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A Quarterly Publication of Diversity Abroad

FALL 2020 EDITION

INCLUSION & BELONGING IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CRISIS
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Fall 2020 Edition: Inclusion & Belonging in Times of Global Crisis

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What is the role of global education in promoting inclusion and belonging during times of global crisis, including health pandemics, political/economic instability and natural disasters? When a crisis unfolds that is uniquely global in scope, the impact is often disproportionate for already marginalized communities. While globalization is at times perceived as the source of the problem, global understanding and collaboration are at the heart of the solutions needed to effectively address far-reaching global crises irrespective of national borders. At the same time, global crises often foment xenophobia, racism, and other forms of discrimination. In reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2020, what lessons can be learned in how we support education abroad participants as well as international students on our campuses during times of crisis? How have organizations and institutions adapted through virtual learning platforms, and other opportunities to ensure global education continues during times of uncertainty? As a profession, how are we understanding how global crises may uniquely impact professionals from diverse backgrounds? How are organizational structures adjusting to support administrators and staff? How can institutions and organizations be prepared to support the most vulnerable during times of crisis?
2020 has been a year that none of us will soon forget. We began this decade with hopes of progress that could be made and confidence in the opportunities that lay before us. Without warning, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only wreaked physical and emotional havoc globally, it has also affected practically every sector of the world economy, including higher education and acutely the field of international education and cultural exchange. This has resulted in too many of our friends and colleagues being furloughed or laid off, and institutions and organizations scrambling to adapt to a new normal, one in which global learning is more important than ever but the pandemic renders traditional methods of delivery elusive. Additionally, the students and families who we serve—particularly those who have been historically marginalized, such as domestic students of color and international students—continue to be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

At the same time that we are navigating a critical public health crisis, a spate of killings this spring, including those of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, to name a few, unleashed the largest racial justice movement that the vast majority of us have seen in our lifetimes. Spurred by this global recognition of the longstanding racial injustice crisis, institutions, organizations, and associations in our field have found themselves examining their own complicity in perpetuating systemic racism in and through their work. Refreshingly, not only has diversity, equity, and inclusion entered the lexicon of professionals at all levels within our field—from entry-level advisors to Senior International Officers—conversations around systemic racism, Anti-Blackness, and Anti-Racism are becoming commonplace. However, while changing our vocabulary is a necessary step, if our organizations and the field as a whole are to support meaningful progress toward racial justice much more substantive actions need to be taken, such as ongoing assessment of our practices and policies and investment in training for our people.
How, though, do we systemically advance racial justice, equity, and inclusion when many of our budgets have been turned upside down, our teams are virtual, and our modus operandi for delivering global education is in flux? This question is at the heart of the theme of the Fall 2020 edition of *The Global Impact Exchange: Inclusion & Belonging in Times of Global Crisis*. Despite the unease of navigating an uncharted landscape, around the globe, professionals in our field are speaking with a loud voice and demonstrably affirming that despite the current headwinds they remain committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in and through their work. This is an opportunity for all of us to reflect and ask, “How do I maintain my commitment to advancing equity and inclusion personally and in my work despite a challenging landscape?” It is my hope that the articles contained in this edition of *The Global Impact Exchange* inspire you and spur creative ideas for you to advance this critical work in your areas of influence.

At Diversity Abroad, in spite of the dual crises we are facing, we will remain steadfast in the work we embarked upon nearly a decade and a half ago: leading the field of international education and cultural exchange toward realizing its ideals and ensuring our work prepares all students to thrive in our interconnected world, supports inclusion and belonging within our profession, and contributes to a more just and equitable world.
The impact of the current global crisis, COVID-19, has directly affected work of international educators. Yet it has also inspired many practitioners to re-imagine effective methods for engaging and supporting the students they serve. This piece showcases how we, three administrators from Howard University, Morgan State University, and Prairie View A&M University, seized a moment and the attention of our Historically Black College and University communities to mindfully motivate our students to prepare for a “new normal” that centers global connectedness and learning opportunities. Taking a tailored approach to virtual engagement, in April 2020 we began offering virtual programming that was culturally relevant, time sensitive, and resource rich for HBCU students and fellow practitioners. Our ongoing community initiative has been shared with more than 110 practitioners and countless students via GroupMe, LinkedIn, and Instagram, thereby successfully augmenting, sustaining, and improving our institutions’ student engagement strategies and encouraging a collectivist model to the promotion of education abroad across campuses.

This collaborative approach to student development has been delivered by leveraging technology (Zoom) to grant access to all interested parties domestically, and to especially invite our networks of Black professionals living abroad in such countries as Costa Rica, England, Mexico, South Africa, and Thailand to participate. With a specific focus on engaging in Black Diasporic-centered conversations around the contemporary themes of the time (e.g., COVID-19, social justice worldwide, Black consciousness), we as global-minded professionals are sharing our insights with our students/the next generation of international-change agents. This new approach to joint programming has begun to normalize this practice at HBCUs and aims to showcase a best practice for the field of education abroad.

