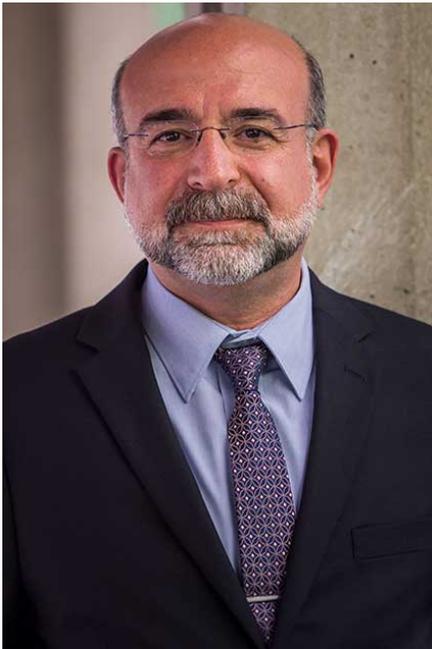




**Association of International Education Administrators**  
*Leaders in International Higher Education*

## **Spring 2020 Presidential Message**

*Dr. Adel El Zaïm, AIEA President*



Dear AIEA Members,

This year, we were fortunate enough to hold our annual conference in February 2020 before the worsening of the global health crisis. It feels like the world has completely changed since then. We SIOs like change, and we usually drive changes in our institutions. But this period of change is accompanied by mourning, worry, illness, economic decline and a lot of day-to-day deprivation of the essentials of our modern life. It is a sad time, but a crisis is also an opportunity to reinvent ourselves.

As in the past, our 2020 conference was a great success thanks to the hundreds of participants, presenters and keynote speakers who shared their knowledge and discussed the issues related to “Comprehensive Internationalization for a Global Generation.” I think the conference was a great opportunity to learn, discover and explore the future.

Among the impacts of the current global health crisis, the future of higher education and its internationalization is of primary importance, not only for us SIOs, but for all our institutions, students, and also for our institutional partners, governments and the private sector. Travel restrictions have already affected the winter session. They will also affect the upcoming summer and fall sessions. Even if most of our institutions have managed to continue the session in remote and online teaching mode, preparation for the next terms is a marathon which will require endurance, determination, resilience and a lot of innovation to mitigate risks and continue to strive. The world needs more international research collaboration and more global citizens.

Internationalization of higher education will experience moments of truth where we will have to demonstrate the relevance, the viability, the usefulness and the concrete benefits of study abroad, interinstitutional and multi-stakeholder collaboration, recruitment of international students and international partnerships. The economic difficulties generated by the crisis and the mitigation measures will reduce the capacities of individuals and institutions to fund travel and large collaboration projects. Income will also decrease. Not to mention the perceptions and feelings of seclusion, isolationism and xenophobia that, unfortunately, will be more visible.



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This will highlight our role as SIOs and the qualities illustrated in the AIEA *Standards of Professional Practice*. SIOs will have to put into practice their skills as strategists in higher education, not just internationalization. We will also have to show our communication skills, our leadership, our collaboration and management skills in complex situations, our ability to build fruitful partnerships, our experience, our intercultural knowledge and our ability to work in ambiguous and changing contexts. The *Standards of Professional Practice* should guide our actions in the coming months and years.

AIEA has updated its bylaws, strategic plan and committee structure. Our strategy is based on a more global approach which will be strong by and for its members and partners. New services and programs will be implemented and new partnerships will be developed in order to maximize resources and outcomes. We will collaborate more with sister associations, whether national, regional or international, so that the good generated by our efforts is generously distributed. Remember that Kathleen Fitzpatrick invited us to adopt an approach of generous thinking in our universities. We will also have to think about how AIEA is and will be a generous association which works in a spirit of partnership and contributes to internationalization all over the world.

The health crisis we are experiencing now is just one example of the threats hanging over the planet. It is not caused by globalization; rather, it is underscored by globalization, and it demonstrates how our community is an interconnected and interdependent body. For years, climate change experts have been warning us of the dangers that threaten our societies. Collaboration—whether scientific, political, institutional or individual—is more necessary now than ever. SIOs are able to demonstrate the positive contribution of internationalization in our universities, in the society and for the world. I invite you to work within AIEA to multiply this positive impact of internationalization.

Adel El Zaïm  
Chief Internationalization Officer, University of Ottawa  
2020-2021 AIEA President