

1 The Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

Challenges and Issues

*Ravichandran Ammigan, Roy Y. Chan, and
Krishna Bista*

Abstract

This chapter gives an overview of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in higher education and how colleges and universities have changed and adjusted along with new technology and challenges. In this book, we have tried to respond to the growing need for new insights and perspectives to improve higher education policy and practice in the era of COVID-19. The need to understand the impact of COVID-19 on higher education is more urgent as institutions seek to innovate and adapt during times of uncertainty.

Keywords:

higher education; COVID-19; issues and challenges; globalization

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic due to alarming levels of spread, severity, and inaction around the globe (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). In an attempt to contain the virus, the United States and several other countries went into a state of public health emergency, imposing national lockdowns and bans on public gathering and travel (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). As the health crisis unfolded, educational institutions were forced to abruptly switch to remote and online learning after closing down their campuses and suspending in-person class instruction. Health and safety protocol had to be put in place and communicated to the campus community; large-scale, in-person events such as career fairs, orientation programs, and engagement activities were canceled; and the level of fear and public pressure had to be carefully managed with data-driven insights and guidance (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Without question, the education sector continues to be one of the worst-hit by the pandemic, affecting opportunities

for growth and development for over 1.5 billion students (or 91% of the world's school population) at all educational levels (UNESCO Global Education Coalition, 2021).

The COVID-19 outbreak has been characterized as the biggest test of resilience and relevance for higher education institutions in recent times, requiring innovative, risk-mitigating responses that ensure access to learning and the safety of all students (Fraser-Moleketi, 2021). With very little training and time to prepare for remote teaching, institutions scrambled to find different options of pedagogical approaches in synchronous or asynchronous environmental conditions as well as evaluation methods, all adding to the stresses and workloads of faculty and academic staff (Dhawan, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). The overwhelming challenges of e-learning faced by educators, administrators, and students alike can be broadly linked to issues around accessibility, affordability, flexibility, learning pedagogy, and educational policy (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

Over the past year, the landscape of higher education has changed dramatically. Substantial modifications in most aspects of teaching, learning, and campus life have eventually led to declines in student enrollment and net tuition, creating financial pressures and strained labor relations among faculty, staff, and administrators (Grawe, 2021). With the shutdown of residence halls and dining services, social and engagement facilities, conferences, and intercollegiate sports programs, among other in-person programs and businesses, the long-term financial impact from the loss of revenue has started to weigh in for many universities. The economic loss is estimated by the American Council on Education to exceed \$120 billion for American colleges and universities, including furloughs, layoffs, and reductions in retirement benefits (Nietzel, 2020).

From a global learning and mobility standpoint, many study abroad programs came to a stop in 2020 due to restricted international travels and heightened health and safety risks. According to the Institute of International Education, most US institutions canceled travel for US students, both international (71%) and domestic (48%), with 93% of study abroad programs canceled entirely or in part last year (Martel, 2020). In the other direction, international student enrollment, which normally injects \$44 billion and 460,000 jobs into the local US economy each year, dropped by 43% in fall 2019 due to travel bans, health and safety concerns, visa delays, and complex immigration policies (Baer & Martel, 2020). It remains unclear what the future of international education at colleges and universities will be, considering how critical global learning programs and student exchanges are to the competitiveness of American higher education.

For students, their college lives have been significantly upended. In addition to having to adapt to a new learning environment, factors such as fear about their safety and that of their loved ones, decreased social interactions, and disruptions to their academic performance and progress have contributed to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive thoughts (Son et al., 2020). The long-lasting situation has also taken a financial toll on students, with

many losing their on-campus jobs and others being impacted by the financial hardships experienced by their family (Lederer et al., 2021). Students who are already marginalized and discriminated against have sadly suffered the most from school closures and online instruction, considering that not all students have access to a computer, the internet, or a safe and quiet environment to study in (Arnove, 2020). In the United States, students of color, particularly Asian Americans and Asian international students, continue to face increased discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatization during the pandemic, fueled partly by various social, political, and policy factors (Harper, 2020).

The Current Situation

A year into the global pandemic, we are still uncertain as to how the COVID-19 crisis will reshape our society and drive innovation and advancement, especially in higher education (Kang, 2021). While some believe that the way in which higher education is delivered in the future will change permanently from face-to-face to a more aspirational online or hybrid mode of instruction, others have expressed a “renewed appreciation” for in-person classroom learning and expect institutions to revert back to their traditional academic model after the pandemic is contained (Ewing, 2021). In the meantime, however, policymakers and university administrators continue to invest time and resources into identifying effective information and communication technologies and virtual support services that enhance the e-learning experience of students, especially those who are underrepresented, vulnerable, and disadvantaged (Farnell et al., 2021). Balancing health and safety concerns with financial and enrollment considerations, institutions are actively developing plans to reopen their campuses as quickly and as securely as possible.

