requires integration into all aspects of the university and requires an investment of resources so that the reputation of the institution is protected.

XII. Education Abroad

Participants gained insight into trends in education abroad, such as the growing importance of faculty-led or short-term study abroad programming, and the importance of travel policies for these programs. Access and reaching students and faculty who are not open to going abroad were also mentioned as important insights. There was also debate regarding some fresh perspectives on how to help students get the most out of their study abroad experiences.

XIII. Intercultural Competence

Participants gained insight into the need for SIOs and practitioners to build their own intercultural competence in order to be culturally sensitive in dealing with issues that arise in the international office, and to not assume that everyone operates from the same understanding of specific terms.

XIV. Working with Administration

Participants gained insight into the need to convince administration to invest in globalization, the need for professional development for administrators, and the need to create greater accountability for deans for internationalization. Also mentioned was the need to get Presidents and Provosts behind comprehensive internationalization to mobilize allies, and the understanding that when administrators speak of “internationalization,” this often comes from a limited worldview or understanding of the term.

XV. Ethics/Social Justice in International Education

Participants came away from the conference with insights regarding social justice issues in international education and the need to address ethical issues of internationalization in leaders’ daily work. The Presidential Plenary Panel confirmed that issues facing the planet (of access and mobility) are also issues



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facing higher education. Insights also included the sentiment that international education is “all about money.” One participant noted “the hegemonic rise of English as the global lingua academica has resulted in an Anglo-cosmopolitan neoliberal monoculture shared by most of the world’s leaders in international higher education but antithetical to the core aims of internationalization, which ought to result in a diverse multicultural richness of competing perspectives.”

XVI. Recruitment

Participants came away from the conference with strategies for recruitment, and insights on best practices for attracting overseas students.

XVII. Other Insights

Other insights mentioned include:

- Best practices and examples of how to deal with compliance issues
- The idea that failures can lead to important institutional advances and that there is no singular way to solve a problem
- The perspective of viewing higher education as just a part of the continuum of lifelong learning, and how that perspective may change our roles and actions.
- Developing the strength of purpose and commitment to work collaboratively across cultures and regions.
- The importance of developing leadership skills.
- The need to think about how we are telling our stories (as offices, as individuals, as educators, as citizens) and then tell them!
- The importance of networking on and off campus to have significant effect on initiatives
- Strategies for international research engagement
- The conference helped me to think next level with my organization
- Gaining a great practical idea for a themed program.
- Distress about low priority to language instruction apparently among provosts
- Insights into salaries of Senior International Officers (“I am underpaid.”)
- The value of collaborative rather than top down leadership
- New ideas on how to approach student orientation sessions from an emphasis on student-centered learning.
- There is too much competition to do things half-baked
- Campus internationalization is an ongoing process, it never ends.
- The importance of inclusivity in our internationalization efforts.
- An understanding of mapping global learning