



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

Insights from 2021 Virtual Annual Conference Participants

AIEA 2021 Virtual Conference participants identified the following as some of the key take-aways and insights from the conference.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

- The conference highlighted the need to focus on intercultural learning at home (“learning across difference”) through inclusive and intentional programming.
- Sessions raised the awareness of racism in the field to another level.
- Internationalization urgently needs to be more inclusive - from partnerships, to mobility, even to the makeup of our international offices.
- The conference affirmed the belief that DEI and International Education have much work to accomplish together and the walls we build are imposed by ourselves and our institutions. Wall busters will lead us forward.

Internationalization at Home/Curriculum or Co-Curricular Internationalization

- Sessions emphasized the Importance of grounding internationalization in the curriculum.
- We are at a crossroads and have an opportunity to build back internationalization with more of an emphasis upon inclusion and curriculum internationalization. It's critical as leaders that we not squander this opportunity otherwise our larger purpose of advancing global learning might be lost in the shuffle as institutions remake and relaunch into the next chapter of international higher education.
- The shift from a focus on mobility-based global learning to various home-based and virtual forms is now well under way.

Virtual Exchange and Learning

- Virtual learning is here to stay and can allow us to reach more students
- Virtual Exchange is not a temporary stop-gap during the pandemic but a viable addition to the repertoire of activities to foster intercultural skills, foster understanding of differences and appreciation of the “Other.”

Strategy for Leading Internationalization.

- Discussion highlighted the importance of long-term thinking, flexibility, and nimbleness in internationalization strategy.
- There's a real need for ongoing solidarity between professionals in our field especially during the pandemic. We need to actively cultivate these connections throughout the year.



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- The conference led to considering revising a campus definition of internationalization in view of the current global picture: health, the politics of division/exclusion, race relations, speech, the meaning of democracy, the place of USA in the world.
- The conference provided ideas to move forward the concept that organizationally, we must center internationalization within our institutions or it will remain marginalized or be vulnerable to elimination with changing institutional leadership.
- Using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for international education; SDGs can be a driver for internationalization.
- Discussing the Samantha Powers article (“The Can-Do Power”) drew important connections between our work and its role in bringing the world together through U.S. foreign policy.
- In the words of keynote speaker Michael Osterholm, “If there were ever a time to realize international education is important, the time is now.”

Impact of Covid on Internationalization

- Contrary to conventional wisdom of doubling down on existing partnerships, many innovative new partnerships were developed during Covid.
- It was reassuring to hear that most of us are in the same boat - with same current challenges (whether we are a university or a provider). Good to see movement away from Universities making the final say in allowing students to study abroad or not -- and moving more (yet very slowly) toward allowing students/families to make the decision for themselves. I still see much too much fear of risk and liability from university administration and this is a terrible shame and obstacle blocking so many students and faculty. As a result, there will be a "lost year" of international opportunities that institutions and students cannot regain.
- William Durden, former president of Dickinson College, said Covid-19 "challenged limited notions of us vs. them, here vs. there" in traditional study abroad.
- With Covid, mobility ceased to be the basis of partnerships, with implications for the future of internationalization.
- Some universities turned overseas branch campuses into places to serve international students who couldn't make it to their home institution during Covid. But in an uncertain geopolitical environment could they evolve post-pandemic?



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Critiques of IE Leadership

- I gained a very valuable piece of insight, albeit not a positive one. SIOs are primarily looking for ideas to advance their own agendas to protect resources, save staff, and remain influential on our campuses. But what happens when the actual needs to internationalization a campus differ from the preferred wants of an SIO? That tension was present in virtually every session I attended. The field is evolving, and I imagine new structures and funding schemes will emerge, which may reduce our SIO-managed resources and staff, as well as our tendency to chase shiny objects and other special projects. True campus internationalization requires more engagement from faculty and academic administrators, and those colleagues should become more present in our discussions. What SIOs seem to want right now is to keep the lights and keep their staff employed.
- I keep underestimating the extent to which many US universities are almost exclusively focused on the American education system. Having been reminded of this will help me communicate better - or differently, in any case.

Insights from Closing Plenary Speaker Michael T. Osterholm

- “You can’t consider yourself an institution of higher learning unless you understand the importance of international education. To me, that’s like trying to play a baseball game without pitchers. It doesn’t work.”
- “Help others understand why it’s so important. Why starting this [international education activities] up again is not only in the institution’s best interest but in the world’s best interest....”
- “Please don’t get disheartened by this pause. If anything, I’m hopeful there might be more understanding of why international education, international collaboration, is so important. It’s that old line, sometimes you don’t know until you lose something what you really had. And I think this past year we’ve learned a lot about what it might look like if international education wasn’t the way it once was.”