By the time this book is published, it is very likely that the world will be in a different place again—facing emerging challenges and finding answers in our fight against the virus. Regardless of whether regular classes and campus activities resume this coming fall, it is important that institutions consider a number of factors as they engage the university community in planning ahead. In keeping the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff as a priority, Lederer et al. (2021) offer four distinct recommendations to educational administrators as they continue to support students’ experiences and success. First, survey the campus community about their experiences and use the assessment findings to identify institutional priorities and guide the decision-making process. Second, employ a holistic communication strategy via web, social media, and email to clearly and concisely disseminate reliable and scientifically based guidance and preventative measures about COVID-19 to the campus community. Third, prioritize and adapt student support services, such as health and counseling centers, wellness and engagement centers, academic support units, student affairs departments, multicultural centers, and international student offices, to increase access, reach a wider audience, and support the success of all students. And last, establish and implement student services and resources through a diversity, equity, and inclusion

lens to ensure a welcoming and supportive campus climate for students and employees of all backgrounds, and especially those who are marginalized and underrepresented.

While there has been a heavy reliance on technology and information systems during the COVID-19 era, a new report from the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence highlights the importance of ethical development in technology that promotes work and collaboration across cultures in order to solve the critical challenges that impact the world in a collective and equitable way (Veerasingam & Rasmussen, 2021). This points to a direct implication for institutions to provide adequate and intentional training for faculty and staff not only to increase proficiency in technology and evaluation methods but also toward intercultural and global competence in relation to course design. When institutions decide to fully resume their academic operations, evidence of faculty and staff preparedness in terms of professionalism, technical ability, and cultural awareness will be essential in what we expect to be a highly competitive environment to recruit and retain talented students (Rapanta et al., 2020). Humanizing the student experience at all levels of the institutional setting and building an engaged community among students and across cultures must remain a priority as we move forward, even when technology is driving the process (Liu & Ammigan, 2021).

Themes and Structure of the Book

This book includes 14 chapters organized into three sections. The first section addresses some recent fundamental issues and challenges in higher education that educators have experienced as results of COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 1, editors Ammigan, Chan, and Bista give a general overview of the book projects, larger themes, and scope of the book, and present urgency of selected contributions in the volume. In Chapter 2, Silveus and Ekpe explore leadership styles that played significant roles during the COVID-19 at the institutions of higher education. In Chapter 3, Nguyen, Tran, and Tra focus on social responsibilities of universities in COVID-19 pandemic as a major component of institutional transformation. In Chapter 4, Muñiz and Borg discuss college admissions and enrollment issues that directly impact marginalized students, including students of color and students from low-income households, and how the concept of “Internationalization at Home” could be used to build inclusive practices in admissions and enrollment during and after the pandemic. In Chapter 5, Harry examines the financial ramifications of the coronavirus on athletic department operations, an important component of the higher education world .

In the second section, contributors bring academic issues such as graduate employability, research and mentoring, innovative teaching and learning, evolution in leadership, and emerging opportunities during and after the COVID-19. In Chapter 6, Kelly, Moore, and Lyons examine the relationship between exams and enhancing graduate employability through

three key skills: problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking during the COVID-19. In Chapter 7, Niño and Martínez II discuss how social distancing measures created new possible ways for graduate students to continue their research and publication using technology platforms during the pandemic. In Chapter 8, Armour reviews the accommodations and experiences of students with disabilities and students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHOH) and called for considerations to disrupt the medical model of accommodations through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in higher education. In Chapter 9, O'Shea, Zhang and Mou examine how this pandemic impacts international students' plan of study in Canada and the United States, with their concern for the expense and experience of online learning and their consideration of other alternative destination countries. In Chapter 10, Bai presents a case study documenting funding issues in higher education which has been public institutions to be more proactive to their diversity and inclusive missions.