Generally speaking, HBCU institutions offer intimate and familial spaces to Black students, and this is certainly the case at our three institutions. As such, preserving this type of sacred Black space within the virtual context is our priority. The availability of access to our programming is made available through our institutions’ official social media platforms and via our professional networks. This form of limited pre-
program promotion produced what one attendee commented on as a “heartwarming . . . fireside chat with dope Black friends!” Our original learning objectives sought to simply sustain our students’ global curiosity, awareness, and the #StudyAbroadSoBlack movement despite current physical limitations. Yet in response to the ongoing unfolding of devastating political and social events (namely, the inequitable impact of COVID-19 on the Black community, the murder of George Floyd, and the sustained protesting for social justice for Black people worldwide)—and our knowledge that the HBCU community shares feelings of trauma and uncertainty about the quality of life in the US for Black people—we became motivated to enhance our objective and use our platform to make space for HBCU students and communities to have authentic in-group dialogue about life and work in and outside of the US for Black people and how to take a stand for Black people globally.

Birthed from the palpable human emotions of the summer came two pivotal series: The HBCU Global COVID Connection and The HBCU Black & Abroad Experience. The seven programs provided space for more than 300 participants to engage in time-sensitive conversations and gain a feeling of connectedness with like-minded ‘folk’ of all ages around the world. The first series included: (1) The State of Study Abroad: An Open Dialogue, focused on the impact of COVID-19 on education abroad and its relevance, coping mechanisms during a pandemic, and feedback on the emergence of virtual study/internships abroad; (2) The HBCU Global Kickback: An HBCU-themed Meet Up & Trivia Night, which prompted students to learn about and explore the international footprint of each institution; and (3) The HBCU International Opportunities Panel, which featured Black professionals within the field of international affairs (e.g., Education New Zealand, Fulbright, and the Peace Corps) who encouraged students to prepare for future opportunities to work abroad, should in-person study abroad no longer be an option.

The second series, The HBCU Black & Abroad Experience, addressed the socio-cultural realities of Black Americans living abroad and reaffirmed and celebrated the uniqueness of our identities, especially during a period of globalized racial contention. During four panel discussions, we explored the lived experiences, social rewards, and implications of living abroad as a Black American and shared lessons learned and resources with future travelers. The series was organized by region and, to the extent that we could, by a variety of countries within each region (e.g., when discussing Africa we had panelists who lived in Morocco, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi, and Zambia). This was done intentionally to address the diversity of the Black experience presented within each region. To ensure the series was delivered with utmost authenticity and depth, we invited panelists now located domestically and several currently living abroad who all spoke with reverence about the complexity, their privileges, and the freedom that has come from living abroad.

Despite the global impact of COVID-19 and in support of the imperative conversations taking place around the state of social justice for Black and marginalized communities worldwide, our networks were used to empower and fortify Black students and our HBCU institutions. The HBCU Global COVID Connection and The HBCU Black & Abroad Experience series directly enhanced diversity, inclusion, and equity within the field of education abroad by cultivating Black students’ interest and by making global learning information more accessible. Our joint programming produced invaluable outcomes during an insecure time socially: primarily, the professional and cultural significance of our platforms as Black, female international educators, the importance of global community-building and cross-campus collaboration, and the affirmation that Black students want, need, and will seek out resources that prepare them for global learning and careers. This unsettling period of time allowed us as three
administrators at HBCUs to remain engaged with our beloved students and enhance the reach, scope, and impact of our small but mighty study abroad offices. We have since continued this form of collectivist-minded student engagement and this fall 2020 offer a series entitled Voices From the Diaspora, exploring the experience of international and first-generation students at HBCUs. Let us all embrace crafting a more culturally responsive “new normal” within education abroad.
2020 has undoubtedly been a challenging season for many of us. The dual global pandemics—COVID-19 and racial injustice—have sparked worldwide demonstrations and upended the status quo in nearly every industry, including international education. For me, witnessing the murder of George Floyd, immediately followed by the casual way in which Amy Cooper weaponized her white privilege against Christian Cooper, who is African American, was the final straw. This triggered both painful, individual memories and collective trauma for African Americans and historically minoritized populations across the globe.

As civil demonstrations unfolded across the country and around the world, I received a tidal wave of calls, emails, and social media posts from colleagues far and wide, expressing feelings of shock, disbelief, anger, sadness, guilt, and helplessness. There has been a collective awakening and recognition that international education is not immune to systemic inequality. I immediately recognized we needed to come together as a community, share our stories, and, above all, honor humanity. That’s when I proposed Listening Circles for my organization.

**What are Listening Circles?**

Circles have existed for thousands of years and continue to be an active practice in many indigenous communities (Regnier, 1994). I tend to use the term Listening Circle, but similar practices are called Spirit Circles, Talking Circles, or Deep Listening. The Circle is an affirming space for people to come together in community, speak openly about what is on their hearts and minds, ask questions respectfully, offer resources, support, and, above all, listen.

Facilitating and holding space for active listening and reflection is also a hallmark of leadership. “Leaders who are Deep Listeners invite community members and colleagues to be fully present to each other and identify what is happening and emerging in the moment. It involves getting out of the way in order to open up a space in which genuine contact can be made” (Brearley, 2015). Scholars and practitioners across many different disciplines—social justice, peace and reconciliation, education, and business to name a few—have adapted many of these principles into practice (Pranis et al., 2000; Pointer, 2017).

Gathering in a circle helps build trust and promotes equality among the participants (Bintliff, 2014). Sometimes a talking stick or symbolic artifact is used to signify that whoever is holding the piece is going to speak, and the expectation is that everyone will remain silent and hold space for the person speaking to express themselves. A facilitator or circle leader will select the time and place, extend the invitation to participants, and make opening/closing remarks. The facilitator will also establish “ground rules” before opening the circle to foster trust and psychological safety in the space.
How did we do this in my organization?

