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MOVING TO THE CENTER: Five Strategies for Strengthening Institutional Commitment to Global Initiatives

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of global competencies for students is widely acknowledged, yet few institutions place international programs at the center of their strategic planning, funding, and staffing for internationalization and global engagement. Of the many AIEA members who are Senior International Officers (SIOs), few are on the most senior leadership teams of their institutions.

Fortunately, formal power is not the only way to increase the impact and prominence of global initiatives on our campuses. To help SIOs exercise greater power and influence at their institutions, the AIEA Strategic Issues Committee offered a workshop at the 2015 AIEA conference that explored a range of strategies.

Workshop participants:

- described their institutional contexts and how change is accomplished,
- identified styles for influencing others, and
- examined the characteristics of effective change agents.

This Issue Brief summarizes the outcome of the workshop and provides SIOs with five strategies that will help them better understand their institutions and improve their ability to “Move Global to the Center.”

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL INITIATIVES

1. Know your Institution

What does “moving closer to the center” look like at your institution? Is globalization or internationalization part of the mission and/or strategic plan at your institution? What are your objectives for internationalization at your institution? What levers do you have to influence the institutional mission as an SIO?

Globalization describes what is happening in the world today – it is a worldwide phenomenon that affects economies, politics, the environment, business, entertainment, communication, etc. Technological advances have accentuated this process and put globalization on “fast forward.”



International education is the institutional response to globalization. It requires that higher education leaders prepare their students for global realities by internationalizing the curriculum, enhancing the global mobility of students and faculty, establishing risk management policies, promoting intercultural competencies and cross-cultural skills, developing international strategic plans, establishing international partnerships, and creating a range of policies and procedures for working and learning in a global context.

Knowing an institution involves sense-making, that is, telling the institution's story. To make sense of their institutions, SIOs should ask: What are the stories at my institution? Who are the heroes? What are the core values? Values can often be identified by analyzing the speeches made by the president. Is the institution centralized, decentralized, or loosely coupled? Is it adapted for survival (flexible, malleable) or does it have a stable, unchanging structure? Where do the students come from? Paying attention to the sense-making process at an institution can open avenues for connecting international stories with an institution's narrative of itself.

2. Map Your Reporting Line(s)

Draw an organizational chart of your institution. Where do international programs sit in your institutional hierarchy? Are international programs centralized under an umbrella unit, or spread under different areas? Do you report to international affairs, academic affairs, student affairs, or to multiple areas? As SIO, are you a vice president, vice provost, dean, associate dean, executive director, or director? What are your reporting lines, both solid and dotted? How many people/steps are between you and the president? Are you one person deep? Two? Or three or four?

There are many models and organizational structures at institutions of higher education. Mapping reporting lines helps with understanding how SIOs are situated at their institutions and offers a sense of how the international arena is valued.

3. Exercise Soft Power

There are different ways to exert power. Formal power may include an impressive title, delegated authority over the international arena, and defined responsibilities in a job description. But, whether you have formal power or not, you can exert power informally through soft avenues.



Informal power includes the ability to influence outcomes. Influence can be exerted through relationships, by formal and informal networks, and committees. One can “lean in,” to quote Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, or volunteer to participate in groups to exert influence by gaining a seat at the table. Or one may be invited to participate in a task force/committee because of one’s expertise. A vacuum (loss of a position, lack of leadership) can also provide an opportunity for an SIO to take leadership and exert influence at an institution. As the authors of *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change* write,

Learning how to motivate and enable others to change their actions may be the most important skill you’ll ever acquire. It’s not merely curiously engaging (and it is); it also sits at the center of what ails most of us. The lion’s share of problems that really bother us don’t call for additional technology, theory, philosophy, or data (we’re up to our necks in that); instead, the problems call for the ability to change what people do. And when it comes to this particular skill, demand far exceeds supply. (p. 8).

SIOs need to find ways to enhance their informal and soft power. Building relationships and networks on campus and with faculty is critical. It’s important to be strategic by accepting invitations to join select committees and to volunteer when one’s institution has a need; strategic involvement can often result in a shift in how the international arena is perceived and move it toward the center.

