



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

**President's Message**  
**Spring, 2014**

Values are important to any field of endeavor as a way to guide behavior, assist in strategic planning and as a standard against which we can hold ourselves accountable. I found myself musing over such thoughts in response to the recent issuance of the Nelson Mandela Bay Global Dialogue Declaration on the Future of Internationalization of Higher Education, an important document that I commend to the attention of fellow members of AIEA.

Although the declaration does not address values directly, the narrative that accompanies the Action steps talks about "a global higher education agenda which is equitable, ethical, socially responsible, accessible and accountable." These values are also implicit in some of the Action steps. Such thinking is important in my view and I will explain in the following paragraphs.

The Nelson Mandela Bay Global Dialogue Declaration reminds us in a particularly powerful fashion of the need for the discipline of international education to clarify what we mean by "international education values." Lest we forget, most professionals within our field come from very disparate backgrounds. Even if the overwhelming majority of Senior International Officers are academics, they could be from disciplines as different as astrophysics is to anthropology, or music is to dental hygiene. And, there are SIOs who come from private industry as well, with backgrounds just as diverse, or from government, again, with very different areas of expertise. This diversity in terms of background is even more true of the significantly larger numbers of employees within the field who are not SIOs, but entrusted with responsibility to coordinate and manage different aspects of the work of international education. In effect, what we have within the field is a very diverse group of people in terms of skills and training, who share a love, some would say a passion for the field of international education, but for whom there is not a core set of values that can serve as the north star for the profession.

A number of international education organizations (but not all) have tried to address the issue of values in articulating organizational identity. NAFSA's values statement, for example talks about learning and scholarship, understanding and respect among different peoples, leadership, peace, security and well-being. The International Education Association of South Africa's core values include professionalism, excellence, ethical commitment, diversity, collegiality and sustainability. The Institute for International Education describes its values as including integrity, global awareness, collaboration, professionalism, excellence and service. The Japan Network for International Education mentions excellence, understanding of differences, peace, security and well-being as values that it embraces. The International Association of Universities, in its publication titled "Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action" actually articulates the most comprehensive list of values underpinning internationalization that I have encountered.

Clearly, while there is a great deal of overlap in these values statements, there are also divergences. We lack a set of core values for the field of international education possibly because we do not have an overarching body that speaks for all of international education, but such a fact does not lessen its need. It cannot be



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helpful that we claim to subscribe to the same field of international education, but be guided by different sets of statements that purport to express the values that undergird our work. Might it be that the time has come for the field of international education to articulate core values, not unlike the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that will guide us in our work, regardless of our institutional affiliation, the actual work we do on a daily basis, or the country where we are based?

The notion of a common set of values is important for the very reason that at the heart of our field is a concern for the global, be it global understanding, global collaboration, or the global well-being of humanity. Indeed, in this age of globalization, the one phenomenon that has become the most important factor influencing the ongoing evolution of the internationalization of higher education, should we not be at the vanguard of conversations and scholarship about how we can ensure that we succeed as a global community in advancing the best interests of higher education in a manner that will serve all of humanity? It would be an unacceptable shortcoming if our international education organizations are preoccupied with international education issues, as they should be, but not mindful of the values that should guide such deliberations.

For example, it is possible to be concerned about international student mobility as a way of increasing the international student population on college campuses but, if driven principally by a desire to generate revenue, there are those who may be unconcerned about the ethics around the fees such students are charged that may amount to gouging them. Furthermore, is it not true that we do ourselves a dis-service, even when we talk about international concerns, by having those conversations only from one perspective, say the American perspective? We struggle with this very issue at our annual meetings where we lament the absence of multiple perspectives in the papers presented. Should we not be among the least parochial and insular with respect to the values that guide us as international educators? In effect, whatever set of values we develop should have global applicability and be developed in a manner that incorporates the perspectives of our colleagues from around the world.

Although the answers to these questions are not easy or simple, they nonetheless set the stage for an even more important kind of inquiry. For once we develop core global values for the field of international education, what then becomes the next responsibility? Might we have an obligation to act on these values? The International Association of Universities, as reported by the University World News Global Edition, cites the biggest institutional risk of internationalization as being that it benefits primarily wealthier students. There is no question that this must be of concern to international educators as it speaks to the issue of access. So what are we going to do about it? There are many instances of scholars being persecuted in various countries because of the subject of their research or even their political sympathies. Shouldn't we be speaking out against such policies? Issuing the most alarming report ever in its history, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns about dire consequences to our planet if current practices associated with the use of fossil fuels aren't radically altered. Since being stewards of the planet is not only compatible with our values as international educators but the defining value proposition of our lifetime, are there actions we can take in terms of policies we help to develop, pedagogical commitments and even lifestyle choices that can help to forcefully advocate against the status quo and in favor of renewable sources of energy? Defending the integrity of the values we espouse in a public way, and at the risk of



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attracting the disapproval from some sectors of our community, may be necessary if our professional lives are to be aligned with our values.

The ferment within international higher education and the sweeping changes being precipitated by globalization forces us to seriously consider the values that should underlie and characterize our work as international educators. I think that it has become necessary for us to articulate the values that are core to the field of international education, irrespective of our regional organizations. This will take time and involve many voices but I am convinced that we would be better off for so doing, and that this will help further define and establish the field of international education as a reflection of the consciousness of our most important constituents. I invite you to join me in starting this important conversation.

Dr. Harvey Charles  
2014 AIEA President