

Introduction

*Laura E. Rumbley, Robin Matross Helms,
Patti McGill Peterson, and Philip G. Altbach*

Higher education leaders today are recognizing the need to develop an international strategy for their institutions but may lack the knowledge and perspective required to inform good decisions. Students are graduating into an increasingly integrated international environment that, while offering exciting opportunities, also presents many challenges. Faculty are challenged by the need to exercise greater stewardship over a globally oriented curriculum. They are also interested in expanding international research networks and collaborative projects. Institutions must create educational environments where students will begin to appreciate the complexity of global integration and develop skills to navigate it successfully. International outreach and initiatives enrich institutional culture but must be based on good information and analysis.

To address this need, the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) in 2012 launched a publication and webinar series titled *International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders*. The purpose of the series is to assist campus leaders, particularly American college and university presidents, chief academic officers, and senior international officers, in their efforts to make sense of a broad and complex set of issues inherent in the internationalization of American higher education today. In an era of “information overload” and in light of the realities of time constraints faced by busy institutional leaders, each *Brief* publication is organized around one clearly defined topic. The *Briefs* are also presented in a highly readable format, consisting of 10-12 articles of 1,000-1,300 words in length, on various dimensions of the primary subject matter.

In order to provide readers with a relevant and compelling set of insights and perspectives on each *Brief* topic, the authors represent

a wide range of backgrounds, ranging from university presidents, to policymakers and scholars, to frontline administrators and program officers. Each has recognized expertise in different areas of the issues under consideration, and all are sensitive to the particularities of the American higher education context. They are concerned with presenting information and ideas that US institutional leaders might find most useful in their strategic decision-making processes.

Although the *Briefs* have largely been conceived to serve as resources for an American audience, the material they contain has much wider applicability. While contexts certainly vary by country, university leaders and policymakers everywhere face similarly pressing needs to understand the shape and scope of new internationalization trends and developments. They are also called upon to further their understanding of specific countries and regions where opportunities to engage are currently unfolding. The topics covered by the ACE-CIHE *Briefs*, therefore, resonate beyond the scope of any one particular national environment, and can be a useful resource for many higher education leaders around the world.

Current Content: Responding and Leading

Our first set of *Briefs* was designed to provide analysis of issues of pressing current interest—specifically, three significant countries/world regions and the broad theme of global engagement. The three countries/world regions included in this book—China, India, and the southern cone of Latin America—are among the most dynamic parts of the world for many reasons, but particularly in terms of their roles as sources of internationally mobile students. Together, they are the source of well over one-third of the world’s mobile student population. Opportunities for partnerships and other models of engagement are emerging, in some cases spurred by government initiatives and funding.

Despite the importance of these countries, however, their large and complex higher education systems represent uncharted territory for many—in universities, government agencies, and among faculty and students, as well. The *Briefs* dedicated to these specific parts of the world endeavor to stake out the most relevant data, core elements, and likely future directions of the higher education sectors in these parts of the world, in order to then provide informed insight into what all of this information means for international engagement prospects there.

In addition to *where* institutions are focusing their international energies, *how* they approach their work to internationalize and engage globally is a fundamental concern in the current conversation around internationalization in the United States, and elsewhere. For this

reason, the first “thematic” issue of the *Briefs* series zeroes in on the topic of “new modalities” for global engagement. Key questions raised here include such fundamentals as how one defines “global engagement” and where it fits into institutions’ missions and ethos. More specifically, the *Brief* provides perspectives on how global engagement plays out across various types of US institutions—including community colleges, research universities, liberal arts colleges, and others. The analysis also explores particular channels for engagement, such as international networks and consortia as well as growing interest in joint and double-degrees, among other modalities. Importantly, the lessons of “failure” are considered as well, as these experiences often provide some of the deepest learning for institutions and their constituents.

Overall, a primary purpose of the *International Briefs for Higher Education Leaders* series is to provide key data, contextual information, and practical advice for institutions seeking to initiate or expand their global engagement—in particular geographic areas as well as through new types of activities and initiatives. More broadly, however, the *Briefs* are built around the collective effort of ACE and CIHE—drawing on their extensive national and international knowledge networks—to uncover issues of emerging importance and help US higher education leaders understand their place in the global higher education landscape. By including information and perspectives from non-US sources on how American interests intersect (or not) with other countries’ objectives and approaches, as well as balanced assessments of what may be gained or lost by action or inaction in the face of evolving opportunities and imperatives, the *Briefs* seek to provide an in-depth, multifaceted picture of both the current lay of the land, and new developments on the horizon.