Immediately following the murder of George Floyd, I reached out to my leadership and proposed a series of Listening Circles. Timing is everything and with unwavering support from my leadership, in less than 24 hours I had organized several Listening Circles.

I have facilitated Listening Circles in previous academic roles, but this was the first time I conducted a Circle in a virtual setting. I selected Zoom because of its functionality and the ability to empower participants’ agency to turn on/off their screens and mute/unmute themselves. I also enlisted the support of a colleague to manage the technical side of things, which is especially helpful when facilitating larger groups.

All staff were invited, and although attendance was optional, each session was well attended. The smallest Circle was around a dozen participants and the largest was over 80. We began each conversation with Community Requests, or ground rules, to establish trust and support psychological safety for participants:

1. Honoring wellness. Listen to our bodies, hearts, and minds. If people aren't physically comfortable, it becomes more challenging to be present and be active listeners.

2. Always learning. No one knows all of the answers and we can learn just as much from each other as we can from the facilitator/teacher.

3. Making room. If you’re an extrovert, be mindful if you are talking more than others and if you see someone who hasn’t spoken up, make space for them to do so.

4. Allowing discomfort. Encourage participants to name what’s making them feel uncomfortable and own your own discomfort. This is how breakthroughs happen.

5. Confidentiality. Take lessons but leave stories and names behind in the Circle.

At the beginning of the Circle, I shared several slides that included the Community Requests; images of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor; and guiding questions. After honoring their memories, we “entered” the Circle:

1. What brings you to the Circle?

2. What is your understanding of recent events that have transpired? How has this made you feel?

3. What is one thing you would like people to know about you or your loved ones?

4. What is one thing you would like to learn about someone from another community?

I shared my personal experiences as a woman of color and several colleagues did the same. Allies shared personal stories of confronting family members with racist views and self-reflective work that they were actively doing. After a period of time, I stopped sharing my slides so that we could all see each other. When participants unmuted themselves, that gave a visual indicator that the person felt called to speak. Near the end of the hour, I shared resources with participants to continue learning and invited my colleagues to share additional resources and learning opportunities.

Call to Leadership in International Education

If you are in a management or leadership position, model vulnerability and be real with your team. Challenge the status quo and actively seek opportunities to recruit, retain, and promote professionals of color. Ask for demographic data across all levels and positions in the organization and advocate for change if there is underrepresentation. In leadership meetings, take a moment to notice who is in the room and whose voices are absent. Stay abreast of how the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice are
disproportionately affecting communities of color, and make it a practice to regularly check in with your team.

We all have agency to disrupt harmful narratives around minoritized communities. Folks from historically underrepresented communities and allies alike can use their respective platforms to amplify complete narratives, not just “single stories.” Speak out against social injustice, even when it’s difficult, uncomfortable, or inconvenient. We all have a responsibility to take ownership of our education and foster spaces of inclusion and belonging in the workplace so that colleagues can fully show up and be their true, authentic selves.

At the present time, the world is still seeking a vaccine for COVID-19, and the struggle for social equality is now amplified by calls for voter rights. These dual pandemics are affecting nearly everyone in the world, but the impact is not equitable. International educators can no longer ignore or remain silent to social injustice. By taking an honest look within ourselves and our profession and making a commitment to act, we will become a stronger, more inclusive community.

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Somewhere Over the (Virtual) Rainbow: Creating Safe and Affirming Platforms for LGBTQIA+ Students During Pandemic

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When Alex came out as queer during college, they found support through their campus LGBTQIA+ center. Through that community, Alex gained courage to push themself on campus and by studying abroad. While abroad, Alex found LGBTQIA+ communities and experienced belonging in new ways. Then the coronavirus pandemic hit, causing school closure, education abroad evacuation, and a return home to a place where Alex could not be fully themself. The physical spaces, organizations, and communities that allowed Alex to find wholeness and wellbeing and to embark on new challenges abroad were stripped away overnight.

This synthesized student narrative sets the stage for this article on lessons that international educators can take from higher education’s LGBTQIA+ support structures. In Spring 2020, institutions quickly adapted to provide remote platforms that support identity-based connections, community events, and celebrations. These structures provide international educators with models for supporting LGBTQIA+ students before, during, and after international experiences.

**Fostering LGBTQIA+ Belonging**

Fostering belonging for LGBTQIA+ students is essential for wellbeing and academic success. As Basil (2020) notes, “for many young people, a campus might be the first time they can truly be out.” Physical and virtual support structures and safe spaces provide many benefits (Blumenfeld et al., 2016; Coleman, 2016; Garvey et al., 2015) and must promote intrapersonal, interpersonal, and academic support for students at varied developmental stages (Brandon-Friedman & Kim, 2016; Fox & Ore, 2010; McCormick et al., 2015; Sansone, 2019). Creating safe online spaces for negotiating gender and sexual identities presents opportunities and challenges (Lucero, 2017; Miller, 2017). The pivot to online learning, due to the global pandemic, and the disproportionate challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students (Basil, 2020; Brown, 2020; Burns, 2020; Wood, 2020), made educators acutely aware of the urgency of providing virtual spaces to support wellness, wellbeing, and belonging.