The final section of the book brings together hope and prospect addressing public health and wellbeing, future global collaboration, and our academic relationships with dignity and humanity. In Chapter 11, Njoku highlights the need for public health curriculum to address racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 and to prepare and motivate a future healthcare workforce. In Chapter 12, Anzaldúa presents a trauma-informed human rights (TIHR) perspective to post-secondary education systems to maximize mental health and academic benefits for present and future college students. In Chapter 13, Minaeva and Marinoni present a strong case of how COVID-19 pandemic became an opportunity for global collaboration for seeking solutions to the virus at the same time when it is creating chaos and disorder in societies. In the final chapter, Liu and Ammigan present an exemplary case of how interactive and innovative use of information and communication technologies offer rewarding humanistic experiences to global learners during the pandemic.

Guiding Questions

We anticipate that the chapters in this book will empower educators, administrators, practitioners, policymakers, and families with new ideas, principles, and advice that they can apply this academic year and beyond. To conclude, we leave our readers with a few guiding questions as they begin to peruse the book:

- How do we meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's students during the COVID-19 era?
- How do we rearticulate the value of global education after the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How do we innovate and develop effective curricula and co-curricular post-COVID-19?
- How do we foster collaboration and support in uncertain times?

- How do we handle health, safety, well-being, and crisis management during the COVID-19 restrictions?
- How do we articulate justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and intercultural learning in the COVID-19 era?

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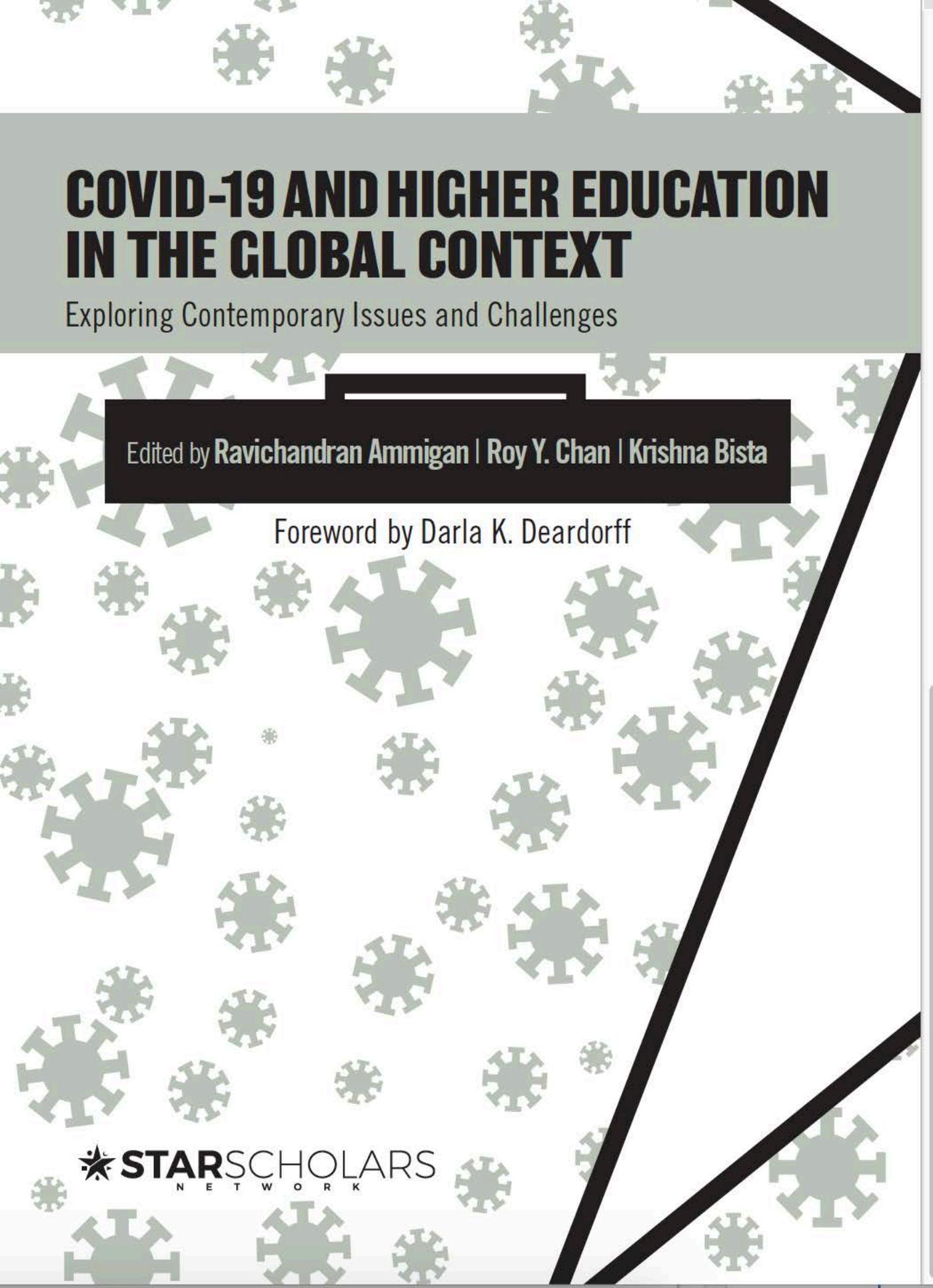
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COVID-19 AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

