

Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA)
**THE SIO PROFILE: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY ON
SENIOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION OFFICERS, THEIR INSTITUTIONS
AND OFFICES (2020)**

Preliminary Analysis and Summary

AIEA was able to continue its survey of institutional members considered to be the Senior Institutional Officer (SIO) at their institutions during the turbulent 2020. AIEA adopted the term SIO to describe individuals within an institution of higher education who are charged with leading and facilitating its internationalization efforts. AIEA recognizes that many other terms may be used to reference these leaders, depending on the context and country (examples include International Relations Officer, International Relations Manager, International Liaison Officer, and so on (see www.aieaworld.org). This survey is an update of similar surveys conducted in 1999, 2006, 2011, 2014, and 2017 by AIEA. Of the 605 possible respondents, 200 completed the survey. Following is a preliminary summary of some of the survey results.

This summary updates information on the SIO position at higher education institutions (HEIs) as an effort to provide a snapshot of this leadership position within the professional and academic fields of International Education.

The survey was conducted at the end of 2020 and obtained a response rate of over 33%. Of the 200 completed responses, between 162 and 200 valid responses were included in the final results. Some responders did not answer all the questions. Of those responding, 67.2% were from public higher education institutions (HEIs) and 32.3% were from private not-for-profit HEIs, and 0.5% were from private for-profit HEIs, nearly all from the United States. Over half of the respondents (61 %) were from doctoral universities (R1, R2, R3), while 20% were from master's institutions (M1, M2, M3), 9% were from baccalaureate institutions, 3% offered associate degrees and 1% were specialized institution. The rest were institution located outside the U.S. or classifications was not included in the survey. About one third of the reporting institutions ranged from 5001-15,000 students (30%), another quarter ranged in size from 15,001-30,000 (24%), and the rest was split between smaller school size ranging from less than 1001 to 5000 students (15%), and larger school size of over 30,000 students (30%).

Institutional Context for Internationalization. Of those HEIs responding, a little under a quarter (22%) indicated that internationalization was not only in their mission statements but given a high priority at their institutions, and 40% of respondents indicated that internationalization was given a high priority in institutional strategic plans. A third (30%) noted that international goals and activities were mentioned in institutional mission statements while 34% indicating that such international goals and activities are not explicitly mentioned in institutional mission statements. Over half (53%) of those responding have internal and/or external internationalization advisory boards, while over one third have no advisory board (36%). In 2020, 23% of respondents noted that there were multiple SIOs at their institutions as compared to nearly one-third (29%) in 2011, 19% in 2014, and 25% in 2017.

SIO Title and Salary. In this 2020 survey, the most common title used for SIOs was that of “Director or Executive Director” (36%). This was followed by 29% reporting the use of the title “Associate or Assistant Vice President/Chancellor/Provost.” The third most common title was “Vice President/Chancellor/Provost” at 14%. The salary range for SIOs in 2020 ranged from less than \$75,000 (9 %) to above \$200,000 (23%). Over 47% of respondents’ salary range between \$75,000 and \$150,000.

Salary Range	RESPONSES
Less than \$75,000 annually	9.68%
\$75,001-\$100,000	16.67%
\$100,001-\$125,000	15.05%
\$125,001-\$150,000	15.59%
\$150,001-\$175,000	11.83%
\$175,001-\$200,000	8.60%
Above \$200,000	22.58%

SIO Reporting Structure. As for reporting structure, most SIOs (59%) report to a Vice President/Chancellor/Provost of Academic Affairs. No other reporting line came close. The next level was at 11% who report to the President/Chancellor or CEO. Over 53% reported that there has been no significant change in the way their institutions structure international programs and offices in the last three years, with the majority reporting centralization/consolidation internationalization structure (63%). The most significant change reported in the last year was budget decreased (73%).

Almost three quarter (70%) reported no significant changes in the SIO position at their institutions in the last three years. The most common theme respondents observed is that the SIO position has become more central, prominent, expanded and relevant at higher education institutions, with more emphasis given to student recruitment/enrollment. This majority also see the growing importance of the SIO position in the future, with an ever increasing complex and institutional-wide role. At a personal level, approximately 4% of respondents aspire to become president while almost 6% aspire to become provost.

SIO Gender, Age, Degree. Of those responding, female SIOs are now more prevalent at almost 55%, while male SIOs comprise 45%. In terms of age, the largest group of SIOs were in the age category of 56-60 (22%), the rest were fairly divided at between 13% and 17% in the age range of 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, and 61-65. Over 76% of SIOs in this survey has a doctorate or professional degree, with over half (66%) does not hold a tenured positions.

SIO Experience. Almost 46% of respondent have been in an SIO position for five years or less, with 23% having been an SIO for 6-10 years, 19% had 11- 15 years of SIO experience and the remaining 12% had more than 15 years of experience as an SIO. However, over 42% have been involved in the international education field for over 20 years. Only 5% have been in their current SIO position for more than 15 years, while the majority 61% have been in their current SIO position for 5 years or less.

SIO Responsibilities. The top three primary SIO responsibilities are linkages/partnerships, strategic planning for internationalization and representing the institution in institutional dealings. By far, the largest area of secondary responsibility was area/international/language study, followed by Research and Grants and/or Fundraising.

Valued Characteristics for SIOs. Knowledge of understanding institutional culture and context was the most valued knowledge area by SIOs (84%), followed by international issues in higher education (79%), and knowledge of and leadership knowledge (62%).

The most valued experiences were those of managing an organization (75%), followed by academic administration (72%) and managing budget/finance (54%).

Meanwhile, the most valued skills of an SIO were interpersonal skills (68%), followed by planning/visioning skills (66%) and intercultural competence (45%).

The top two personal characteristics valued in SIOs were vision (55%) and energy/passion (49%), followed by diplomacy (49%), flexibility (38%), and creativity (35%).

SIO Challenges. The overwhelming challenge named by SIOs completing the survey was that of resources or funding. Other challenges frequently mentioned include enrollment/study abroad participation, political environment, personnel/staffing, faculty/admin. “buy-in, ” decentralization, balancing constituency demands, securing institutional commitment, and institutional leadership turnover.

Implication/Findings. Of those responding to this survey, over half were female (55%) and the majority of respondents were from the age categories from age 46 to 60 (56%), meaning that the prevailing image of an SIO being a male in his 60s is no longer the norm. Given that 46% of those completing this survey have been an SIO for five years or less, AIEA would do well to provide increased professional development targeted to newer SIOs. Such professional development should take into account the top three reported SIO responsibilities as partnerships, institutional representations and strategic planning for internationalization, as well as the top 3 needed knowledge areas reported from this survey: international issues in higher education, understanding institutional culture and context, and leadership knowledge, and the top three skill

areas as interpersonal, visioning and intercultural competence. Thus, these are all topic areas for AIEA to address in professional development opportunities moving forward. In addition, the most valued experiences by SIOs were organizational management experience and academic administration. In 2020, 61% of respondents had 5 years or less in their current SIO position, when comparing surveys from 2012 (60%), 2014 (61%), and 2017 (46%) we can hypothesize that there is a continuous new SIOs entering the field or current SIOs are very mobile.

The information gathered from this survey is by no means comprehensive, as only current members of AIEA were involved, so this provides a limited and biased snapshot of leaders in campus internationalization. Another limitation of the study was that the questions were kept largely the same as the past AIEA surveys for comparability. More data are needed and in a more consistent basis in order to develop better benchmarks to assist higher education institutions on information regarding hiring, compensation, and structuring their campus internationalization leadership endeavors.

- Compiled by C.K. Kwai