Little has been published about LGBTQIA+ individuals and their needs in international education. As Capiobianco (2020) noted, there
is a significant gap in research regarding the experiences of LGBTQIA+ study abroad and international students. Some international education researchers have noted gender and sexuality disparities related to participation rates (Bryant & Soria, 2015), while others found that learning abroad is gendered in ways that reproduce home country inequities and create exclusionary communities of practice (Fleck, 2015; Jessup-Anger, 2008). The popular press has also described how LGBTQIA+ students receive little support before, during, and after education abroad (Nett, 2018). Given what is known about the dynamic nature of LGBTQIA+ identities (Hipple et al., 2020), it is clear that international educators must create spaces that foster belonging and support for all students participating in international education activities.

Model Practices

Institutional approaches to creating and sustaining community for LGBTQIA+ students, under the current physical distancing constraints, provide international educators with versatile models to adapt to international education settings. Since the closure of its office due to COVID-19, The Q Center at the University of Washington has provided virtual resources to support an array of identities (The University of Washington, n.d.b). Among these resources are a Gender Discussion Group to center “trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming experiences” and a Queer Mentoring Program that fosters a “safe, affirming, and exciting environment in which a mentee’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is supported and celebrated by an educated and experienced mentor” (The University of Washington, n.d.a). In addition to these institutional approaches, student-led intercollegiate collaboration presents another model for broadening support beyond campus boundaries. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Outreach is a project that aims to connect LGBTQIA+ affirming student groups from Tennessee State University and Fisk University, two HBCUs in the Nashville area (Brothers United, n.d.). This project illustrates how support networks should not be confined to physical spaces or individual institutions, but rather can pool resources from multiple entities to create larger communities of support.

While discussion and identity-based support groups are essential, recurring events and celebrations also provide support and build community among LGBTQIA+ students. After our institution, the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS), transitioned to online learning in Spring 2020, board members of the student club Queers and Allies at MIIS (QAAAM) (Queers & Allies at MIIS, n.d.) examined student needs and took action. To foster community online, QAAAM organized events such as Queer Film Fridays, a queer literature book club, and a pen pal network. QAAAM also hosted MIIS’ first Lavender Graduation (Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, 2020). The event brought the community together in important ways. As one professor noted: “It was probably one of the most meaningful graduation parties I have ever been to in my life...It’s a great tradition you have started!” (J. Harmer, personal communication, May 2020). In addressing graduates, the keynote speaker Monroe France, Associate Vice President of Global Student Engagement and Inclusive Leadership at New York University, stated: “As members of the LGBTQIA+ communities, you are uniquely positioned to see the world differently, because your identities and experiences have shaped the way you have navigated the boundaries that exist in the world. Use that as your superpower” (Luedke, 2020). In referring to our experiences as a “superpower,” France reminded us all that our identities have given us the tools to not only confront adversity, but to make the world a better place for everyone; it has long been known that we
do so by connecting with each other and standing in solidarity. Our closing plenary by the founder of QAAAM, MIIS alumna Dionne Daniels, shared that meaningful change requires “support at different levels and [from] various stakeholders” (Luedke, 2020). These words support our argument with this article that institutional investment in resources is critical to the formation of reliable and accessible spaces.

These model resources for LGBTQIA+ students, which successfully transferred to the virtual sphere during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate that our communities can transcend physical space. We have learned from current experiences that virtual platforms can supplement or replace on-campus support structures. Much like the current global situation, international educational experiences are characterized by a series of potentially disruptive transitions. For LGBTQIA+ individuals, navigating marginalized identities in an unfamiliar culture poses complex challenges. Institutions and study abroad organizations can help mitigate stress by creating and supporting identity-based groups and facilitating spaces for all in the LGBTQIA+ community throughout their international experiences. Structures such as the ones described herein would provide opportunities to learn from alumni and others who share their identities as they prepare for travel, to connect with mentors and advocates while abroad, and to build support networks for navigating life after returning home.

**Call to Action**

These examples provide models for technology-supported approaches to promote LGBTQIA+ student wellbeing and development by fostering identity negotiation, connections with community, and solidarity for advocacy and action. The research and models we shared also serve as reminders that gender and sexual identities are not static. International educators must be ready to support students as they renegotiate their LGBTQIA+ identities throughout their international experiences (Hipple et al., 2020). The integration of safe spaces, identity-based groups, events, and celebrations can sustain individuals and communities not only in times of crisis, but also through the many transitions students experience when they participate in international education activities.

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Local and Non-Local Student Linkages Amidst Political and Social Upheaval: Mainland Chinese Student Perceptions of Inclusion and Exclusion in Hong Kong

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Over the past year, Hong Kong has been immersed in an ongoing conflict over its status in the One-Country-Two-Systems framework. Protests, sparked by the controversial extradition law passed in May of 2019, progressed to encompass an overarching call to protect Hong Kong’s autonomy from China (Yu et al., 2020). Fallout from treatment of the protests, combined with the Coronavirus outbreak, have coincided with spreading xenophobia in Hong Kong directed against Mainland Chinese. Anti-Mainland sentiment in Hong Kong reached new heights in February 2020 (Cheung & Wong, 2020), and on June 30th, the Chinese government passed a national-security law that gives Beijing sweeping powers over the semi-autonomous city (Yeung, 2020). While the lasting effects of the national-security law remain to be seen, legal experts and Hong Kong civil-society leaders contend that the measure ends any remaining autonomy the region has enjoyed (Feng, 2020).

