



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

Fall 2021 Presidential Message

David Fleshler, AIEA President



Dear AIEA Members,

I found that the lead article in Karin Fischer's recent edition of [Latitudes](#) succinctly outlined some of the major issues facing leaders in international higher education today. Karin Fischer provided a highlight of AIEA's 2021 Virtual Annual Conference when she interviewed University of Minnesota's nationally renowned epidemiologist Michael T. Osterholm, Ph.D. during the closing plenary (see the full interview [here](#)). More recently, she uses the break-up of the Yale - NUS partnership as the backdrop to ask key questions that all leaders in international higher education need to address, among them:

- *“Does the commitment (of institutions in two different countries) go both ways?”*
- *Is the “missionary” era of international partnerships over?*
- *Do you know why your (university) wants to go global?”*

It is no epiphany to say that we live in a remarkably interconnected world. As such, each of our institutions is required by its faculties' desire for intellectual and research partnerships to solve the important questions of our time. Further, our institutions are required by societal demands to look to others outside our own countries or regions when setting policy or confronting these global issues. Our institutions are, to a greater or lesser extent, global and we each struggle to determine how best to relate to both the world and universities outside of our home countries. The American Council on Education (and Barbara Hill, a long-time AIEA member and 2017 recipient of the Association's [Charles Klasek Award](#)) provides a remarkably clear guide for our work. Globalization is *the movement and interdependency of ideas, people, goods, capital, services, and organizations – as well as threats like environmental and health challenges – across borders*. Internationalization is *higher education's engagement with that reality*.

Those who lead internationalization at universities - sometimes presidents or provosts, but often you, AIEA's members - are dealing with an enormous set of multi-layered issues. Not long ago, leaders of international offices were primarily concerned with mobility - sending students on study abroad and bringing international students to their campuses. Today, AIEA members navigate a much more complex landscape. Our portfolios now include guiding international research and education strategy; creating and managing international risk policy; helping faculty internationalize



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the curriculum and create *Promotion and Tenure* guidelines that stimulate international work; promoting #YouAreWelcomeHere campaigns on campus; supervising international rankings efforts; developing complex educational and research relationships and agreements with universities, governments, and corporations in multiple countries - and these topics only scratch the surface of our challenges. We are working in a COVID era that continues to have a major effect on higher education. Plus, student mobility has not gone away!

AIEA was founded in 1982 (a 40th Anniversary Task Force is working hard to plan appropriate ways to celebrate this milestone throughout 2022) as “*the only association dedicated exclusively to senior leaders in the field of international education*”. For many years, AIEA approached its work through the prism of senior internationalization leaders in the United States. Over the last years, recognizing the growing interconnectedness and internationalization of universities, as well as the broadening scope of members’ portfolios, AIEA’s focus changed from US-centric to global, as evidenced by the association’s current strategic plan.

International higher education leaders on six continents (as I found out on a university expedition several years ago, Antarctica has no universities!) are confronting a variety of similar issues, no matter where they are located. After adopting its most recent strategic plan, [Strengthening Global Leadership for Internationalization](#), AIEA is uniquely positioned to help our members - located all over the world - develop a framework to address comparable topics at each of our institutions. As one example, log onto the [AIEA Website](#) and, under Resources, see the wide list of AIEA Town Hall Discussions on topics that affect members in many countries and that are led by experts from around the world. AIEA will continue to support our members, during whatever challenges we face.

AIEA’s Annual Conference, chaired by AIEA’s Immediate Past President Adel El Zaim, will be held in person from February 21 - 23 in New Orleans, LA, USA (observing of course, all COVID safety protocols as recommended by the CDC). We are looking forward to gathering safely together in person, for the first time in two years, to assess the state of international higher education, understand breaking trends, hear from experts and each other, and together discern the major shifts in our field (and of course provide support and understanding for each other as well). You are invited, in fact urged, to come. Not only will we be celebrating AIEA’s 40th Anniversary (read: great party!), but we will be gathering at a time that many political and university leaders are questioning the value of our work. The conference theme, *Why the Internationalization of Higher Education Still Matters*, could not be more pertinent. While we may intrinsically understand the importance of internationalization, as Karin reminds us, each of us needs to convincingly answer the question *Why Internationalization Still Matters* - or we will find that our presidents and Boards will support other priorities on campus.



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In addition to our in-person time together in New Orleans in February, AIEA is also pleased to be offering pre-conference workshops virtually in January as well as a first ever virtual Global Summit on April 5-7. All are invited to both our events - in person and virtual. (For those who are not able to join us in person in New Orleans, we hope you will join us for the virtual events.)

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to our field during this unprecedented time. I hope to see you in New Orleans!

David Fleshler
Vice Provost for International Affairs at Case Western Reserve University
2021-2022 AIEA President