



AIEA PROVOST PERSPECTIVES

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Linking Internationalization to Mission, Priorities, Capacities, and Opportunities

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Provost





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Name: Christine M. Riordan

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Time served as Provost: Since July, 2013

The University of Kentucky is a public, land grant university dedicated to improving people's lives through excellence in education, research and creative work, service, and health care. As Kentucky's flagship institution, the University is home to more than 29,000 students and plays a critical leadership role by promoting diversity, inclusion, economic development, and human well-being.

Dr. Christine Riordan became provost of the University of Kentucky in July 2013. In this role, she oversees all academic operations of the institution, which has more than 29,000 students, 19,000 full and part-time employees and a budget of \$2.7 billion. Before assuming this role, she was Dean of the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver.



Given all of the demands and constraints facing higher education today, why did your institution decide to internationalize?

The great challenge for higher education today is how to develop leaders for an increasingly interconnected world. For me, internationalization and global learning communities are an essential strategy for educating those future leaders. We can do that through student mobility, and are working very hard on strategies to increase that mobility. However, we also have to think about how to create global learning communities here on our own campus, through the use of technology and through pedagogical innovation. For that to work, our faculty have to have global connections as well. As a research university, the University of Kentucky orients its faculty global connections around the discovery of new knowledge, through international research partnerships. So for us, all of those threads must be strategically interwoven – students and faculty, pedagogy and mobility, teaching and research. Each one leads to and depends on the others, requiring both effective leadership and broad-based buy-in.

Has the role or importance of internationalization at your institution changed over the past five years? If so, how?

Internationalization has always been critically important – but it has not always been pursued in a strategic way. Instead, it has been led by faculty champions in disparate areas of the university. Today, in an era of constrained resources and with all of us focusing on the need to control rising costs, the strategies we adopt have to be linked to institutional mission, priorities, capacities, and opportunities. For that reason, an institution’s senior leadership must be attuned to and supportive of comprehensive internationalization. This activity cannot occur within a specific unit, but must be a shared priority across the colleges and throughout the administration. The strategy needs to be incremental, continuous, mainstreamed, and rigorously assessed, so that we can demonstrate the value and impact of global engagement.

What were some of the main challenges you and your institution faced in pursuing internationalization? What are some of assets you and your institution drew on for this work?

One of the chief assets on which the University of Kentucky is able to draw is our interdisciplinarity. We are one of only eight universities in the US with established schools in Agriculture, Engineering, Medicine, and Pharmacy on a single, contiguous campus. Their cutting-edge discoveries depend on partnerships not only across disciplines, but around the world. Our internationalization strategy looks for synergies among these colleges, and with



our 12 other colleges as well. Each institution should build on its core identity and unique assets, in order for internationalization strategy to be effective.

Our challenges, as on most campuses, include equity of opportunity for our students. We encourage global mobility and students' engagement in international research teams, but we don't want that to be an opportunity only for those who can afford it. We are actively seeking ways to offer cost-neutral options (such as reciprocal-tuition exchanges) and to enhance financial aid to enable students to take advantage of international learning opportunities. Given the need to hold tuition costs down for all students, we are going to have to find external dollars to support this work, through both fundraising and corporate alliances.

What is an example of an internationalization effort on your campus that was not completely successful? Why was that the case, and what did your institution learn from it?

When we have valuable goals to achieve, we never want to admit defeat – we only learn and adapt. We designed a Certificate of Global Studies a couple of years ago to link education-abroad opportunities more centrally to the curriculum. We had just codified our undergraduate certificate programs, and this was the first program to be approved under that new paradigm. The Certificate has a different pattern than many of our academic tracks, as it involves not only international work but also co-curricular engagement. Adopting such a differently shaped program has been challenging for us, in terms of promotion, tracking, and accomplishing the goals it was designed to achieve. But we haven't given up. Instead, we are re-evaluating the structure of the Certificate, and we continue to push to make our academic structures more flexible, rather than having to adapt exciting new academic programs to fit pre-existing processes. The Certificate illustrates the power of internationalization to drive innovation across the entire academic mission—even if it is sometimes challenging.