The dramatically changing political, economic, and judicial landscape will affect Hong Kong’s internationally esteemed higher education system. Specifically, fallout from the pro-democracy protests and ramped-up anti-Mainland sentiment following the national-security law create an unstable environment for Mainland Chinese (MLC) students. In 2018, there were 12,322 MLC students studying at universities in Hong Kong (UGC, 2020). Mainland students constitute a vital dimension of Hong Kong’s international educational environment, providing important sources of revenue as well as valuable perspectives. MLC students studying in Hong Kong also help create enduring cultural and social linkages in younger generations that are crucial for future relations between the Special Administrative Region and the Mainland (Shive, 2005). Such linkages are even more important at a time when anti-Mainland sentiment is at an all-time high and MLC students feel especially anxious about undertaking studies in Hong Kong (Ma, 2020).

In the current context of rising political tensions, future intergroup relationships among MLC and local students take on special importance. The study reported here sheds light on the underlying perceptions of MLC students in Hong Kong regarding inclusion and exclusion that provide key insights for Hong Kong higher education going forward.

The existing literature documents Mainland Chinese student experiences in Hong Kong almost exclusively within the context of social exclusion. Specifically, the literature reports that MLC students face numerous challenges to participating
in positive intergroup relationships with their local student peers. For instance, Vyas and Yu (2018) identify cultural-adaption issues, rooted in differences in language, learning cultures, and perceived discrimination.

My research undertaking moves beyond barriers to MLC integration with local students and supplements existing scholarship by considering their perceptions and experiences of social inclusion and positive intergroup relationships in Hong Kong. Additionally, my research treats MLC and local student relationships within the context of rising political tensions in Hong Kong.

This study involves an investigation of viewpoints, perceptions, and experiences of MLC students studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I interviewed 18 Mainland students and analyzed the resulting interview transcripts using a phenomenographic approach. The advantage of this approach is its emphasis on description, typically including closed interviews with a small purposive sample of subjects, with the researcher “working toward an articulation of the interviewee’s reflection” (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Principal Findings

The study data are consistent with previous findings that MLC students perceive a variety of barriers to integration and inclusion with local students, including in-group favoritism and exclusive outgroup perceptions. Specifically, MLC students perceive Hong Kong’s “Westernized culture” to be distinct from China’s more traditional culture. Outgroup perceptions were evidenced in findings that MLC students report that they are often stereotypically perceived negatively and as outsiders by local students. These findings, together with prior scholarship, provide evidence of deep-rooted sentiments of intergroup bias. They also are consistent with the prevailing politically charged Mainland-Hong Kong conflict.

Of particular interest, my research findings transcend perceptions of exclusion; they unmask MLC student perceptions of inclusion as well. When analyzing the presence of positive intergroup relationships between MLC and local students, the common-identity group model and concept of recategorization of identities come into play. Specifically, the common-identity group model advocates the elimination of intergroup boundaries by increasing the salience of an existing common in-group identity and by introducing factors that facilitate the recategorizations of two subgroups into an inclusive identity (Stone & Crisp, 2007). Dovidio et al. (2004) posit that when a common-identity group is established, then intergroup prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination will be reduced through the extension of pro-in-group bias to former out-group members.

Reframing social-category boundaries reinforces findings of positive social relations among MLC and local students. For instance, perceptions of college-society identity, where students perceived equal membership, revealed that MLC students felt included with local peers in the context of being part of the same college. According to social dominance theory, effective common in-group identities are likely to develop within environments in which subgroups are considered equal partners within the common in-group (Levin et al., 2009). Externally motivated activities where MLC students perceived equal membership (such as group projects or roommate relationships) also emerged as instances of MLC student inclusion. In sum, previously exclusive Mainland and local categories were overridden or replaced, and common-college identity, or being part of the same academic team, became the inclusive group that included members of different backgrounds and cultures. In similar fashion, English served to level the linguistic playing field and, therefore, to reframe non-Cantonese speakers as included in the common identity group’s activities.
Despite boiling political tensions as well as rising anti-Mainland sentiment in Hong Kong, findings from this study suggest potential for intergroup linkages among local and MLC students. Powerful perceptions of exclusion might even be overcome under certain conditions that are conducive to multicultural inclusion. In this connection, educators, students, and university administrators must intentionally devote serious consideration to ways in which positive intergroup relations can be promoted through common identity-group formation. This can be achieved in a number of different ways, including promotion of language-inclusive campus opportunities such as sports, shared meals, and group projects that engage students from different cultural backgrounds, require multicultural collaboration, and are conducive to the formation of common identity groups.

**Conclusion**

While this study reveals potential for successful intergroup relations among local and MLC students, the findings must be considered within the current political context, most notably the recently CCP-implemented national-security law (Cadell, 2020). While pro-democracy protests have all but ceased following implementation of the national-security law and subsequent arrests of protesters (Yu, 2020), underlying anger with Mainland China and its policies toward Hong Kong will remain widespread. Therefore, the challenges to promoting positive MLC-local student intergroup relations identified in this and prior studies remain daunting.

