



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

## **Spring 2016 Presidential Message**

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The 2016 Annual Conference explored the theme, *Building a Better World: the Academy as Leader*. In this column I'd like to engage the AIEA membership to further reflect on several implications of the conference theme. These thoughts incorporate the call to participate in the 2016 gathering and expand on them.

The 2016 conference was organized around a key issue; ours is a century of clear and present globalization. In response to the phenomenon of globalization, colleges and universities are increasingly recognizing that local and global are part of the same system, that one cannot be understood without reference to the other, and that the local communities in which they are located, --urban, rural, and regional-- must now be viewed as globally embedded. (AIEA 2015)

To argue that the university and the community in which it resides is globally embedded makes explicit and extends those elements that comprise the long-standing definition of internationalization as the process of “integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions” of a college or university. (Knight 1994)

As the call for participation in the 2016 AIEA conference stated, “...a repositioning of global learning in the higher education curriculum and a more intentional engagement with the international dimensions of the (surrounding) community....recognizes the need to identify and better understand model practices associated with institution-wide dialogue that engages in collective sense-making and goal-setting for and with the places and regions we reside. How can we think more collectively (across all our differences and similarities) to solve global grand challenges, especially in the role of teaching, research, and practice in preparing graduates who can actually perform as globally empowered local citizens?”

There are several practical implications of these ideas about the role of the academy in building a better world. I would like to explore two, each of which contributes to public dialogue on the nature of and solutions to global problems.



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First, universities need to better explain and communicate what is meant by the intersection of globalization and the concept of comprehensive campus internationalization. One thoughtful way to consider this intersection is that “if globalization is the movement of people, ideas, goods, capital, services, pollution, and diseases, etc. across borders...internationalization is higher education’s engagement with that reality” (Hill, 2016).

An example of how such thinking can be incorporated into campus discourse is to consider internationalization as the process of connecting a university's teaching, research, and engagement activities to the global networks that frame 21st century life (IUPUI; 2007; 2014).

Several strategies can be considered:

- Institute global learning for all, regardless of major, and connect these learning experiences to professional practice and community development;
- Create public awareness and understanding of the ways in which global forces are reshaping the communities we reside;
- Connect key international academic programs at least partially to the inter-national interconnectivity of surrounding communities, thus supporting effective functioning of local private, governmental, and non-governmental organizations;
- Reach out to growing immigrant communities and identify strategies for their integration; and
- Take the lead in developing projects on global issues and community conversations on matters of global citizenship and responsibility. (Latz et al, 2015)

To be sure, in addressing the practical implications of the intersection of globalization and internationalization, and the myriad of ways that the global and local can be better appreciated, the discussion is not limited to cross-cultural understanding or international competitiveness, important as they are. In addition, and in conversation with the larger public, higher education is uniquely suited to encourage conversation on a whole host of urgent social and environmental inequities that are global in scale.

Thus, a second important way for higher education to contribute to building a better world is to more effectively demonstrate the value of comprehensive campus internationalization by creating high profile leadership projects that address the grand challenges of the day.

In this regard, higher education is both an academic and a civic institution, one capable of addressing the roots of such issues as poverty, global health, climate change, violence, and so on, on campus and through collaborative teaching, research and service partnerships that simultaneously have local and global dimensions.



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As noted in a recent UNESCO report,

*There is no more powerful transformative force than education – to promote human rights and dignity, to eradicate poverty and deepen sustainability, to build a better future for all, founded on equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, and international solidarity and shared responsibility, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity. (UNESCO, 2015)*

In that spirit, I look forward in the year ahead to engaging our membership and those like-minded organizations committed to the identification of programs and projects that demonstrate the 2016 AIEA conference theme: how the academy can serve as a leader in building a better world.