Edited by **Ravichandran Ammigan | Roy Y. Chan | Krishna Bista**

Foreword by Darla K. Deardorff

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Praise for this book

This book is a must-read for all university leaders and senior managers to enable them to get a better insight into the numerous challenges facing academia in the new normal, where it is not only about academic excellence but also about the human dimension through the enhanced use of technology.

—Dhanjay Jhurry, Professor and Vice-Chancellor,
University of Mauritius, Mauritius

This thought-provoking book captures contemporary changes to higher education at the micro and macro level post-2020. Stakeholders across the sector will benefit from reading the research-driven chapters that are stimulating and insightful. The book interrogates and challenges ways in which internationalization and global mobility can be re-imagined.

—Dawn Joseph, Associate Professor,
Deakin University, Australia

This book shows a more intensive and multi-faceted response by the higher education community to the pandemic that one might have expected. Attention is paid notably to sustain international life on campus.

—Ulrich Teichler, Professor Emeritus,
International Centre for Higher Education Research,
University of Kassel, Germany

This volume is a welcome addition to the literature on international Higher Education produced during the COVID-19 era. With a sensitively chosen array of topics, it shows new thinking around internationalisation, which is encouraging for all, and is exactly what is needed.

—Amanda C. Murphy, Professor and Director,
Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation,
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy

With the COVID-19 pandemic seeing no end in sight and its effects on international higher education for students around the world yet unknown, the importance of this timely book cannot be overstated. At a time when we are

literally awash in countless editorials prognosticating on *possible* implications of this health catastrophe, it is refreshing to get a carefully collected series of essays that step back, take a deep breath, and bring us back to the fundamental questions we need to be asking at this most dangerous time for humanity.

—Bernhard Streitwieser, IEP Program
Director & Associate Professor of International
Education & International Affairs,
George Washington University, USA

This is a valuable addition to higher education for understanding the complexities that COVID-19 introduced into the academic landscape. This volume explores valuable topics and issues such as employability, research and mentoring, innovative teaching and learning, and emerging opportunities during the pandemic.

—Jane E. Gatewood, Vice Provost for Global
Engagement, University of Rochester, USA

This timely book is much needed for practitioners, scholars, and policy makers who are grappling with the challenges created by the pandemic. The book is comprehensive given the depth and breath of topics. The human centric approach is refreshing.

—Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life &
Inclusive Excellence, American University, USA

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges

COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges addresses the lasting impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the higher education sector and offers insights that inform policy and practice. Framed in a global context, this timely book captures a wide variety of topics, including student mobility, global partnerships and collaboration, student health and wellbeing, enrollment management, employability, and graduate education. It is designed to serve as a resource for scholar-practitioners, policymakers, and university administrators as they reimagine their work of comparative and international higher education in times of crisis. The collection of chapters assembled in this volume calls for a critical reflection on the opportunities and challenges that have emerged as a result of the global pandemic, and provides as a basis for how tertiary education systems around the world can learn from past experiences and shared viewpoints as institutions recalibrate operations, innovate programs, and manage change on their respective campuses.

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Exploring Contemporary Issues and
Challenges

**Edited by
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**In memory of those who lost their lives during the
COVID-19 pandemic worldwide**

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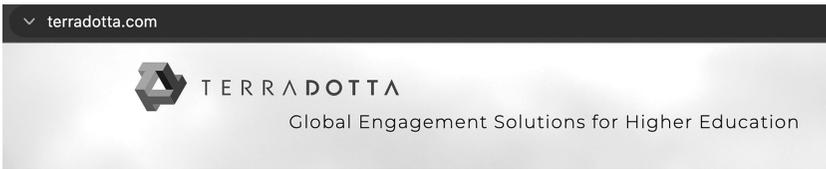
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Foreword

Darla K. Deardorff

The COVID-19 pandemic has represented a unifying challenge globally, providing a defining era in human existence as the pandemic upended life as we know it. *COVID-19 and Higher Education in the Global Context: Exploring Contemporary Issues and Challenges*, edited by Ammigan, Chan, and Bista, delves into the pandemic's impact on higher education around the world. Such an exploration empowers “educators, administrators, practitioners, policy makers, and families” with ideas and guidance that not only can be applied in the current context but also in the post-COVID future.

