

'IE Generation' Leaders Reflect (II)

AIEA Interviews Highlight 'Arc of Change' in International Education

by John D. Heyl, PhD

Founder and Editor

IELeaders.net

Posted November 1, 2016

This is the second discussion of recent oral interviews conducted by Dr. Joan Gore on behalf of AIEA (Association of International Education Administrators) with senior leaders in international education. The leaders included in this posting are: JoAnn McCarthy (INTO), Gil Merckx (Duke University), Michael Woolf (CAPA) and Susan Buck Sutton (Bryn Mawr). View the full interviews at [the AIEA website](#).

In addition to their "senior" status among leading international educators, these interviewees have also charted new, often unique, roles in the field following leadership at one or more institutions.

All four of these leaders came into international education by way of unanticipated developments following their graduate education and early professional work. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the field of international education was still unformed, often practiced by part-time appointees and very much at the periphery of institutional priorities. These four professionals brought to their appointments, however, a vision of internationalization that would guide long careers with extraordinary impact. They epitomized the second post World War II generation of international educators who would create a professional field, establish paths for IE careers, dramatically expand participation in international activities and help move international education closer to the core of institutional priorities.

JoAnn McCarthy, for example, was an adjunct professor of French at Illinois State University (Normal, Illinois) when she was named Executive Director of International Programs at ISU in 1983. She attended her first AIEA meeting in 1987 and saw quickly that both an academic and professional field was emerging. She subsequently lead internationalization at Old Dominion University (Norfolk, VA), the University of South Florida and the University of Pennsylvania before joining INTO. Likewise, Michael Woolf, currently Deputy President for Strategic Development at CAPA, had been working at the BBC in the early 1980s and teaching American literature part-time at Middlesex Polytechnic when CIEE in London hired him because he "knew a bit about a lot of things." In addition to his work at CIEE, Woolf had worked at FIE and Syracuse University before coming to CAPA in 2011.

Levers for Change - The Importance of Senior Leadership Support: McCarthy notes that, when she came to Old Dominion University in the early 1990s, she reported directly to President Jim Koch, who was an acknowledged advocate for internationalization. This gave her, in addition to generous budgetary support and a high profile privately funded facility, access to faculty development and the curriculum across the institution. At IUPUI, Sutton had strong Provost support for an ambitious faculty collaboration initiative, which had "multiplier" effects

IELeaders.net

**Resources • Insights • Inspiration for Senior
International Educators**

Tel.: 520.784.1068
Email: info@ieleaders.net

throughout the institution. Currently, Sutton reports directly to the President at Bryn Mawr, again assuring her ability to reach across the institution to support IE initiatives. Woolf also talks about the opportunity, with leadership encouragement, to innovate in the private sector of IE, including challenging education abroad orthodoxies - as a "counter-thinker" - on behalf of a major study abroad provider. Merkx had President and Provost support when he came to Duke to extend his leadership from Latin American and area studies at the University of New Mexico to the "entire institution" at Duke - a much harder task. However, when the Provost decided to advocate for establishing Duke campuses abroad, he and Merkx parted ways, and Merkx was asked to resign his SIO position.

A widely understood fact of life in higher education is that, without presidential support, real and sustainable institutional change is virtually impossible. And a change in leadership, as Jack Van de Water, long-time SIO at Oregon State University, wrote in 2006, when senior leadership changes - or changes priorities - much of the SIO's prior work is "'out the window.'" These four cases, each in his/her own way, demonstrate once again the truth of both sides of this observation.

The Good News: International education has become more professionalized and thus has opened up leadership paths in the field - especially for women - that weren't there twenty or thirty years ago. All four of these leaders have worked at multiple institutions and outside higher education altogether - but ultimately focusing on IE partnerships. Moreover, as Merkx points out, the fact of accelerating globalization will inevitably require higher education to increase global engagement, if in distinct patterns based on the mission of each institution.

Clouds on the Horizon: As in the previous article in this series, these long-time IE leaders see clouds on the horizon for the future of the field. Regarding globalization itself, Woolf agrees that globalization is a relevant theme for the entire field, but only if it is linked to such issues as social justice and access to education. McCarthy sees aspects of both short-term study abroad ("American education with a set around it") and poorly thought out international student recruitment as continuing evidence that collaboration for comprehensive internationalization is not even close to a reality on many campuses. Likewise, Sutton sees IE avoiding some key ethical issues - including the impact of brain drain on developing countries, unequal institutional partnerships and the pursuit of essentially meaningless global rankings.

Perhaps of greater concern, Merkx sees international education losing momentum across higher education. In particular, the high turnover of senior leadership in higher education means that sustaining the internationalization process is increasingly challenging. (Note: Some of the issues relating to IE careers are presented in his recent volume, edited with Rial Nolan, *Internationalizing the Academy: Lessons of Leadership in Higher Education* (Harvard Education Press, 2015)). There is even some evidence that globalization itself - as evidenced by nativist politics and slowing global trade - may not be as profound a driver in the future as it has been in recent decades.

In light of these and other challenges, Merkx urges international educators to be "realistic about the obstacles and idealistic about the goals" of their field. Good advice in the changing context of higher education worldwide.

IELeaders.net

**Resources • Insights • Inspiration for Senior
International Educators**

Tel.: 520.784.1068
Email: info@ieleaders.net

Note: The next IELeaders.net posting on the AIEA interviews will feature Hans de Wit, Nico Jooste, Philip Altbach, Joe Tulbane, William Brustein and Sylvain St-Amand.

IELeaders.net

**Resources • Insights • Inspiration for Senior
International Educators**

Tel.: 520.784.1068
Email: info@ieleaders.net