



Leaders in International Higher Education

# STRATEGIC ISSUES:

Summary, Analysis,  
and Priorities Facing  
Leaders in International  
Education Today

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# Strategic Issues: Summary, Analysis, and Priorities Facing Leaders in International Higher Education

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# Strategic Issues: Summary, Analysis, and Priorities Facing Leaders in International Higher Education

## Introduction:

It is my pleasure to present this booklet titled, “Strategic Issues: Summary, Analysis, and Priorities Facing Leaders in International Higher Education,” which represents the compilation of information gathered during 2014-2016 by AIEA’s Strategic Issues Committee. This work was begun by Christa Olson, first Chair of the Strategic Issues Committee, and her team, who identified a need to more intentionally track the strategic issues AIEA members face as we work to advance global engagement. I also want to acknowledge all members of the Strategic Issues Committee during the past three years who worked on this very comprehensive project.

Special thanks and acknowledgement must be given to Lorna Jean (LJ) Edmonds, who provided a Strategic Framework for Globalization that was created by Ohio University, which provides the organizational structure of this analysis. LJ and her colleague, Ji-Yeung Jang, organized the responses using this framework, which allowed the committee to review the data systematically. While 36 key issues were identified, the framework provided a mechanism for summarizing the 226 responses within the several “pillars” and specific sub-categories.

The “four primary pillars” of Global Education within this framework are:

1. Global Education, Research, and Creativity
2. Global Mobility of Knowledge and Experience
3. Global Diversity of Campus Life
4. Global Relations and Profile

The organizational categories that fall under these pillars include:

1. Governance, Management, and Infrastructure
2. Planning, Data, and Metrics
3. People, Partners, and Networks
4. Communications
5. Finance, Administration, and Revenue Models

The top three areas of concern, identified by the numbers of responses, were: 1) Governance, Management, and Infrastructure; 2) Finance, Administration, and Revenue Models; and 3) Diversity of Campus Life. However, many respondents also expressed a need to identify how various issues and trends impact the globalization efforts of leaders in international higher education.

This booklet summarizes the project's methodology, provides an analysis of the survey responses, identifies the areas prioritized by leaders in international higher education, summarizes the responses within each category, and shares Ohio University's Strategic Framework for Globalization.

We hope our summary, analysis, and prioritization of strategic issues will serve as a tool to help inform AIEA leaders and members about the topics of greatest concern in the field at this time, issues to be addressed at future conferences, thematic forums, in publications, or in roundtable discussions.

With Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Bender". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Bender, Ph.D.  
Chair, Strategic Issues Committee  
Executive Director, International Engagement and Programs  
University of Idaho



## Methodology

Recognizing the need to track more intentionally the strategic issues AIEA members face as we work to advance internationalization and global engagement at our institutions, a new AIEA committee was formally charged in 2014 with identifying the pressing and emerging issues that confront SIOs in our rapidly changing environment, developing programs tailored to seasoned SIOs, and capturing content from these programs.

The committee solicited input from the general AIEA membership through the 2014 Membership Survey section on SIO Challenges and during a 2015 roundtable session titled “Strategic Issues that Keep SIOs Awake at Night.”

AIEA leaders were invited to share their ideas at the September 2014, February 2015, and November 2015 AIEA Board meetings. Then, believing that an external perspective would also be useful, in-depth interviews were conducted with leaders of international initiatives for other organizations, including APLU, ACE, AACU, AACC and CCID. Most interviews lasted 30 minutes. During each conversation, participants were asked the following questions:

- 1) What are the most vexing external issues that are shaping the global landscape of higher international education?
- 2) What are the most pressing internal issues that are impacting your effectiveness as an SIO?

These two strategic issue questions have also been added to the annual AIEA conference survey. Approximately 43% of respondents to the annual survey have answered the strategic issues questions.

The committee received 226 responses that were compiled and reviewed for patterns or out-lying perspectives across the conversations. The organizing model guiding our analysis was the “Strategic Framework for Globalization” created by Ohio University. We have grouped according to the four pillars and five supporting priorities of this framework.

Summary of sources:

- Survey of AIEA members during the Roundtable sessions at annual conference beginning in 2015
- Insights from the AIEA Board
- Conducted interviews and summarized responses of leaders from the following organizations during summer 2015:
  - AIEA Board
  - ACE (American Council on Education)
  - APLU/Commission on International Initiatives (Assoc. of Public and Land Grant Universities)
  - AAC&U (Assoc. of American Colleges and Universities)
  - CCID (Community Colleges for International Development)
  - AACC (American Assoc. of Community Colleges)

Survey questions:

Q19: What are the vexing external issues that are shaping the global landscape for higher international education?