On the heels of political and social unrest in Hong Kong, higher education provides a challenging but special opportunity for mutually beneficial linkages to occur between Hong Kong locals and Mainland students. Interview data from this research project reveal potential for overcoming perceptions of exclusion among MLC students in Hong Kong through the promotion of common-identity groups. Establishing enduring positive interactions among MLC and local students can pave the way for mutual learning and long-term bonds to develop among future leaders in both Hong Kong and China.

**References**


An Intentional Approach Towards International Education Pedagogy

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Most definitions of international education describe it as the exchange of people and ideas across borders, whether they be physical or cultural. This year has brought unprecedented challenges to that definition, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to simultaneously disrupt both international mobility and education systems across the world. International education has been severely impacted by restrictions on international travel in particular. These restrictions have led to program cancellations, refunds, and overall anxiety about students’ health and safety. None of this bodes well for the international education industry, which relies on healthy enrollment numbers in multiple international programs worldwide to sustain itself. Yet international mobility remains a key feature of international education. One would be hard pressed to find an internationalization strategy within a higher education institution that did not involve mobility in some way—whether by study abroad or international student enrollment. But as the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, an approach to international education completely reliant on mobility is not always sustainable. Rather, we should consider the objectives of international education as we look to its future. Perhaps study abroad and international exchanges are not the only ways to develop a global mindset.

Higher education is a good place to start. Many U.S. institutions have identified internationalization as a key priority and include references to diversity and inclusion in their mission statements. Indeed, universities across the country pride themselves on their ability to foster an inclusive and diverse campus community (ACE, 2012). The objectives of international education align with many of these institutional goals—among them collaboration and communication among diverse populations, openness to different perspectives, and respect and tolerance for others. The overlap between institutional goals and the objectives of international education creates an opportunity for the two to align and become embedded within the institution’s culture.

The pandemic has introduced significant challenges to higher education, and the residential college experience has been drastically transformed as a result. It may be harder to find ways to create a diverse and collaborative community now that students are mostly away from campus and taking their courses online. But even so, one aspect of the higher education experience endures despite the upheaval to campus life—the curriculum. The curriculum has the potential to do more than deliver subject
area content. The curriculum can be used as a mechanism for promoting diverse ideas, challenging students to examine their perspectives, and engaging in meaningful intercultural dialogue. An internationalized curriculum can also respond to our current moment. It recognizes that students can and should participate in the social, cultural, and political discourse that has been shaped by the pandemic and which will continue to be relevant in an increasingly globalized world.

Internationalizing a curriculum to include international and intercultural dimensions is a skill that most educators in higher education are not explicitly taught (Booker et al., 2016). It can be challenging for an instructor to reassess their curriculum and teaching pedagogy given the constraints of time, competency, and priority (Booker et al., 2016). Instructors may feel intimidated by their lack of knowledge about international issues and may also feel overwhelmed with the amount of material they are required to cover in their academic discipline to meet the learning objectives of the course. Not surprisingly, it seems faculty are often more comfortable with pushing discussions of inclusion, equity, and diversity outside of the classroom, believing they are better suited at the institutional level.

Yet every class presents a learning opportunity not just for teaching the academic discipline, but for creating strong connections between the discipline and its implications in a multicultural and interconnected world (Sorenson et al., 2009). The objectives of international education can be met if careful consideration is given to the teaching pedagogy and learning outcomes embedded within the course.

A critical assessment of the curriculum with an international perspective enables the instructor to determine what patterns are present. Is the instructor consistently using materials focused on a singular, stereotypical narrative? If teaching a case-based approach, for example, who is the protagonist and are they representing a diverse approach to problem solving? Critically assessing written materials in the context of diversity and inclusion will bring a new perspective to the authors’ words (Ammerman et al., 2019). Although the instructor may have been drawn to a particular source for its academic value, that source also contains subtext: the author’s cultural lens. Diversifying that cultural lens will lend itself to a more critical examination of the topic.

Guest lecturers, another prominent aspect of the curriculum composition, also provide opportunities to expand international perspectives on the academic discipline. Fortunately, online learning is conducive to inviting diverse speakers from around the world into the virtual classroom. What can students learn from an entrepreneur in Brazil? What can they learn from a woman in a Fortune 500 company? The unique perspective of others creates an opportunity for students to gain a varied perspective on the academic focus. Encouraging diverse opinions and dialogues in the classroom fosters a culture of inclusivity and can engage students in important intercultural communication opportunities (Branche et al., 2007).

Students themselves can teach diverse perspectives. Even among students who share similarities in race, class, and nationality, each student has a unique experiences which can contribute to the international and intercultural lens of the class. Team-based projects, peer reviews, and study groups can provide opportunities for students to both reflect on their own perspectives and also analyze and contextualize their peers’ perspectives. Peer collaboration and communication is especially important in a virtual class environment, where there can be fewer opportunities for students to build relationships and create community outside of class time (Raygoza et al., 2020).

An internationalized curriculum requires that all participants maintain respect for each other’s beliefs and opinions. The instructor’s job is
to create a classroom environment where the exploration of ideas can happen freely, but they must know what questions to ask to effectively facilitate the dialogue, encourage participation among all students, and know how to maintain equity and respect in the conversation. Building trust and ensuring the psychological safety of all group members will help promote open-mindedness, resilience, and motivation to engage in multicultural thinking (Delizonna, 2017).