From *Briefs* to Book

The *Briefs* series has been well-received. Electronic copies were circulated originally to those who subscribed to ACE’s webinar series—which featured commentary and interactive audience conversation with 3 to 4 contributing authors. The *Briefs* are now freely available on the ACE Web site.

Each *Brief* issue easily stands alone, with a clear logic as a self-contained publication. Collectively, however, the four initial *Briefs* in the series offer readers a unique and rather expansive picture of several important dimensions of the internationalization and global engagement agenda of concern to American higher education leaders today, with resonance beyond these shores, as well. This book, therefore, can serve as a most helpful resource to a variety of constituents—those

with responsibilities for internationalization working in the American higher education context; those working with US college and university counterparts in this domain; non-US university leaders around the world with similar interests and concerns; and students and scholars of internationalization in higher education, seeking new insights and perspectives on this phenomenon.

There is much more work to be done to make sense of the many dimensions of internationalization and global engagement jostling for our collective attention. The *International Briefs for Higher Education* series will continue to address these issues; a fifth installment, on the subject of international joint and double-degree programs, is due to be published in 2015. For now, this book stands as an important first step in our ongoing effort to compile and conserve important aspects of our collective thinking on these dynamic issues of our time.

ACE and CIHE: Natural Collaborators

The American Council on Education (ACE) and the Boston College Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) have a long track record of work in the internationalization and international higher education realms. Since its establishment in 1995, CIHE has incorporated research and analysis on the issues of globalization and internationalization into its broad suite of publications and information dissemination activities. It has done so with a particular eye on marshaling leading-edge knowledge from around the world, not simply from one national context. ACE, as the most prominent higher education association in the United States, has for more than two decades served as a reference point for key questions about the international dimensions of American higher education. ACE has been particularly influential in terms of its work to “map” internationalization on US campuses, its efforts to support strategic planning on campuses for effective internationalization, leadership development for internationalization, as well as helping to frame the national discussion around the internationalization of higher education, both in terms of policy and practice.

In 2011, ACE’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Global Engagement released *Strength Through Global Leadership and Engagement: US Higher Education in the 21st Century* (ACE 2011), an analysis of American needs and interests in relation to various core elements of internationalization. This report highlighted the crucial need for US colleges and universities to “engage strategically and substantively with a globalized higher education environment and interconnected world” (ACE 2011, p. 7). It also called upon ACE to renew its efforts to provide cutting-edge leadership

in this area. Meanwhile, ACE's 2012 report, *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* (ACE 2012), revealed that progress is being made across some dimensions, but that other aspects of internationalization lagged behind—for example in the area of faculty support/recognition, and curricular requirements for undergraduate students.

The momentum created by the Blue Ribbon Panel and “Mapping” reports, as well as the establishment of ACE's Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE), has provided impetus for a series of new ACE-led initiatives in the last few years. As a group, these initiatives are designed to expand the range of support provided to American higher education institutions to advance their international agendas in smart, principled, and sustainable ways. An important aspect of this work is a commitment to meeting the needs of the stakeholders involved—particularly at the level of strategic decision makers—for current information and thoughtful analysis about key issues related to the internationalization enterprise.

Given their respective resources and expertise, ACE and CIHE recognized that partnering would be an ideal way to advance well-informed conversations about international issues in higher education. Indeed, a wide range of topics could be addressed in a highly authoritative way by leveraging the scope and capacity of the combined networks of ACE and CIHE. While ACE's membership provides important insights into the needs and priorities of US higher education leaders, CIHE offers easy access to an extensive array of individuals with topic- and country-specific expertise. Together, our two organizations are well positioned to expand our baseline understanding of the many dimensions of internationalization in US higher education and beyond. We look forward to ongoing collaboration between the two organizations and to assisting with collaboration among institutions of higher education worldwide.

References

- American Council on Education. 2011. *Strength through global leadership and engagement: US higher education in the 21st century*. Washington, DC: ACE.
- American Council on Education. 2012. *Mapping internationalization on U.S. campuses*. Washington, DC: ACE.