



AIEA PROVOST PERSPECTIVES

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High Impact Global Research and Student Success

Ralph C. Wilcox • *University of South Florida*

Provost & Executive Vice President





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Name: Ralph C. Wilcox

Title: Provost & Executive Vice President, University of South Florida

Time served as Provost: Since January 2008.

The University of South Florida is a high-impact, global research university dedicated to student success. Serving nearly 48,000 students, the USF System has an annual economic impact of \$4.4 billion. Currently 975 faculty are engaged internationally, 2,650 international students attend USF, and 1,500 USF students study abroad each year.

Ralph C. Wilcox, Ph.D., is USF's Provost and Executive Vice President. His expertise is in cultural studies and globalization, an area in which he teaches in the USF Honors College. He holds the Ph.D. from the University of Alberta, Canada, the M.Sc. degree from Washington State University, and a baccalaureate degree from the University of Exeter in his native Great Britain.



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

USF determined early on that it could not afford to ignore the significance of globalization in the 21st century. Among the youngest, top-tier research universities in the United States, we recognized the need to enhance our institutional global brand recognition and position.

As a result, USF made Globalization a core priority of the university's Strategic Plan for 2013-18. This focus is also a powerful complement to our other strategic priorities: Student Success, Research & Innovation, and Community Engagement.

USF World, home to talented and passionate professionals who work hard to attract the brightest students and professors to USF from around the world, acts as the central coordinating body for USF's global initiatives. USF World builds strategic partnerships with world-class universities around the world, works to globalize USF's curriculum offerings across campus, facilitates joint research ventures with global funding agencies and promotes the integration of "global classrooms" to ensure that USF graduates can compete successfully in the global marketplace.

We have been encouraged by elected and corporate leaders to engage more globally to enhance the State of Florida's global economic competitiveness, and to create new jobs and improve the state's economic health.

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

Globalization emerged as a top strategic priority at USF over the past decade. While its importance has not changed, our efforts have become more strategic, integrated, focused and sustainable. Globalization now engages all corners of the campus, from academic colleges and departments to the USF faculty senate, students affairs, residential life and learning, student health, intercollegiate athletics, research and innovation, marketing and communication, space planning and fundraising.

USF's focus on globalization will only strengthen as we extend USF's reach around the world. Our global focus will continue to make USF more visible internationally, which will accelerate our strategic globalization goals.



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?

USF’s ambitions for globalization across campus are limited by curriculum space. As a result, USF has woven globalization within existing coursework through curriculum redesign rather than creating new courses or degree programs. Additionally, USF is home to a large population of students who are first in their family to attend college and not easily convinced of the value of investing sometimes-limited resources in education abroad.

Some assets we have utilized to overcome these challenges include our globally committed faculty, a successful English Language Institute, a supportive community of business leaders, a generous, philanthropic record of supporting USF Education Abroad through Passport Scholarships, and our students—our strongest ambassadors abroad.

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 USF was first entering into the international market in earnest, we recognized that we had neither the expertise nor the resources to ramp-up international student recruitment on our own. As such, we initially sought to “outsource” international student recruitment to a private company. Corporate international recruiters were to be remunerated on the basis of “delivering” a student to USF regardless of “best fit” or the likelihood of academic success.

Although it was an appealing, low-cost, low-risk endeavor, it did not work, and it did not advance USF’s strategic vision to cultivate a globally diverse student body and student success. We learned that it is worth the extra effort to embark on a more strategic, focused and sustained path toward globalization while avoiding shortcuts.

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

As a result of the earlier “false start” and following widespread due diligence, we elected to partner with a third-party to “insource” international students and support their academic success. This yielded our relationship with INTO University Partnerships (IUP), which created the INTO>USF Center built upon the prior success of the USF English Language Institute – a positive and fruitful relationship now approaching five years.



This partnership supports USF's goals of enrolling a larger and more globally diverse student body that is positioned for academic success. It brings the complementary strengths of USF and IUP to bear for the benefit of both entities.

INTO provides us access the global marketplace and to their international staff network. At the same time, all academic delivery remains with the university. USF delivers academic assurance and integrity, and international students are integrated into the USF community and provided the support needed to ensure their academic success.

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

The most important stakeholders when it comes to internationalization are the faculty and students. Nearly 1,000 members of our faculty are now engaged professionally overseas in some form of scholarship or research. Having buy-in from these groups is key to building a university culture that values globalization. We also depend on support from top university leadership and our Board of Trustees.

Outside the university, we engage with alumni, business leaders, local and statewide elected officials and philanthropists to invest in globalization initiatives. And as a result of the global profile those groups have helped us to build, we now work closely with stakeholders beyond our borders, including overseas consulates and embassies, World Affairs Councils and US-owned multi-national companies. We have also built relationships with international educational groups, such as: the Association of International Education Administrators, the Institute for International Education, and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. In 2013, NAFSA awarded USF with a Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization, and in July 2014 the Overseas Association for College Admission Counseling (OACAC) chose USF to host its annual international conference.

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

1) Align all global initiatives with the institution's strategic priorities to ensure both quality and relevance. The institution's top leadership must acknowledge and embrace the value of global initiatives and understand the impact of new and pending legislation, regulations and policies. Senior international officers



must strive to make sure these issues appear regularly on agendas of governing boards, executive teams, etc. In other words, "Invite yourself to the party."

2) Stimulate and support sustained global discourse on campus, especially the differences between internationalization and globalization. We have moved beyond country by country comparisons and bilateral viewpoints to recognizing the profound interwoven, dynamic, and infused perspectives of a global approach. USF regularly engages faculty, staff and students in creating a welcoming campus environment for international students and scholars and works to cultivate a culture of acceptance and understanding of those who may be different in the ways they look, dress, speak, eat or act.

3) Be strategic in considering new initiatives: conduct due diligence and avoid opportunism. If something looks too good to be true, it probably is. Carefully invest and demand strategic, accountable returns. Work with leadership to acknowledge and value the strategic importance of contributions toward globalization in tenure and promotion and staff performance criteria.

4) Reinvest any new revenues derived from globalization efforts, including international student tuition, toward expanding opportunities to reach out to the world and improve international student and scholar support services.

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

It's essential to integrate globalization initiatives at every level of the university community. For example, avoid housing all international students in one corner of campus or delivering separate class sections for international students. Do not fall prey to the seduction of new revenues as the primary motivator for globalization. Focus first on the non-financial priorities of the institution: high quality educational experience, graduates' success, "real world" experiences including internships and co-ops through global engagement and, in the case of USF, growing the research enterprise. Finally, be sure to share and celebrate your successes!



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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