



Consistently Engaged: An Exploration of the Intersection of Justice, Equity, Inclusion and Internationalization



Overview

The Ohio State University hosted this AIEA Thematic forum through virtual participation with partner institutions that include: the American Council on Education (ACE), Pennsylvania State University and Tampere University, Finland. The panelists shared European and US perspectives and approaches for tackling contemporary critical issues, and compared lessons learned.

Specifically, this AIEA thematic forum aimed to explore how justice, equity, inclusion and internationalization intersect, and to give higher education professionals tools and strategies for enhancing global-mindedness and for deepening their community's understanding of discrimination and prejudice. The following report will breakdown key insights from each session and compile resources to move forward.

To view the full program details, click [here](#). A repository of relevant readings is available at u.osu.edu/aieaforum. We welcome your insights in the comment section.



Creating An Equal & Inclusive International Academic Community: Learning from the Finnish Context

THIS PANEL AIMED TO IDENTIFY SUSTAINABLE MECHANISMS FOR PROVIDING INCLUSIVE AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNERS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND LANGUAGE SKILLS.

- **Kaisa Kurki** (Moderator)
- **Juha Taperi**
- **Elisa Sinikallio**
- **Heli Tiltinen**
- **Aliisa Toivanen**
- **Laura Kaipia**

In Finland, the current Government Programme includes the preparation of an accessibility plan for the higher education sector. The plan will examine accessibility in higher education from the perspectives of socio-economic status, regions, gender, immigrant background, ethnic groups, language groups and people with disabilities. According to the current Vision for Higher Education 2030, the aim is to raise the percentage of higher education graduates from the current 41% to 50% of all 25 to 34-year-olds by 2030. Therefore, the question whether Finnish higher education offer equality and non-discrimination to everyone and whether they respond adequately to the needs of different students is more than timely.

Finland was evaluated for the fourth time in a row as the happiest country in the world, with equality and education playing a large role.

"The aim of the Finnish education and cultural policy is to guarantee equal opportunities in high quality education, free of charge and conditions for full fledged citizenship."

Language plays an important role in equity, inclusion, and accessibility. The Finnish higher education sector consists of 13 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences, whose official language is either Finnish or Swedish, the second national language in Finland. When thinking of the higher education setting, it is good to bear in mind that foreign-born population as a percentage of total population is low, only 8 per cent. However, the share of international degree students is above the OECD average.

Finnish higher education institutions currently offer 400+ bachelors and masters level programs taught in English. The current vision aims to triple the number of foreign degree students by 2030, with 75% of these graduates finding a job in Finland.

The recent Finnish education policy report highlights that measures to support accessibility and inclusion of underrepresented groups require positive discrimination and attention to inclusion and diversity in higher education.

The panel addressed current policies studies, core challenges being faced in achieving inclusion, support instruments in place and their sustainability.

"Lack of buy-in within the academic community is not often expressed explicitly. It tends to be seen indirectly by the slowness of adopting new policies and not as easily identifiable resistance."

Core Challenges

- Various social structures in place shape, and often restrict, the interactions that faculty and staff have with each other.
- Teachers are not aware of issues of accessibility and diversity that students face, or different cultures and education systems that students come from.
- International students and other groups that face discrimination (such as students with disabilities) lack support for finding jobs or internships.
- Students with special needs expressed more negative results in finding support.
- Students lack opportunities to receive and give feedback on teaching and learning. They are not able to help shape course content or teaching methods to better cater to their diverse needs.
- Despite a recent study showing that one in every five students has faced harassment, there is no national standard for dealing with harassment.

"Student associations play an enormous role in creating a more equal university and student community by educating the associations and students."

Support Instruments

- Establishing initiatives that support immigrant students transitioning into university life through. Eg. SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) helps immigrant students learn Finnish language.
- Developing the practice of using written documents or shaping policies that serve as guidelines for addressing discrimination (e.g. equality instructions for events or accessibility information in event biographies).
- Encouraging and valuing minority participation as a driving force for the decision-making process so their concerns are recognized and addressed ahead of time rather than after the fact.
- Acknowledging that universities are not separate from the rest of society and taking up an active role in tackling social inequality through education.
- Including segments on ethics, diversity, equity in all curricula so that it is normalized within the academic context and across student experiences.
- Student associations must be educated to have a positive impact on the experience of minority students through trainings in equality, cross-cultural competency, preventing harassment etc.
- Creating spaces and opportunities to regularly ask minority students what their needs are, rather than assuming.

