



Association of International Education Administrators
Leaders in International Higher Education

Dear AIEA Colleagues,

I am pleased to write to you after a successful conference in February in New Orleans and three months into my term as President of AIEA. The experience of planning the last conference was highly rewarding, especially with regards to AIEA members who assisted with the planning process, submitted session proposals, presented and coordinated workshops, and the local members in New Orleans who connected us with venues and local opportunities. Seeing it all come together last February was truly amazing and inspiring! Thank you to all who made the conference possible and to all who participated.

The theme of the 2013 conference was “Reimagining Higher Education in a Global Context,” which was expertly addressed by our keynote speakers Eric Liu, George Mehaffy and Michele Ledgerwood, and Hans DeWit. During my Presidency, I would like to continue to make this theme a priority for AIEA, and I want to invite you to explore several questions with me including the following overarching question: How can we work together to address the needs and challenges of a globalized world and thereby facilitate the transformation of our institutions into truly global ones? I would like to especially focus on preparing SIOs to fulfill this multifaceted role of central coordinator and facilitator for internationalization on their campuses and to be able to address and manage the multiple challenges, opportunities, and competing priorities. To that end, I welcome your ideas and suggestions on how AIEA can best help prepare SIOs in this central role. Additionally, I would like us to focus on “professionalizing” the role of the SIO so that it can become a standard position in the top administration of an institution, just as all HEIs typically have a Chief Financial Officer or a Chief Information Officer. To this end, AIEA is partnering with the American Council on Education, for example, to coordinate the inaugural Institute for Leading Internationalization this month, and other discussion around this topic is most welcome.

In the context of “Reimagining Higher Education in a Global Context,” I

would like to invite you to explore the issue of diversity in international higher education. As higher education institutions are responding to global issues and challenges, diversity certainly plays a major role, not only in terms of the students we serve, but in terms of access to education, the diverse needs of a global society and cultures across the globe, the wide range of values and perspectives surrounding global issues and making sure all are part of the process. We can start by simply bringing the voices of colleagues from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and SE Asia into our discussions of leading international higher education. I would like to challenge all of us to attend higher education conferences in those world regions and assist with bringing our colleagues from those regions to conferences in North America, Europe, and Australia. Too often, we only discuss trends and issues with colleagues from similar institutions and locations; the time has come to move beyond our own regional issues and overarching trends and issues to more substantive collaboration with colleagues from across the world at these conferences, especially around themes of diversity.

For AIEA and the field of international higher education, increasing diversity and ensuring that the association represents a diversity of perspectives, approaches, experiences, and members has been challenging. There are three levels of diversity to address in AIEA: institutional, regional, and the individual ethnic/racial/cultural/gender diversity of SIOs. The association is U.S.-based and focused specifically on the SIO role, and therefore, membership has been primarily focused on U.S. institutions and mostly those with an SIO position. Consequently, the majority of institutions that are members of AIEA are large public research universities, given that there are fewer SIO positions at smaller institutions. AIEA has sought to increase the institutional diversity in recent years by including more conference content focused on community colleges and small liberal arts colleges. AIEA has also reached out to HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges & Universities) and Hispanic-serving institutions. As a result, there are an increasing number of diverse institutions represented in the association, but we still have long way to go to be more fully represented by diverse institutions both within the U.S. and across the world.

At the international level, AIEA has attracted institutions from Canada, Europe, NE Asia, and Australia, but institutions from Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and SE Asia, are poorly represented. How can AIEA attract more conference participants and members from these regions? AIEA

members could promote AIEA to their partner university colleagues in these regions and connect with these colleagues, university leaders, and government officials at conferences and meetings. I am sure we can identify other ways to bring our colleagues from underrepresented regions into AIEA and again, would welcome your participation in this.

Diversity among the SIOs at our member institutions tends to be low as well, except with respect to gender. There no longer appears to be a gender and age imbalance among leaders in international higher education which was the case just 10 years ago when SIOs were predominantly Caucasian males over 50 years of age. There has been a significant increase in women in leadership positions in our field and a shift to men and women of younger ages. Most SIOs among our members are native U.S. citizens, but there are many who immigrated to the U.S. from around the globe. The most challenging diversity issue in our field appears to be the lack of racial diversity among those in leadership positions for internationalization. How could this lack of diversity be addressed? Please send me your ideas and suggestions.

Other questions for all of us to discuss further include: Do we need to look at the pathway to becoming an SIO? Could we do better in mentoring and encouraging non-Caucasian international education professionals interested in leadership positions and also faculty members with the aptitude and interest to become an SIO? Can AIEA as an organization take steps to facilitate an increase in the diversity of leaders in international higher education?

It is imperative that we address these questions as an association so that we can truly develop a global framework for our dialogue, professional development, and the change we aspire to facilitate in and through our institutions. As we reimagine higher education, let us start with ourselves: I invite you to enter into dialogue over the next months on these pressing questions. Together, we can become more globally inclusive and even possibly help transform higher education as we know it!

Best,

Sabine C. Klahr
2013 AIEA President