
Listserv Summary: SIO Reporting Line

December 2018

An inquiry was made to the AIEA listserv regarding the advantages and/or disadvantages of an administrative structure in which the SIO reporting line is to Student Affairs or Enrollment Management rather than to Academic Affairs.

Summary of responses:

Response 1, from a flagship state university:

“We are a comprehensive international office (undergrad int'l recruitment and admissions, all university immigration, study abroad) and our office had reported to Academic Affairs for years, then we were switched to Enrollment Management but yanked back to Academic Affairs within two years. Now I, as the SIO, am being asked to report back to Enrollment Management and am resisting with all my efforts.

“In my experience (and opinion) this depends on the scope of the portfolio, culture of the institution and the individual serving as SIO. 1.) If the SIO is primarily responsible for Inward Mobility (recruitment, immigration, on campus programming) than Student Affairs and/or Enrollment Management could work. 2.) If the SIO is meant to have a role in developing & managing Education Abroad Opportunities; on-campus global learning initiatives (virtual exchange, etc.); and/or opportunities for faculty development and engagement, than Academic Affairs would be more appropriate. In either instance, it is often important to work across these structural units. The nature of the university and the credentials of this SIO might make reaching in one direction or the other easier. For example, an SIO with no faculty background housed in student affairs may meet challenges influencing faculty/curriculum that an SIO with tenure housed in Academic Affairs might not.”

Response 2

“I guess it would depend on the mission of the office ... if the mission is solely focused on recruiting and services for international students, an SIO reporting line to Student Affairs or Enrollment Management might make sense, but ... an SIO typically has or should have a much broader role that encompasses academic programs, curriculum internationalization, international partnerships, study abroad, and so much more that the role should really have direct access to the Provost and/or President. Comprehensive internationalization can only become institutionalized

if the SIO reports to Provost/President and the SIO sits at the decision making table with the institution's leadership.”

Response 3, from a public midwestern state university:

“[Our university] does not have a SIO. Yet, we have a Director of International Student Services that reports to the AVP of Enrollment Management that reports to the VP for Student Affairs. International Student Services handles inbound and outbound study abroad, immigration issues, etc. The Director of International Recruitment reports directly to the AVP of Enrollment Management.”

Response 4:

From my perspective as a former SIO, there is a critical aspect of SIO work that has to do with faculty work – such as institutional partnerships for research/publication, or exchange of visiting scholars, or even curricular integration of education abroad programs; and that work is sometimes best facilitated by having the reporting lines be to Academic Affairs rather than Student Affairs or Enrollment Management. Student Affairs and EM are generally staff-focused more than they are faculty-focused, and they don't have as regular an interaction with deans and the provost as is often needed for an SIO. But each institution is different, so there is no single prescription that works best for all.

Response 5:

“Here are my two cents on this essential matter to any comprehensive internationalization strategy:

- Academic Affairs is the best place for the SIO as it puts that position at the center of all colleges/schools and gives it a prominent display before faculty, chairs and deans, as well as associate provosts.
- Enrollment management and Student Affairs make internationalization tendentially unidimensional. Avoid these at all costs.
- I would need to know more about your structure in order to give you a more detailed answer. For example, do you have an office that houses all international services – students and scholars, immigration, admissions, recruitment, study abroad, etc? If so, where is it housed? AA or Student Affairs? Do you have an executive or senior VP (the Provost, for example) or do all VPs have the same 'status'? If you have an executive provost then that should be your reporting line for sure.

“Although there may be some happy exceptions, I believe that the placement of Int Ed in Student Affairs reflects the regrettable identification of Int Ed as primarily responsible for Study Abroad,

which is in turn perceived as recreational "time away" from a student's real studies (a perception that has led many to change S/A's name to Education Abroad, but even that can be seen as something divorced from an institution's curriculum). Similarly, I believe that placement of Int Ed in Enrollment Management reflects the (even more) regrettable identification of Int Ed with the recruitment of international students, who are often seen largely as paying customers, ineligible for in-state tuition (at public institutions) and federal or state financial aid (at both public and private), and graduate applicants who are often more eager than domestic students to pursue degrees in technical fields. Placement of Int Ed in Academic Affairs, especially with a direct reporting line to the provost, does not guarantee that Int Ed will extend, as I think it can and should, into every nook and cranny of an institution's mission and be integral to all of an institution's teaching, research, and service activities, but I believe that it is unlikely to do so without such placement.”

Response 6:

“I have been on both sides through various organizational structures. First, I was under academic affairs when we had a Dean of Faculty. Then we moved to a Provost system and I was moved to student affairs. When we moved to a Vice President of Academic Affairs system, my office was moved back to the academic area. The main advantage/disadvantage I experienced was that my office has more “clout” with the faculty members when I report to the academic affairs. Often faculty members see student affairs as the “busy work” side of the university. When with student affairs, you are lumped in with residence life, student activities, etc. and it can take away the academic aspect of study abroad. Additionally, if you offer faculty-led programs and come under academic affairs, you can have more support and backing when explaining (and enforcing) policies to the faculty members. I work with both study abroad and international students. At some larger institutions, these two are in different offices with different reporting lines.

“There is no better reporting line in a university than to Academic Affairs. Why? Academic Affairs is where the power base resides; it is where priorities are set; and it is the home of most of the discretionary funding that might support your agenda. Student Affairs/Enrollment Management holds a low priority to the faculty. It is not a good base from which to build respect from the faculty and earn their cooperation. There are several publications that address this matter and support my opinion. Look at *Internationalizing the Academy*, Merx and Nolan eds., Harvard Education Press, 2015.”

Response 7:

“I report to the VP Academic Affairs/Provost but can share my thoughts on the polemic. Ideally, SIOs should report to Academic Affairs because the job deals primarily with curriculum internationalization and so involves faculty, academic course work, and international partnerships. The foreign institutions are generally aligned similarly. I frequently work with

deans who report to the provost, so there's a greater degree of understanding and respect for my work among faculty and deans because they know the provost is watching. When I have a concern with a dean and take it to the provost, I know he'll handle it from a position of strength and decisively. I also have faculty rank...under the School of Education. A supervisor in another division (SA or EM) would have less leverage over faculty and deans, especially if such a VP doesn't have a terminal degree. Worse still, some faculty don't respect certain terminal degrees! I've almost never dealt with a foreign partner institution whose division wasn't under academic affairs. While the IE community prefers having SIOs reporting to Academic Affairs, what may be more important is having someone...anyone in that office who understands, appreciates, and vigorously promotes IE and facilitates the job of the SIO. I'm aware of reporting structures where enrollment management oversees the international office. In this case, the VP was quite knowledgeable about the mission of the international office and wholly supported the SIO. I've also once reported to a VP for student affairs who didn't know a diddly squat about IE and frustrated me (unintentionally). When she arrived at this institution, I was reporting to provost, but the provost soon had so much on her plate she maintained only a dotted between my offer and hers. This VPSA prompted my early departure from that institution. Conversely, I'm aware of a VP for academic affairs who didn't know nearly enough about my job and took years to get around to understanding my responsibilities as they related to his office."