In considering informal or soft power, identify who the “powerful” people are at your institution and add them to your organizational chart with connecting lines. Include faculty, staff, campus leaders, and community leaders. Sometimes the informal organizational power structure differs dramatically from the formal organizational power structure. Pay attention to the informal power at your institution and determine how to build alliances with some of these individuals.

4. Work Within the Institutional Culture of Change

How does change occur at your institution? What is your experience of change? Is it an inclusive process, or do new upper administrators “clean shop” with a “like it or leave it” attitude?

Bring colleagues to the table to help articulate a vision for change. Highlight the global aspects of institutional stories. Start with the “low hanging fruit” at your institution by identifying areas that already share the vision, then finding opportunities to collaborate with them. As SIO, your role is to serve as a guide, convener, and listener.



5. Act like an Anthropologist

Pay attention to your personal style of influence. As you enter any new situation, act like an anthropologist. Ask: Who at your institution has successfully orchestrated change? Why and how? What are the positive and negative models of change that you've encountered? What can you learn from the positive models of change? Adapt your style to the context; connect to the stories and values of your institution.

Personal influencing styles include the following:

- Rationalizing – using data to make your argument
- Asserting – demanding respect, “tell it like it is”
- Negotiating – seeking compromise and/or partnerships
- Inspiring – cheer leader approach, motivating
- Bridging – connecting for mutual benefit

What is your style? Does it feel natural? Is it effective? Does it fit institutional culture and/or the culture of the specific contexts you are working in at any particular moment? As SIO, observe others. Practice using different styles in different contexts and at different time in order to increase your effectiveness in moving global to the center.

In sum, given their charge to lead internationalization, SIOs can and should exercise what power they have to make long-lasting institutional change by moving global to the center.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES RELATED TO CENTRALIZING GLOBAL INITIATIVES

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RELEVANT WEBSITES

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/2012-Mapping-Internationalization-on-U-S--Campuses.aspx>

- Source: American Council on Education/ Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement
- American Council on Education (ACE). 2012. *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses*
- ACE – What goes into an International Review

www.aieaworld.org

- Source: Association of International Education Administrators
- Many resources on leading internationalization efforts
- AIEA Survey of SIOs



www.acenet.edu

- Source: American Council on Education/ Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement
- Information on global learning and all aspects of internationalization, with many institutional examples plus mapping of what is happening across the U.S.

<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Internationalization-Toolkit.aspx>

- Source: American Council on Education/ Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement
- Of special interest: Internationalization Toolkit

www.aacu.org/resources/globallearning/index.cfm

- Source: Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
- Global learning resources and projects of all sorts

<http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/globallearning.cfm>

- Source: Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)
- Of special interest: Global Learning Value Rubric

www.campusinternationalization.org/about/curriculum/

- Source: The Inter-Association Network on Campus Internationalization (INCI)
- Offers a common portal for 12 organizations dedicated to campus internationalization and global learning.

www.nafsa.org

- Source: NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- Provides entry to NAFSA's resources on Comprehensive Internationalization

www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?id=30391

- Source: NAFSA: Association of International Educators
- Of special interest: The Global Smart Grid can clarify where to invest in strategic actions in tight economic times that can solidify students' global learning, increase coordination and connection of discrete global programs, and make global learning pervasive.

<http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/>

- Source: Global Higher Ed
- Blog on various matters related to academic internationalization, moderated by Kris Olds at the University of Wisconsin.



<http://ihec-djc.blogspot.com/>

- Source: International Higher Education
- Blog on various matters related to international academic exchange, moderated by David Comp at the University of Chicago.

<http://www.obhe.ac.uk/>

- Source: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education
- Wide range of information from a major British organization monitoring international higher education globally.



The **Association of International Education Administrators** (AIEA), a membership organization formed in November 1982, is composed of institutional leaders engaged in advancing the international dimensions of higher education. The purposes of the Association are to:

- Provide an effective voice on significant issues within international education at all levels,
- Improve and promote international education programming and administration within institutions of higher education,
- Establish and maintain a professional network among international education institutional leaders,
- Cooperate in appropriate ways with other national and international groups having similar interests.

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