Although the pandemic has disrupted what we consider the foundations of international education, there are still opportunities to identify and teach its objectives. Higher education institutions should consider the goals of student mobility programs and place them in the context of the home curriculum. What do we want students to know about interacting with diverse communities? About personal identity in multicultural contexts? The curriculum is a natural place to embed these questions. Each class provides an opportunity to explore issues related to diversity, inclusion, collaboration, and identity. As such, instructors should think creatively about how these issues can be taught alongside the academic curriculum. An internationalized home curriculum will ultimately reach a wider population that is not restricted by international travel, and can also reinforce the institutional strategy of building a diverse and inclusive academic community. If colleges and universities can broaden their perspective of international education to encompass the entire curriculum, perhaps a more sustainable and enduring approach to international education can be established.

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Crisis of Self, Crisis of Community: An Ecological Understanding of Inclusion and Belonging During COVID-19 in U.S. Global Education Practice

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COVID-19 has altered the practice of global education seemingly overnight. Borders have closed, instruction has moved online, and the influence of globalization on our daily lives has changed. Emboldened by the spread of the pandemic, some have called for a reimagining of globalization (Goffman, 2020) and others have discussed the value of collaboration within the global community (Altman, 2020; Dervis & Strauss, 2020; James, 2020). These trends raise concerns about the future of global education and how to foster a sense of belonging in students and colleagues at higher education institutions (HEIs).

Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) conceptualized “sense of belonging” as feeling connected, important, and mattering to others, and in its absence, one feels a “sense of alienation, rejection, social isolation, loneliness, or marginality” (Strayhorn, 2018, p. 2). When a crisis strikes an entire community, it is critical that global education practitioners are aware of the implications for individuals in various contexts and gain an ecological understanding (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) of inclusion and belonging within HEIs during times of global crisis.

Eco System of Inclusion and Belonging: Implication of COVID-19

Ecological Systems Theory explains that individuals develop within five systems and the relationships between these systems shape our environment and affect our development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). COVID-19 highlighted how unprepared we were for how the crisis would affect our practice. To comprehend how the pandemic shaped our collective sense of belonging on campuses in the US, we must understand our various ecological environments.

Collective crisis provokes dichotomous and seemingly incompatible emotional experiences in the individual (Biancolli, 2020). It leads to increased feelings of connectedness and solidarity (Raymond, 2018). Conversely, as the collective crisis is prioritized, individual needs can be overshadowed. For example, experiences of micro- and macro-aggressions in our professional communities have been dismissed as petty grievances as the pandemic continues (Mani, 2020). The stress of having to reconcile the simultaneous experiences of a stronger bond within one’s community yet an increased feeling of isolation has strained opportunities.
for relationship building. This takes place in the microsystem, the environment most immediate to the individual and described as “a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 39), including the institutions where we work and study. Nearly all facets of the higher education microsystem were impacted by the pandemic.

The mesosystem is a network of microsystems and “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). These include the individual units where we work (e.g., student affairs, academic affairs, operations) and the programs and services accessed by students (e.g., international student advising, residence life, library). When the seriousness of COVID-19 became apparent, many of these distinct units found themselves members of united task forces that had to quickly develop plans of action to ensure the continuity of the services they provided. Staff had to transfer curricula to the online space, keep abreast of immigration legislation that affected international students, and examine their budgets as uncertainty about the future loomed. These were all vitally important considerations. Yet the time and energy spent on those issues subtracted from time used for supporting the sense of belonging for international students and professionals from diverse backgrounds, innovating in our practice, and, more simply, having a cheerful lunch with a colleague or practicing self-care.

The exosystem “comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). Multiple decisions had to be made in a short period of time within a shifting external environment predicated on the nature of the public health crisis. The majority of students and staff were left out of decision-making processes and felt excluded as they were impacted by important changes originating from a small group of senior administrators. Students were required to leave their residential campus communities and cease in-person interactions with peers; this most adversely impacted international students without local homes to return to. Many administrative colleagues working in global education faced being furloughed or losing their jobs.

The macrosystem is the “societal blueprint for a particular culture or subculture” and consists of the “overarching patterns of characteristics of a given culture or subculture, with reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, and hazards that are embedded in each of these broader systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). HEIs and their community members were affected by the broader U.S. culture. As institutional leaders were projecting messages about the strength and unity in their communities in the face of a constantly changing crisis, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that international students would face deportation if their Fall 2020 courses were taught 100% online. Though this decision was later reversed, the eight days it stood caused needless fear among international students and their families. Critically, the decision underscored the broader cultural sentiment that international students did not matter to the US and did not belong.

The chronosystem “encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). This system requires global education practitioners to understand the historic and contemporary realities of inclusion and exclusion that are embedded in the structures and policies of the U.S. government and higher education system. It means being reflexive about
xenophobic movements in U.S. history, including the genocide of indigenous populations in the Americas and the theft of their lands, enslavement of individuals of African descent, internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, and the xenophobic responses to infectious disease dating to the 19th century (White, 2020). Within a higher education context, women, People of Color, and religious minorities experienced exclusion and segregated learning well into the 20th century. These legacies influence our work today. Building on this long history of xenophobia, the U.S. president racialized and politicized a health crisis, resulting in trauma for many groups in the country (Human Rights Watch, 2020) and contributing to their feelings of isolation.

