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## **Senior International Officers: Essential Roles and responsibilities**

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As internationalization efforts in higher education have grown in scale and impact over the last few decades, sound institutional leadership, policies, and practices that are rooted in a clear appreciation of the purpose of internationalization have become even more crucial for advancing socially responsible standards of success (Brandenburg et al., 2019). Areas such as developing a strategic plan for internationalization and fostering institutional partnerships globally are key responsibilities that require effective leadership and are critical for higher education institutions (Kwai, 2017). *Senior International Officers: Essential Roles and Responsibilities* is one of the few existing guides on the emerging role of the Senior International Officer (SIO),

an administrative position often tasked with the oversight of all matters relating to internationalization. For higher education leaders and administrators faced with a promise-filled but dynamic and challenging international education landscape, a publication such as this has the potential to be a valuable resource.

The topics addressed in this publication cover a wide range of educational leadership responsibilities particular to the role of the SIO. Higher education administrators will find the book beneficial for refining their internationalization goals and approaches regardless of whether internationalization efforts are at an emerging, intermediate, or advanced stage. The authors identify several strategic, operational, academic, and other core practices that need to be placed at the forefront of institutional priorities. Since contexts and resources for internationalization vary across colleges and universities, these practices are sometimes implemented

independently under a decentralized structure. Alternatively, several of them can be deployed under a unified approach in which the internationalization strategy is also integrated into overarching institutional priorities. The SIO's role is thus integral in order to "carefully align internationalization with the overarching strategy of the institution; failure to do so places the SIO and all internationalization efforts at risk for marginalization" (Di Maria, 2019, p. 5). As Chapter 4 on international strategy development illustrates, an integrated approach has value for garnering support from institutional leadership, thereby maximizing resources and relationships toward achieving not just internationalization goals but overall institutional goals.

As international relations continue to evolve in the face of unfolding transitions and tensions around the globe, the SIO position is increasingly critical in its responsibility for establishing global competence as an educational priority for students and for growing international relationships with partners abroad, among other internationalization responsibilities. While the preparation and qualifications required for the role have traditionally varied across institutions (Di Maria, 2019; Kwai, 2017), this variation in backgrounds potentially adds to the richness of the skills and experiences that can be brought together to form and strengthen coalitions in international education leadership. However, as the field has evolved, the SIO roles, responsibilities, and attributes described in the first chapter as well as the key practices addressed in the remaining chapters point to a shift toward a more standard preparation and professional training path to entering the SIO position. This is due to a better recognition of the specialized nature of the skills and competencies required to effectively execute core areas of responsibility, be they strategy development, curriculum internationalization, international education, or international research (among others).

Whether the SIO has extensive experience with internationalization or is expected to grow into their role, this publication should be recommended reading for administrators and staff of international education offices looking to expand the breadth of their experiences. While the intended audience of this book is primarily leaders and administrators at the SIO level, the content also holds value for other individuals serving under a different designation, capacity, or organizational structure involved in defining the trajectory of internationalization at their institutions. This includes faculty and other scholars, staff, and students who, with the aid of this guide, will have ample preparation to research, locate, and seek out the resources and support needed to strengthen internationalization at their institutions.

With contributions from varied leaders who possess direct experience at the helm of internationalization efforts, the book presents guidance supported with examples from the contributors' experiences. By laying out best practices, challenges, and lessons learned by these individuals, each chapter articulates specific institutional contexts as well as possible use cases that may be applicable to varying contexts for which societal development through the internationalization of education is a unifying goal. Some of these recommended practices include careful consideration of institutional priorities for internationalization during the SIO hiring process to ensure fit between the institution and the SIO's methods (Chapters 1 and 5). Assessing these institutional priorities, their positioning relative to global trends in internationalization, as well as the integration and impact of current

internationalization programs on academics, research, and community engagement, have also been identified as being pivotal in developing international strategy (Chapters 4 and 11). Tracking and showcasing impact is also vital in demonstrating the value of internationalization for the overall growth of the institution.

Structured upon four core pillars—strategy, administration, faculty and academics, and partnerships and outreach—the selection of topics represented in the chapters collectively define the necessary interplay of well-grounded leadership, management, curriculum development, social engagement, and other components in advancing internationalization goals. The SIO thus has an advisor on these functional areas of responsibility in each chapter. Not only that, the chapters address often underemphasized areas of international education leadership such as support for global operations and internationalization of research. Further guidance is provided in two appendices—an immigration services checklist with step-by-step instructions and a compilation of relevant professional associations, meetings, and tools.

The contributions are supported with research literature but also document progress in the field by presenting the range of programs that have been put in place by colleges, universities, professional bodies, and scholars in the internationalization arena. Together, they prescribe a set of approaches and principles crucial for moving colleges and universities in a desired direction of well-rounded internationalized education and meaningful societal impact. In addition to serving as a reference resource with practical strategies and examples, the contributions also offer insights into shifts that are on the internationalization horizon and possible opportunities and challenges that could emerge as a result. Trends like the growth of international research collaborations and the expansion of academic and other institutional offerings internationally via technology-based channels such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), are identified as opportunities that should inform institutional strategy. As higher education institutions around the world are thrust into, and research into, new political, economic, and global health-related realities and their attendant effects on education and international relations, it behooves each to reassess and redefine its strategy for the future. This book provides a launching pad for taking stock of current and emerging approaches to internationalization in higher education while also signaling the need for further resources and support, strengthening the vital role of the SIO in its societal reach and impact.

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