



AIEA PROVOST PERSPECTIVES

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The University of California Davis: Seeking Solutions to Global Challenges

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*Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor; Distinguished
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Name: Ralph J. Hexter

Title: Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor; Distinguished Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature, University of South Florida

Time served as Provost: Since January 1, 2011.

With more than 34,000 students, UC Davis offers 99 undergraduate majors and interdisciplinary graduate study in four colleges and six professional schools. It has an annual research budget of over \$750 million, a comprehensive health system, and about two dozen specialized research centers.

Provost Ralph Hexter's major scholarly focus is the reception of Greek and Roman literary heritage. After earning degrees at Harvard, Oxford, and Yale, he held faculty positions at Yale, CU-Boulder, and UC Berkeley, where he was dean of arts and humanities. Immediately prior to UC Davis, he was president of Hampshire College in Amherst, MA; he participated in the founding of LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education.



Given all of the demands and constraints facing higher education today, why did your institution decide to internationalize?

The University of California, Davis began internationalizing decades ago, through the Fulbright and Humphrey scholars programs, study abroad, and partnerships with scholars, institutions, governments, and businesses around the world. Thus, the chancellor and I are encouraging the broadening, deepening, and acceleration of a process already long under way.

The need to follow this course was obvious. A major university such as ours cannot truly prepare students for a rapidly globalizing world, or stay on the cutting edge of research and scholarship, without robust international engagement of many types. The international students enrolled in our graduate and undergraduate programs, and the international scholars who study and teach with us for one or two years, boost the cultural literacy of our students from California and other regions of the country. They also enrich the intellectual and cultural environment for all members of our community—besides planting the seeds for stronger international partnerships and collaborations in the future.

As reflected in the chancellor’s explicit goal for UC Davis to “Embrace Global Issues,” we know that we must view humanity’s grand challenges through a global perspective, and seek to find the solutions to those challenges through strong international cooperation and partnerships.

Has the role or importance of internationalization at your institution changed over the past five years? If so, how?

In the fall of 2011, we began to plan for what we now call our “2020 Initiative,” which involves adding 5,000 undergraduates by 2020, along with significant numbers of new graduate students and faculty. To support this growth, we will also need to grow our staff and facilities. The initiative offers us an excellent opportunity to accelerate diversification of many types, one of them being internationalization. Indeed, our 2020 plan foresees the percentage of international students growing four- or five-fold over the 2011–12 baseline. In the next five years, even as we work to diversify the origins of our international students, we must encourage our U.S. undergraduates and graduate students to include an international experience in their educational programs..

What were some of the main challenges you and your institution faced in pursuing internationalization? What are some of assets you and your institution drew on for this work?



One challenge was that we were relatively new to the project of recruiting international undergraduates. Another was that our past practices had unfortunately led the world to imagine we were not especially interested in bringing international undergraduates to our campus. So we adjusted and increased our messaging to actively encourage their applications, and we followed this up with robust yield events. Also, a newly recruited director of admissions became a key asset.

The higher cost of attendance incurred by students who are not California residents is a significant barrier to recruiting this group, on both the graduate and undergraduate levels. To address the challenge in attracting the first group, starting this year we are returning significant portions of the “non-resident tuition differential” to graduate students. Our hope is that this will result in more international graduate students applying to, enrolling in, and earning degrees from our academic programs.

Financial concerns (including the lost opportunity for summer or term-time employment) can prevent domestic students from participating in an international study experience. Thus, we were delighted to receive a recent \$1M gift to support scholarships for outbound students. That success has inspired us to redouble our fundraising efforts for study abroad..

What is an example of an internationalization effort on your campus that was not completely successful? Why was that the case, and what did your institution learn from it?

Not every internationalization effort succeeds. For example, some agreements developed with an international partner are never signed—or, if signed, they fail to deliver the intended benefits. One thing we’ve learned is that no agreement can be truly productive if faculty are not deeply engaged and committed—at the beginning and throughout the partnership.