Q20: What are the most problematic internal institutional issues that are impacting your institution's efforts to advance campus internationalization and global engagement?

The Ohio University Global Education framework used to organize the 226 responses was made up of the following "four primary pillars":

1. Global Education, Research, and Creativity
2. Global Mobility of Knowledge and Experience
3. Global Diversity of Campus Life
4. Global Relations and Profile

The organizational categories that fall under these pillars include:

1. Governance, Management, and Infrastructure
2. Planning, Data, and Metrics
3. People, Partners, and Networks
4. Communications
5. Finance, Administration, and Revenue Models

The top four areas of greatest concern identified by this survey include:

- 1) Governance, Management, and Infrastructure
- 2) Finance, Administration, and Revenue Models
- 3) Diversity of Campus Life
- 4) Global Issues and Trends, a category that was not part of the initial framework.

These four priority areas are designated in orange on Chart 1: AIEA Strategic Issues in Globalization Framework by Ohio University.

Conclusions:

There was no significant distinction found between external and internal issues after the 226 responses were entered into the database and analyzed. The four areas of greatest concern were identified in this analysis. Next steps include sharing this information with the AIEA Board and membership during the 2017 AIEA Conference, developing programs that are tailored to capture these priorities, and creating a survey that more easily collects information to fit within the framework rather than asking open-ended questions (which are time intensive and more difficult to synthesize and summarize).