As the world emerges from the COVID pandemic, it is good to remember the signs of hope that have been there all along from the small gestures of kindness to the heroic efforts of those on the frontlines, from strangers lifting their voices together in song across balconies as the pandemic began with the later Jerusalema dance challenge that swept around the world, even as the pandemic was raging. This pandemic has shown us that we are all truly interconnected, for better or for worse. Desmond Tutu reminds us that we are all in this together and that our humanity is bound up together. We are members of one human family, and when some members are hurting, we all are hurt. He goes on to say, “For us to engage in the practices that will ensure that we all prosper, we must come to know that each of us is linked in the chain of our common humanity.”

As we move into the light of a new day, there is radical hope in truly embracing our shared humanity. Let's seek to see ourselves in others. Let's seek to see the whole picture through discovering others' perspectives beyond our own. Let's seek to see the invisible among us and to remember the power of being seen and heard. As we do so, we can reflect on some of the following questions:

- What do I know about my neighbors?
- Do I make an effort to learn more?
- What are others' perspectives and can I articulate those?
- What are the connections I see in others to my own experiences?
- How much do I really listen for understanding and seek first to understand?

Higher education provides opportunities for students to explore these and other questions, as universities seek to educate global citizens. As we have come to understand more poignantly over the last year that we are indeed part of one global community, we need to remember that education is more than employment or even graduating global citizens—in the end, it is about how we come together as neighbors both locally and globally, to build a better future together. We can make choices every day that help make the world better for all. As Tutu noted, “When we step into our neighborhoods, we can engage in the practices of good neighborliness or we can choose not to. The quality of life on our planet now and in the future will be determined by the small daily choices that we make as much as by the big decisions in the corridors of power.” As we move forward into a post-pandemic era, we must remember that actions matter and what we do impacts others. What daily actions will we take to support the most vulnerable among us? To improve the quality of life for others? How will we uphold justice and dignity for all in the human family? In the end, how will we be good neighbors to each other?

Let us commit to taking action to address the racial injustices and inequities faced by our neighbors. Let us commit to being a good neighbor, as we live in authentic solidarity with each other, aspiring to be compassionate, generous, and kind, knowing that we can find our greatest joy in showing love to all and that in doing so, we are embracing the oneness of our humanity.

Bio

Darla K. Deardorff is the Executive Director of the Association of International Education Administrators, a national professional organization based in Durham, North Carolina, USA. She is also a research scholar with the Social Science Research Institute at Duke University, where she has been an adjunct faculty member in the Program in Education and a faculty affiliate with International/Comparative Studies. In addition, she is an Adjunct Professor at North Carolina State University, a Visiting Research Professor at Nelson Mandela University in South Africa, and at Meiji University Research Institute of International Education (RIIE) in Japan as well as visiting faculty at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) in China. Dr. Deardorff has served on faculty of Harvard University’s Future of Learning Institute as well as Harvard University’s Global Education Think Tank, in addition to being on faculty at the Summer Institute of Intercultural Communication in Portland, Oregon. She has also been an affiliated faculty at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, and Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan) in the United Kingdom and taught at Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. She receives numerous invitations from around the world (in over 30 countries including in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Australia, and Asia) to speak on her research and work on intercultural competence and international education assessment, and is a noted expert on these topics, being named a Senior Fulbright Specialist (to South Africa and to Japan).

Dr. Deardorff has published widely on topics in international education, global leadership, and intercultural learning/assessment, and has published eight books including as editor of *The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (Sage, 2009) as well as lead editor of *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* (Sage, 2012) with Hans de Wit, John Heyl and Tony Adams, *Building Cultural Competence* (Stylus, 2012) with Kate Berardo, and co-author of *Beneath the Tip of the Iceberg: Improving English and Understanding US American Cultural Patterns* (University of Michigan Press, 2011). She is also the author of the recently published book on *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International Educators: A Practical Approach* (Stylus, 2015) and co-editor of *Intercultural Competence in Higher Education: International Approaches, Assessment, Application* (Routledge, 2017) with Lily Arasaratnam-Smith. Her seventh book *Leading Internationalization* (Stylus, 2018) is with Harvey Charles, and her most recent book is *Manual on Developing Intercultural Competencies: Story Circles* (Routledge/UNESCO, 2019). E-mail: d.deardorff@duke.edu