Conversely, please discuss an example of an initiative that did work, and why.

We are very proud of our successes in curricular integration of education abroad led by our EA director Dr. Anthony Ogden and our Associate Provost Susan Carvalho. Tony Ogden has changed the core question for outgoing students, from “where do you want to go?” to “what are you studying, and how can international experience help you reach your academic goals?” This has had multiple positive impacts. First, it has engaged faculty in ways that we could not engage them before, in promoting education abroad opportunities to their students as a central part of the major. Multiple academic programs now



include a specific global track, with approved coursework that integrates well into the students' major. Second, this has linked education abroad with our core goals of reducing time-to-degree and increasing retention among our undergraduates. And third, it has shifted students' focus from academic tourism to intellectual engagement abroad, and to how EA can help them achieve their career goals. These efforts have doubled our student participation numbers since 2006, and we expect them to continue to increase due to the linkage between education abroad and academic departments.

Who are the most important stakeholders you work with regarding internationalization at your institution?

In my view, the key stakeholders are clearly our students. As an educational institution, we must harness all of our goals—research, education, engagement, internationalization, and all that we do—to foster the development of students as future leaders and experts in their chosen fields. So while we pursue international research collaborations and partnerships, and other forms of global engagement, we want always to try to build in pathways and opportunities that directly involve and benefit our students.

Of course, we cannot do this without our other key stakeholders – the faculty, and academic leadership. The interaction between all three groups of stakeholders is critical. And I wouldn't want to leave out our statewide community. As a land-grant university, we endeavor to make sure that all of our work broadens the horizon and contributes to the well-being of our state – and we can do that by fostering the development of global business partnerships and training a generation of global leaders for our workforce..

What are some of the key ways in which senior international officers can help individuals in your role advance internationalization at their institutions?

Chief academic officers rely on senior international officers to develop and keep up with national best practices. At the University of Kentucky, our education abroad director and SIO are taking the lead roles around curricular integration, risk management, international student and scholar services, communication and marketing, and strategic planning. SIOs need to build in continuous professional development for their staff, so that they can both lead and learn from the leaders, across the field of international education. That spirit of and drive for innovation has to be the catalyst for internationalization. Chief academic officers rely on SIOs to keep that alive. Chief academic officers need to support, direct, and enable that work, but they can only do it if their SIOs are helping to bring new ideas from the field to develop innovations that



work for and stem from our core identity as a university, and to ensure that our infrastructure keeps up with our vision and ambitions.

In addition, SIOs are a critical link between the international office and academic departments. That role has to remain front and center if internationalization is going to become interwoven with the core missions of the institution. We have to push constantly to make sure that academic approval processes allow for global innovation—such as the development of joint and dual international degree programs, or the integration of education abroad and core curriculum—but we also have to make sure that the leaders of internationalization have the support and buy-in of that full academic core. So we rely on SIO to keep the stakeholders in conversation with and in concert with each other, for ambitious and continuous innovation and improvements.

Is there anything else you would like to share with senior international officers or fellow chief academic officers?

In my view, a new leadership paradigm for universities of the 21st century involves five key cornerstones: 1) a focus on world economies, especially across the developing world, 2) the creation of global learning communities, 3) interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships, 4) the integration of technology, and 5) creating and demonstrating our value and impact. We are constructing our internationalization strategy for the coming years on these five cornerstones. All five both require and support internationalization here at UK. International strategic plans can't just copy each other – they have to be developed in accordance with each institution's unique strengths and priorities. And for us, the plans then have to be fitted to each college's unique strengths and priorities. As those priorities evolve, internationalization strategy must evolve with it, not trying to follow a standard paradigm or creating a niche of its own, but rather helping the institution accomplish its broader and most central goals through global engagement.



The **Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA)**, a membership organization formed in November 1982, is composed of institutional leaders engaged in advancing the international dimensions of higher education. The purposes of the Association are to:

- Provide an effective voice on significant issues within international education at all levels,
- Improve and promote international education programming and administration within institutions of higher education,
- Establish and maintain a professional network among international education institutional leaders,
- Cooperate in appropriate ways with other national and international groups having similar interests.

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