# AIEA Strategic Issues Analysis

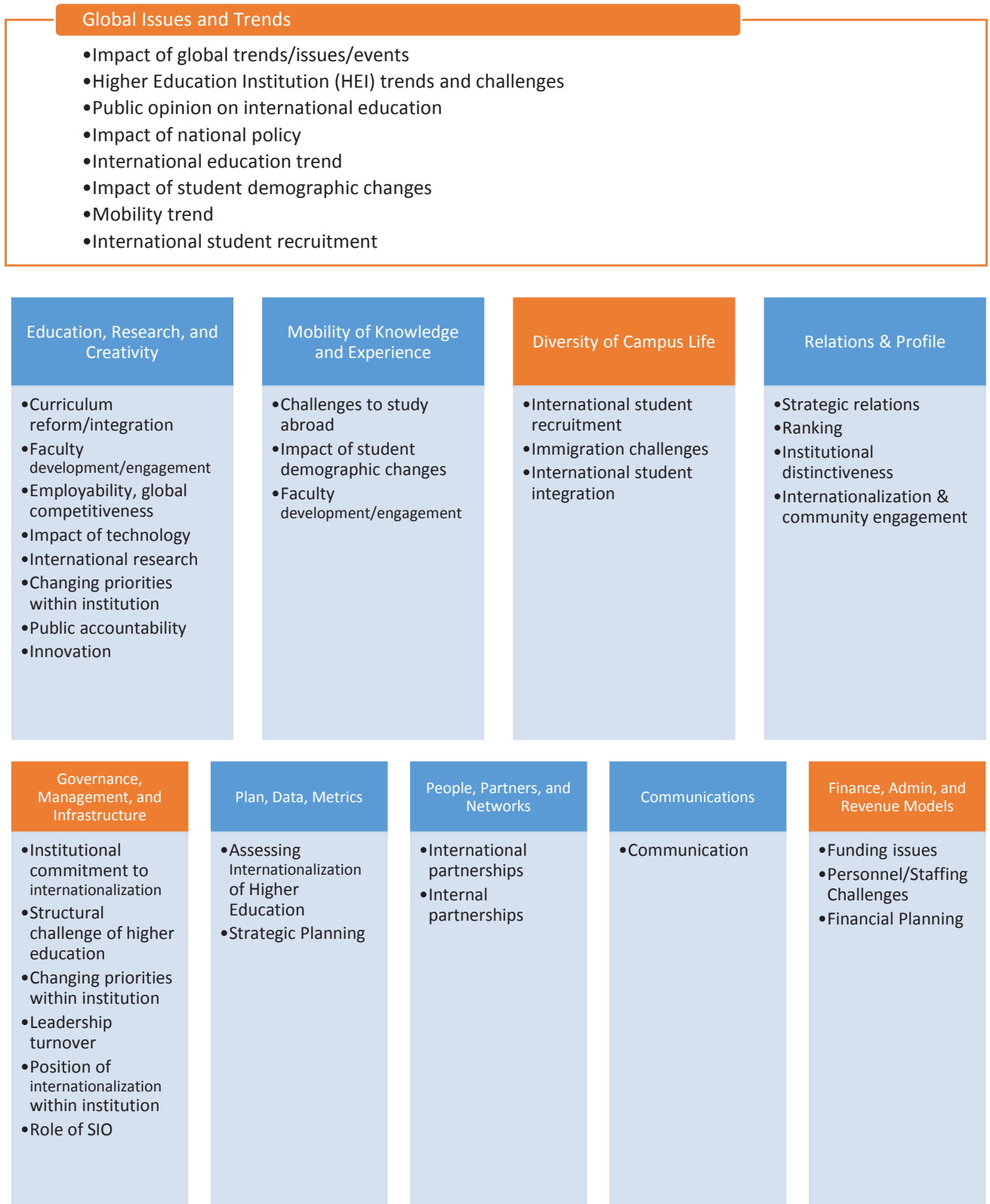
## Findings

The responses (total of 226) to the AIEA survey were analyzed in two phases. First, using the qualitative data analysis methods, each response was reviewed carefully, coded, and grouped with similar contents. The first analysis produced 36 key issues that capture the essence of the responses. Below are the key issues identified in the analysis, shown in descending order of frequency.

1. Funding issues (40)
2. Impact of global trends/issues/events (20)
3. Institutional commitment to internationalization (20)
4. Structural challenge of higher education (17)
5. International student recruitment (15)
6. Position of internationalization within institution (10)
7. Personnel/staffing challenges (9)
8. Changing priorities within institution (9)
9. Leadership turnover (9)
10. International education trend (7)
11. Role of SIO (7)
12. Curriculum reform/integration (7)
13. Public opinion on international education (6)
14. Impact of student demographic changes (6)
15. Challenges to study abroad (6)
16. Immigration challenges (5)
17. HEI trends and challenges (5)
18. Employability, global competitiveness (5)
19. Quality of international partnerships (5)
20. Assessing internationalization of higher education (5)
21. Impact of national policy (4)
22. International student integration (4)
23. Mobility trend (4)
24. Impact of technology (4)
25. Strategic planning (4)
26. Financial planning (3)
27. Faculty development/engagement (3)
28. Strategic partnerships (3)
29. Ranking (3)
30. International research (2)
31. Institutional distinctiveness (2)
32. Public accountability (1)
33. Innovation (1)
34. Internationalization & community engagement (1)
35. Internal partnerships (1)
36. Communication (1)

In the second phase, the key issues identified above were assigned to the strategic outcomes and supporting priorities of the Strategic Framework for Globalization developed by Ohio University (see Appendix A). As demonstrated in Chart 1, the framework allowed the review of the strategic issues from a categorical and systematic view. Top areas of strategic framework that gained most responses include 1) Governance, Management, & Infrastructure; 2) Finance; and 3) Diversity of Campus Life. It is notable to highlight that “Global Issues and Trends” came up as a strong area that impacts the globalization efforts of higher education institutions (HEI). This reality check presents an opportunity to review one’s global mission and vision and how HEI should be nimble in this fast-changing and unpredictable world.

Chart 1. AIEA Strategic Issues in Globalization Framework by Ohio University:  
 (Orange indicates top priority categories)





## Governance, Management, & Infrastructure;

- Position of internationalization
  - Internationalization is not a priority and not being fully integrated in the system.
  - Lack of awareness of the importance of internationalization and global engagement among the top administration (often associated with only a revenue generation tool)
  - Faculty members' engagement in internationalization is often devalued (by their colleges/departments).
- Securing institutional commitment to internationalization
  - Sustaining commitment and support from the senior leadership
  - Increasing faculty and administrative interest and buy-in
  - Mainstreaming internationalization through nurturing internal engagement and expanding global learning opportunities
- Changing priorities within institution
  - Competing priorities and limited funds
  - Attention to the immediate urgencies and less time for strategic planning
  - Profit-driven approach to university management
  - Risk management and financial concerns override.
- Structural challenge of higher education
  - The institutional structure should evolve from vertical to horizontal to address pressing global issues.
  - Decentralization and silos lead to inadequate understanding of common goals and coordination difficulties across the institution.
  - Bureaucracy and inefficiency contributes to difficulty in decision making.
- Leadership transition
  - Institutional leadership turnover and subsequent uncertainty
  - Succession planning for retiring SIOs
- Role and competencies of SIOs
  - Agents of change
  - Building consensus for global education and overcoming resistance
  - Expanding faculty interest, attaching to external initiatives
  - SIO is a profession that requires management experience and international education expertise (not just any faculty member can become an SIO).

