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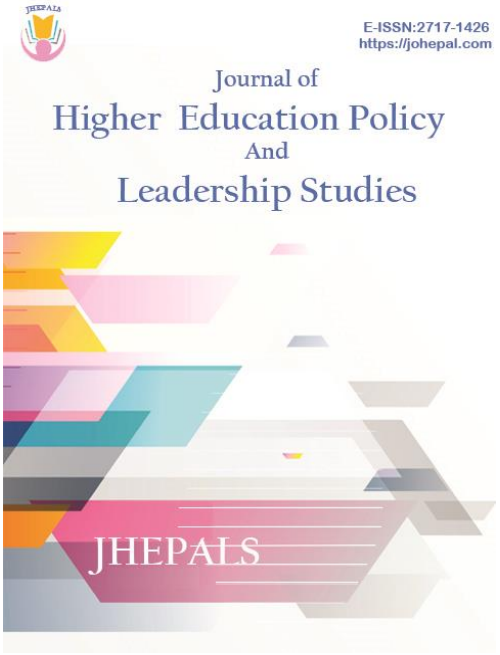


# Coordinating "Internationalization at Home"

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# "Colloquium"

## Coordinating "Internationalization at Home"

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### Highlights

- Discussion on the issues surrounding the coordination of "Internationalization at Home".
- A focus on how all of the internationalization pieces fit into a "Global Learning Ecosystem".
- Providing the framework for assessment of internationalization learning outcomes.

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**Keywords:** Internationalization; Assessment; Virtual Exchange, Global Learning, Ecosystem

I am the Director of the Office of Global Education and Engagement within the Office of International Programs at UNC Charlotte. UNC Charlotte is a community of 30,000 students of which about 3% study abroad. The international student population is around 1500 students, of which most students are at the graduate level. The mission of my office is to "orchestrate academic and co-curricular opportunities to infuse global and intercultural learning for University constituencies and the Charlotte community." Basically, my office focuses on "Internationalization at Home" rather than on mobility issues.

In the case of my office, the offerings include a mix of academic and co-curricular programs such as coordinating a certificate-type program called the "Global Engagement Scholars Program" and a festival that showcases the international student and Charlotte city community members called the "International Festival." Recently my office began facilitating an official virtual exchange program called "Globally Networked Learning" (GNL).

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A future goal is to establish a "Summer Institute for Global Learning and Internationalization" in collaboration with faculty to discuss the internationalization of the on-campus curriculum. Internationalizing on-campus curriculum is part of the new institutional 10-year strategic plan. Many US universities spread out my responsibilities within various units within an office of international education or even across the university such as within Centers for Teaching and Learning. My office was established five years ago as a separate unit within the Office of International Programs to centralize Internationalization at Home responsibilities.

## Global Learning

The concept of "Internationalization at Home (IaH)" was created in 1998 in Europe (Beelen & Jones, 2018, p. 1). The concept has grown to focus on learning that includes a variety of activities, programs, and academic endeavors, including virtual exchange. IaH was mainly centered on the types of programs to add to support campus and curriculum internationalization, rather than on the assessment of outcomes. How to assess international education learning outcomes was difficult to conceive for most international education units. A change occurred in terms of establishing and assessing learning outcomes in 2009 when the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2009) developed the "Global Learning" rubric that created a needed definition and set of outcomes for students and a blueprint for their assessment. Over time, the term global learning has become a broad concept that is flexible enough to encompass many learning goals of international education, including those focused on intercultural education and within specific academic disciplines.

Thanks to AAC&U the field and my work gained a blueprint on how to assess outcomes for international education activities. This begs the question then that certain activities might have different outcomes based on the level of engagement required of the students for different types of programs. For example, virtual exchange and study abroad would have a deeper learning outcome for students than that of attending a one-day International Festival. As part of my responsibilities, I have categorized and organize the programs/activities I coordinate based on the type of outcome desired. This may involve arranging an activity for simple cultural awareness as in the case of the International Festival or deep engagement as in the case of virtual exchange. The assessment of various programs will be different as well based on their higher or lower level of engagement.

The above all sounds good and well. But what does having a similar office mean for institutions? Why is it necessary to have a unit focusing on global learning outcomes? Where are we as a field?

## Internationalization as an Ecosystem

The pandemic has and will continue to force many institutions to ascertain whether international education is truly central to institutions' missions or not. Why is this so? Many institutions have not ventured further than mobility programs as the focus of international education. At some institutions, student mobility in the form of education abroad is considered a "high impact practice" and is sold as a selling point for the institution. With

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education abroad having been on pause and international student numbers diminished, what was left? My thoughts on this phenomenon are that in most of our institutions, international education in its broadest sense is still not seen as central to the institutional mission. However, in some institutions, I would argue that the pandemic forced them to move away from solely opting for traditional models of internationalization that include mobility to making global learning whether at home or abroad, a central piece of all internationalization efforts.

As I have also recently outlined in a chapter entitled "Approaching Internationalization as an Eco-system" (Gobbo & Hoff, 2020), I propose that global learning must be one of three pillars of a larger umbrella internationalization eco-system that includes faculty training and development. An "eco-system" approach to internationalization proposes that global learning outcomes and assessment must be a part of institutional internationalization goals and that without the necessary up-front development, training, and support for those who lead international efforts, including faculty and staff involved in internationalization efforts, those outcomes might not be achieved. An eco-system approach also involves the "access" question, placing emphasis on all global learning educational and co-curricular offerings on campus beyond student mobility. As Amanda Sturgill states "This shift in mind-set…helps integrate the study away experience for those who participate and encourages institutions to think about how to provide global learning for students who can't travel" (Sturgill, 2020, p. 11).

In addition, an eco-system approach helps us understand that international education efforts cannot sustain themselves without integrating into the rest of the institution. In a presentation at the IUPUI Assessment Institute, Dr. Roger Brindley, entitled, "Pervasive and Authentic: Building an Institutional Ecosystem that Accelerates Global Engagement," (2020) the author discussed the "structural interdisciplinarity" of global engagement and the idea that if one of the stakeholders in the institutional ecosystem is unable to engage, say faculty understanding the purpose of global engagement, or alumni affairs understanding the importance of engaging with international alumni, then it affects the entire system.

My office of Global Education and Engagement is an anomaly currently within the international education field. If international education is to accomplish its goals of preparing all students to work in a globalized world to solve the world's problems, then the expansion of the assessment of global learning outcomes in all its forms needs to become the center of efforts on our campus. This will require both Internationalization at Home as well as mobility approaches that reinforce each other. In addition, there needs to be individual program assessment as well as institutional assessment of global learning outcomes to demonstrate results. Building the infrastructure to do so requires commitment, resources, and knowledge on behalf of an institution. The establishment of my office, established to accomplish the above, is just the beginning. More to come.

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