



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

Spring 2017 Presidential Message

Dr. Hilary Kahn, AIEA President



I would like to tell you how deeply honored I am to be the president of the Association of International Education Administrators. I value and recognize the responsibility I have to lead our superior organization, especially in this uncertain moment for international education. My duty was palpable to me at the 2017 Annual Conference in Washington DC in February, where we celebrated our 35th anniversary. As I attended conference sessions, engaged in conversations, and listened to the AIEA membership, I became intimately aware of the obligation I have as your president and how nimble, engaged, informed, and active we currently need to be as international educators. This is nothing new, but this is a particularly pivotal time.

This is not a moment to agonize, nor is it time to simply react to what the world pitches our way. This is a time for AIEA to be informed and proactive; consider new approaches and build on our strengths; listen and integrate diverse points of view; act on our responsibilities and advocate for our field, and sustain alliances and build new ones.

Interestingly, many of these goals resonate with the objectives a global educator would pursue when developing global and inclusive learning environments. Global learning requires students to 1) have transferrable skills that are applicable in a range of cultural and practical contexts, 2) bring together diverse perspectives and methods, 3) produce knowledge collectively and by making new connections, 4) think and act universally as well as contextually, and 5) articulate responsibilities and take action on knowledge. As leaders in the field of international education, we must draw upon similar skills and values that emphasize plurality, diversity, action, dialogue, responsibilities, and alliances. We must challenge as well as master the silos that are embedded in our institutions, nations, and the world. We need to think as globally as we do locally, nationally, and regionally. We must embrace the values of collective knowledge production, collaboration, commitment, and equity as we move AIEA forward and plan for its next 35 years. We must think about our institutions as much as we do the world.

We also need to be constantly vigilant of the diversity that we encounter and assure that this difference is not just recognized but fully embodied in our approaches and practices. The playing field of international education is not necessarily level, and we are as much focused on the political and economic inequalities and the national contexts as we are on the best practices and basic standards of our profession. We aim to



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provide resources that align with our diversifying membership and recognize how our work is meaningful across different contexts, from classrooms and campuses, to communities, countries, partners, and the world. Like the globally engaged students we strive to teach, international education leaders must be able to toggle back and forth between the general and the particular and recognize how best practices mean nothing unless they are made meaningful and effective in specific institutional contexts. In this way, we must be global scholars who seek to understand the broader transnational phenomena as well as the spaces around the world where these connections are anchored and lived.

This underlying framework is what grounded many of conversations that took place at our annual conference in February, which was the best-attended conference ever! As conference chair, you can imagine how delighted I was to see this record number of attendees. As president, I also want the membership to know that we are conscious of our progress and we regularly consider what our growth means to our ability to serve all the international education leaders that look to AIEA for support and resources. We will balance our evolution with our traditional strengths of supporting SIOs and we hope to diversify membership while maintaining the integrity of our mission. We will continue to improve and encourage the internationalization of higher education; we will maintain a strong and productive professional network; we will collaborate with institutions, organizations, and individuals from around the world to further the field of international education; and we will continue to be an effective voice on important issues.

I am particularly proud of our new outstanding publication, the [Standards of Professional Practice for International Education Leaders and Senior International Officers](#), which was collectively prepared by the AIEA Task Force on Standards of Professional Practice. This one-of-a-kind document details the necessary skills, competencies, and expertise that leaders need to be effective across the many contours of international education. Focusing on competencies that span leadership, internationalization, personal effectiveness, and advocacy, these standards also recognize that today there is not one type of SIO, nor one type of institution or approach to internationalization.

For AIEA, being a strong voice is not only about disseminating information. Being a voice is also about standing firm on one's commitments. With that said, advocacy cannot take a backseat to other practical matters, and forging new alliances must be part of this repositioning of our responsibility to the field. It seems that every day we encounter a new global issue or national policy, or come face to face with shifting tides of social sentiment, that directly impacts our work and the students, staff, and scholars who are the intellectual and human core of international education. Allies are shifting and we cannot wait for the next morning to see what will next impact our work. We need to prepare through advocacy, by staying informed, by establishing collaborations, and by adapting new skills to allow us to be better advocates and more public-facing. We need to prepare and know what we stand for.



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Thinking about what we stand for is an exercise that AIEA will be engaged in over the next year, as we kickoff our strategic planning initiative for 2018-2022. There could not be a better time to do so. Rethinking our strategic planning now, at this critical moment in international education, will allow us to better serve our members, design innovative approaches that recognize silos and differences, and become better at explaining our relevance, providing evidence of our impact, and promoting our work. As your president, I will work diligently to have AIEA be a professional organization that listens, collaborates, acts, diversifies, guides, supports, cares, advocates, and navigates difference and change. AIEA and I will double down on our values and commitment to what matters to our members. We re-commit to you.