## Finance and Resources

- Funding issues and financial planning
  - Reduction in government funding for HEI
  - Scarcity and inconsistency of public and private funding sources
  - Funding challenges while there is a growing demand for quality and integrity
  - Growth within restricted parameters
  - Conflict between economic crisis and the purposes of HEI
  - Conflict between performance-based funding (or RCM) and the purposes of HEI
  - Significant scrutiny on the part of faculty leaders about how funding is being allocated
  - Funding models for international education

- Lack of funding allocation to global initiatives and increasing difficulty in motivating people to be globally engaged
- Personnel/Staffing Challenges
  - Determining appropriate staffing and budgeting models
  - Staffing structure and training

## Diversity of Campus Life

- International student recruitment
  - Increasing global competition for global talent
    - Rapidly changing demand for and economics of international student mobility
    - Rapidly expanding availability of good and excellent universities in the developing world
    - Increasingly aggressive institutional and national enrollment targets
      - Many governments in other countries offer scholarships for American students
    - The U.S. position as the #1 destination for higher education is at risk – especially due to the issues of affordability and access
    - Diminishing number of international students coming to the US and its potential impact on the internationalization efforts
    - Small/medium size institutions striving to identify their competitive markets for recruiting students
  - Recruitment strategy
    - Struggling for student enrollments and recruiting strategies
    - Recruiting top students and sponsored students
    - Student recruitment is moving towards South East Asia because that is where resources are.
    - Strategy to minimize the impacts on decreases in students from Brazil and Saudi Arabia
    - A focus on international student recruitment for financial rather than visionary reasons
- Immigration challenges
  - American political perspectives on immigration and resistance to attracting, training and hiring international talent
  - The potential political backlash against international students in the post-election era
  - Constantly changing immigration regulations (visa-related challenges) and ignorance of decision makers
  - Impact of national policies on mobility and exchange of students, faculty, and staff
- International student integration
  - Integration of international students into U.S. culture
  - Ensuring a holistic engagement with international students on campus
  - International student retention
  - Academic integrity issues dealing with Chinese and Saudi students
  - As US becomes more paranoid, it is difficult to get communities to embrace international student expansion

## Global Issues and Trends

- Impact of global trends/issues/events
  - Geopolitical instability (i.e., wars, terrorism, genocide, migration, refugee crisis, racism)
  - World economic turmoil (i.e., oil and gas prices, North-South divide in resources/access, macro-economic impacts, slower economic growth in China)
  - Political agenda (i.e., China's influence, U.S. election and political rhetoric, government stability)
  - Global health crisis (i.e., Zika virus, health and wellness)
  - Social well-being (i.e., social responsibility, increased mobility, technology, environmental sustainability)
- HEI and international education trends and challenges
  - Resources
    - Lack of funding in HE in general
    - Resource imbalances and inequitable outcomes among global HEIs
    - Increasing cost of HE
  - Quantity over quality
    - Conversations about globalization quickly become about money, "full-pays", and the percentage of students who study away instead of being concerned with the developmental experience that we can craft with special attention to sound, culturally-relevant pedagogical practice
    - Dependence on international student tuition
  - Commercialization and focus on recruitment and mobility
    - Bridging the challenges of commercialization and education
    - Agents and consultants doing business with HE
    - Outsourcing of international education
  - Impact of student demographic changes
    - Student needs (degrees/programs that will benefit them) vs institutional needs (revenue)
  - Changing role of universities in societies around the world
- Public opinion on international education
  - Scrutiny of U.S. HEI by media, politicians and the public - perception that there are problems with access and affordability and increasing difficulty in recruiting students of lower income
  - U.S. political rhetoric that does not value cross cultural exchange and mobility, global learning, and research.
  - Managing risk and managing fear (negative perceptions of the 'other') in international mobility
  - Angst of people about the potential displacement of domestic students by international students
  - Congress and State Legislatures need more effective advocacy strategies
- Mobility trends
  - Increased outgoing student mobility (study abroad)
  - Changing dynamics of student mobility
  - Inequity (north/south in general) that make it relatively easy for entities in North America to travel overseas but make it difficult for the reverse
  - Experiential learning, co-ops, and paid internships

## Appendix A. Ohio University's Strategic Framework for Globalization



### Strategic Outcomes

