



Association of International
Education Administrators

Message from AIEA's President, Bill Lacy:

Economic Downturn Challenges Higher Education Internationalization

Over the last few years many national and international university leaders have focused on the increasingly important topic of internationalizing higher education. By internationalization these leaders are generally referring to the process of integrating international and multicultural perspectives and experiences into the learning, discovery, and outreach and engagement mission of higher education.

However, the economic downturn has led to new challenges for universities at the very time when many have implemented or planned to implement broad programs and administrative units for Internationalization. A number of campuses have retreated from prominent overseas locations (e.g. University of California, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University) and reduced campus staffs and budgets. While it is still early in the process of our economic reset, short-term budgetary decisions may greatly impact our institutions future capacity to be international leaders. Moreover, senior international leaders may be particularly vulnerable in these cost-cutting times. These central offices are very important to facilitate, coordinate, and lead the strategic global initiatives. However, I recently noted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, "If international is at the top of everyone's B List, it won't get done." Moreover, in many cases these senior international officer positions were the last created on campuses and therefore have the potential to be the first eliminated. (K. Fischer, "In Economic Downturn, Colleges Eye International Education: Cut Back or Forge Ahead." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 3, 2010. Volume LVII, Number 2. pp. A36-39.)

We are in a vulnerable period and at a key juncture in the evolution of higher education in the U.S. The process of internationalization will greatly enhance our overall goal to continue to be among the world's leading higher education systems.