The Big Picture: Identifying Intersections and Impact

- **Robin Helms** (Moderator)
- **Chris R. Glass**
- **Alex Hughes**
- **Noelle W. Arnold**

This panel explored how social justice, equity and inclusion intersect with internationalization on multiple levels, including:

- The composition of student populations based on diverse identities
- The curriculum, teaching content and methodology or pedagogy
- The expected learning outcomes, and How institutions support and engage with local and global communities

Panelists examined these points from their perspectives as leaders, researchers and practitioners. They discussed how the pandemic, racial justice movements and other recent events have impacted their work, as well as challenges and expectations going forward.

Core Challenges

- Faculty see teaching non-native speakers and those who are not steeped in American academic culture as more burdensome in courses that are not related to cross-cultural studies.
- Institutions are not equipped to handle international students reporting pointed experiences of alienation and harassment from subtle instances to serious violent attacks.
- Marginalized students express a higher lack of confidence, access to resources, and support in general for their post graduate success.

"The pandemic, racial justice movements and other events being brought to attention this past year did not create new challenges for higher education, but revealed existing ones."

Key Insights

- In the United Kingdom, international mobility or study abroad has proven to have a beneficial effect on post graduate employment prospects and salaries, particularly for students from marginalized groups.
- Institutions have a higher rate of success in reshaping policies if they take a microscopic view into the ways that policies intended to be inclusive are interacting in exclusive ways.
- Intentionally placing global engagement and equity at the core of internationalization efforts can give rise to a new vision and opportunities for diversity, equality, and inclusion.
- When it comes to diversity and inclusion, context matters. Standardized solutions can do more harm than good.
- Instilling diversity audits as a tool for the university to evaluate and restructure inclusive teaching and practices.
- Exploring ways to be instrumental in addressing international issues across the spectrum and ensuring relevant individuals are a part of the decision-making process.
- Creating a senior level role for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion on campus to set goals and keep the university accountable to meeting them.

"Relationships between administration members and students should not be transactional, rather they should be human interactions of educational exchange."



Higher Education Leadership: Accelerating Internationalization, Justice, Equity and Inclusion

THIS PANEL AIMED TO IDENTIFY THE WAYS UNIVERSITY LEADERS, FACULTY, STAFF, AND STUDENTS CAN ASSEMBLE AND ORGANIZE A REPERTOIRE OF PROMISING PRACTICES THAT CREATE MORE DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE TEACHING AND LEARNING.

- **Penelope Pynes** (Moderator)
- **Andrew Gordon**
- **Maija Airas**
- **Tamara T Cunningham**
- **Phillips Thomas Hornbuckle**
- **Sheila Schulte**

The panelists discussed the need for a shift in the tone on justice, equity and inclusion within institutions. They highlighted the need for action-oriented policies and practices, where students actually are able to be a part of instituting the change that they require to feel safe and included on campus. **This starts by providing students a platform to be heard.**

"A change in the conversation has to take place with white folks and those with privilege."

The call for higher education leaders is to bridge the gap between students on campus across identities and spark dialogues that centers fighting for the collective humanity of students over the destiny of one group. This panel fleshed out challenges and key insights for keeping social justice, equity and access at the forefront of the discussion and mission of institutions. This positioning allows these values to resonate throughout university practices and policies. **The premise of this conversation was that different students need different types and levels of support—**there really isn't an average student. It is important for faculty and staff to be aware of these nuances.

Core Challenges

- There is an unspoken resistance to change that many diversity scholars face from university leadership.
- In the early stages of building change-oriented relationships, it is challenging to decipher who is an ally and who is not. Without allies, the programming and momentum for the necessary work cannot be efficiently done.
- There is a degree of skepticism that can develop amongst administration members and students when roadblocks are hit and there are not established ways of addressing reoccurring challenges to solutions (e.g., funding for diversity plans and programs).
- There is a need to elevate and center intersectionality to appropriately address all challenges faced by students with multiple and interacting identities.

Key Insights

- **Recognizing that different students need different types and levels of support—** there really isn't an average student. Each one's needs can be different.
- Knowing that university communities are tasked with rethinking and rephrasing to accommodate living in a more global world, we should not be separating the actuality of global mind set and the daily engagement with it on campus.
- Starting awareness campaigns where students provide input about cultural holidays or observances, whether they observe them or not, to facilitate an educational engagement across students, faculty and administration members.
- Changing what the definition of success looks like, especially with planned programming (e.g., who plans? what are the expectations we are creating?).

"Make sure you do something. It does not have to be the best. Don't let the idea of a best practice ruin the possibility of a good practice on your campus."

"Marginalized students come with grit and now it is time for both the students and the faculty to extend them grace."