Sometimes problems emerge out of a great success. Here’s one example from my campus. We’ve grown our numbers of international students so rapidly that, as we can now see, in many ways we were insufficiently prepared for it. Of course, some challenges we had successfully anticipated. For example, we had recently reorganized and fortified our approach to ESL, and in many ways our new approach has proved equal to the challenge. We did not fully anticipate, however, the degree to which our new international undergraduates would need advising support. Once that became clear to us, we moved quickly to grow the number of advisers focused primarily on this population.



Perhaps our greatest challenge will require yet deeper and more introspective work. Our entire community is in the process of learning how to be as welcoming to significant numbers of international students as it has generally been to international faculty and visiting scholars..

Conversely, please discuss an example of an initiative that did work, and why.

An important success is the Chile-California Partnership, launched in 1963, which promotes technical cooperation in agriculture, education, water resource management, and transportation, among other fields. Several initial memoranda of understanding were signed by Chilean President Michelle Bachelet and then-governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and these continue to guide the partnership today. UC Davis has trained large numbers of Chilean students who have come to our campus through funding from the Chilean government. In addition, longstanding faculty research collaborations remain extremely active.

One reason the initiative and partnership have worked well is because they were supported at the highest levels of our state government and the national government in Chile; by our university leadership; and by our faculty with interests in Chile. Another reason is that Chile and California are natural partners, so to speak, well matched in terms of agriculture, viticulture, geography, climate, culture, and language (Spanish being the second language of California). Finally, the initiative has benefited from having a broad-based steering committee whose membership includes leading stakeholders..

Who are the most important stakeholders you work with regarding internationalization at your institution?

I consider the faculty, students, and staff of UC Davis, and the citizens of California, the most important stakeholders in internationalization at the university. Campus leaders work very hard not only to inform the entire university community on our internationalization goals and efforts, but also to consult with it as broadly as possible. I, of course, work closely on specific aspects of implementation with deans, chairs, and directors, and with all of the vice chancellors and vice provosts. Key collaborators include our vice provost for University Outreach and International Programs (soon to be renamed “Global Affairs”) and, on some projects, our director of Admissions. Increasingly, we find ourselves involved in research collaborations that may well produce intellectual property, so beyond the Office of Research, important partners include the campus counsel at UC Davis and the Office of the General Counsel at the system level..



What are some of the key ways in which senior international officers can help individuals in your role advance internationalization at their institutions?

I rely on our senior international officer and the experienced staff in our international office to provide expert advice on critical operational details, as well as on broader internationalization strategies. For example, I count on our experts to manage all aspects (including risks) of our study abroad opportunities, both those we provide via the UC Education Abroad Program and those that UC Davis sponsors directly, with the involvement of our own faculty. Likewise, the international office oversees all issues related to the visas and other documentation required by international students and scholars who are on our campus, and performs critical liaison functions to programs in which we are proud to participate (e.g., the Humphrey and Fulbright Scholars Programs).

I also look to the senior international officer to communicate insights gained from participation in the professional associations involved in internationalization. These include the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) and the Institute for International Education (IIE), as well as the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), of which UC Davis is a member institution.

Is there anything else you would like to share with senior international officers or fellow chief academic officers?

Today, more than ever, a great university must convey to its immediate communities and all its supporters the essential need for international engagement. In particular, it must communicate the urgency of the imperative that we engage globally in order to fulfill our missions in research, education, and public service. Especially for public universities, successfully delivering this message can be challenging, for the following reason: citizens and legislators of the state that (however partially) supports them tend to underestimate the various ways in which international engagement is critical to the achievement of their own highest goals.

The excellence and standing of a university depend on its international engagement. This reason alone is enough to justify broad support, but there are others as well. The cultural literacy and competitiveness of our graduates, the prosperity and well-being of our society, and the world's ability to meet its most-pressing challenges depend on all of us understanding, in a deep and informed way, that every locale is directly connected to and impacted by every other locale.



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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