- Transforming education to be anti-racist and anti-xenophobic has to become a norm as it is the way for the future. University curriculum must be in flux to meet changing needs. It must be willing to be shaped by what is happening to the students and the community at large .
- We have to do the best of what we have always done in terms of understanding each other including imbedded racism. On the contrary, these moments can be teaching moments that allow all people involved to grow and navigate anti-racism.

Cultural Differences, Diversity and Social Justice: Students' & Practitioners' Views

THE PANEL DISCUSSED CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, INTENTIONALITY AND VULNERABILITY, LESSONS LEARNED, AND THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED WHILE EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONAL NATURE OF LOCAL AND GLOBAL IDENTITIES.

- **Megan Lawther** (Moderator)
- **Roger Brindley**
- **Rick Lee**
- **Dan Thomas**
- **Mel White**

The panelists showcased students' views through a video montage and discussed existing and future programmatic initiatives intended to provide students with opportunities to engage with one another while developing global diversity and social justice perspectives. They emphasized the need for a collaborative spirit to bridge gaps and co-create an inclusive learning environment for foreign and domestic students experiencing marginalization.

"Enough talking about it. Let's be about it - together. This means finding new ways to think and systematically support student success."

Core Challenges

- It is difficult to achieve diversity on campus without diversity of the university community.
- Intercultural competence and responsiveness on campuses tend to be unaddressed without diversity students.
- Universities often miss the intersectional nature of issues that impact their students when they silo services.
- Even on a diverse campuses, the average international student that makes it to US campuses are part of their country's financial elite. It is challenging to build intentional ways of both US and international students.

Key Insights

- There is a false dichotomy between domestic and international students because universities tend to administratively separate them. These students have so much in common, which can be uncovered through stronger collaborations between the services.
- The elements that play a role in whether students feel welcomed or belonged on their campus go beyond the typical co-curricular activities. It includes campus employment positions, membership in other organizations and facilitating spaces with across student groups.
- Marginalized students (be it international or domestic) are demanding and responding to an environment that was not built to serve them. How we meet their demands for personal success greatly influences their ability to reach it.
- Structuring a campus climate where all marginalized students feel safe goes beyond the Office of Student Life or any single office — it includes all critical stakeholders such as resident life, meal organizers, financial aid office, international office, diversity and inclusion office to just name a few.
- Access to education abroad should be more intentionally available to minority students.
- Only by recognizing the diversity in our community and viewing issues from different perspectives can we address the myriad problems we face today with solutions that are effective and lasting.

"Find the people in your community that you want to work with and find out how you can partner with them."



IN THIS SESSION, STUDENTS FROM PARTNER INSTITUTIONS IN THE BIG TEN, SHARED THEIR EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS ABOUT DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION ON THEIR CAMPUSES.

CLOSING REMARKS



THE SPEAKERS HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT WHILE MORE CONVERSATIONS ARE BEING HAD AROUND DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION, THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS FOLLOWED BY TANGIBLE ACTIONS AND RESULTS.

"Collectively, what are we going to do? It doesn't end today, it begins today."

- **Jewell Winn**
- **Andrew Gordon**
- **Roger Brindley**

Resources Shared

Academic Work

- **Are International Students Cash Cows?** By *Rahul Choudaha*
- **Future of Work: Resource Page**
Curated by *Sally Mudiamu and Laura Nissen*
- **Collaborative Leadership: Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Comprehensive Internationalization in Higher Education** By *Kati Bell, Jennifer Donaghu and Andrew Gordon*
- **Bridging Divides Simply and Successfully** By *Darla K. Deardorff*
- **International Educators Must Take the Lead on Anti-Racism Education**
By *Harvey Charles and Darla K. Deardorff*
- **The Hierarchy of Human Value** By *Gail Christopher*
- **Speaking Truth and Acting with Integrity: Confronting Challenges of Campus Racial Climate** By *Adrianna Kezar and Sharon Fries-Brit*
- **Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?** By *Beverly Daniel Tatum*

Policy & Practice

- **A New Compact For International Students** By *Chris R. Glass, Kara A. Godwin & Robin Matross Helms*
- **2020 Virtual Exchange Impact and Learning Report** By *Stevens Initiative*
- **Diversity Abroad's Global Equity & Inclusion Guidelines** by *SUNY's COIL Program*
- **'Everybody's Got Your Back': Life at an HBCU During a Turbulent Year** By *Lauren Mitchell*
- **Retaining Underserved Students** By *Chronicle of Higher Education*
- **Diversifying Your Campus** By *Chronicle of Higher Education*