**Final Thoughts**

Viewing COVID-19 from an ecological lens reveals issues of belonging and exclusion. For example, technology has amplified dissenting voices hiding behind social media handles.

Political strife and acts of xenophobia continue in U.S. governance and higher education. The deep wounds and partisan divisions that have emerged in response to COVID-19 will seemingly outlive the pandemic. The web of relationships implied in our ecological environments and the support provided by global educators have been sidelined, which has imperiled the connectivity we seek in our professional and learning spaces. This is why, even as we share the collective experience of living through a worldwide pandemic, we are suffering from increased feelings of isolation. As global education practitioners, we must work towards equity in our schools and communities in this divisive climate. Understanding Ecological Systems Theory facilitates the development of strategies toward this endeavor. Though inundated with a series of new professional challenges in this unprecedented time, anchoring the promotion of inclusion and belonging at the forefront of our practice will be increasingly important for our global education profession.

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COVID-19 has pressed at existing fractures of global communities, causing differential impacts, disproportionately burdening marginalized communities, including increased fatigue for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, and womxn. And international and study away/abroad students have experienced disruption (visa requirements—Fischer 2020) and sharp pivots in programs; most paused in Fall 2020 and abruptly ended in Spring 2020.

Notedly, social media has focused significantly on racism in the United States; however, racism is certainly not U.S. specific. Racial capitalism, born out of colonialism and imperialism, has resulted in globally racialized policies/practices specific to local contexts; and ongoing global protests signify a “pushing back” against global anti-Blackness, violence, and discrimination and represent a range of diverse positionalities. Higher education professionals are challenged to acknowledge pervasive and emerging globally specific racial and intersectional socio-cultural patterns.

Xenophobia and racist pathologizing of BIPOC peoples during public (health and other) crises are continuous, including anti-Asian and anti-Black racism (Brown 2020a); and communities continue to experience the impact of these oppressions. Calls for immediate strategic action, sparking action across the world, coupled with accelerated institutional, systemic, infrastructural transformation are occurring, partially due to increased media coverage (including mobile-device recordings) of the violence and inequities. Navigating unsupportive, hostile, or violent spaces has intensified for many (Kurter 2020). Gendered labor demands have resulted in decreased research time and solo-authored publications for womxn scientists and researchers (Myers 2020; Flaherty 2020). Access issues for persons with disabilities and international communities are vast (Brown 2020b). All of the aforementioned are deeply rooted and woven into systems, practices, and institutions; and there is a call to change.

1 This list is meant to be representative, illustrative, and NOT exhaustive.
A case study in escalating and expanding DEI

NYU BeTogether: “We can make global change possible. Innovate. Act. Transform.”

NYU snapshot: 17,000 international students and scholars; over 145 different countries; degree-granting campuses in New York/Brooklyn, Abu Dhabi, and Shanghai; numerous global academic centers and research programs. NYU’s global diversity, inclusion, and equity are its greatest assets, and leveraging these among all constituents to accelerate innovation is one of the central foci of the Office of Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation (OGI). As such, OGI encourages spaces of agitation where the exchange of globally diverse, and even conflicting perspectives, are embraced as necessary for institutional transformation/innovation.

In 2017, as part of the recommendation of our institutional Task Force (2015-16) the Being@NYU climate assessment was completed. We learned about our legacies; since then, we continue to collect data and leverage globally diverse perspectives, institutional histories, and power relationships in our attempt to co-create the equitable future our community imagines.

Another Task Force outcome was the appointment of the inaugural Senior Vice President (SVP) for Global Inclusion and Strategic Innovation, and the OGI within the Office of the President. Research, data, and campus-wide feedback provided the blueprint for OGI to create and implement its work across 1) Leadership, Research, Pedagogy, & Development; 2) Strategic Innovation & Sustainable Growth Opportunities; and 3) Cross-Sector Partnerships & External Engagement.

NYU’s President, Andrew Hamilton, and the Board of Trustees in June 2020 renewed a call to action.

The SVP proposed a campus-wide initiative focused on innovation and transformation—NYU BeTogether. This global, strategic action-oriented initiative focuses on co-creation, alignment, digital acceleration, and mitigating structural forms of oppression. NYU BeTogether brings together all constituents to build upon the Being@NYU assessment by a) addressing identified disparities/inequities; b) enhancing pedagogical, learning, and best practices; and c) creating local and global collaborative actions.

The revenue generated by international enrollments at universities is often fundamental to program advancement (Dedman 2018). Conceptual, programmatic, and resource allocation divisions between diversity/inclusion and international/global education programs sometimes exist (Shultz 2014); the implications are great. To substantively address disparities of the COVID-19 pandemic and eradicate racism and other inequities in higher education, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and international education professionals must innovate and conceptualize together, as we attempt to do in OGI by leveraging global cultural, national, and geographic differences.

Programs alone do not create institutional change. If offered in absence of action-oriented strategies, systemic changes, assessment of power dynamics, implementation of equitable policies, and decolonization of the curriculum, programs can serve as a mere optic of institutional transformation. Global DEI-related initiatives are valuable to demonstrate institutional re-imagining, including the critical redress to histories of inequity. Such programming can stimulate transdisciplinary research for change, transgenerational and cross-sector work beyond a single program or commemorative period. One example is NYUWomxn100 (recognizing the centennial anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. 19th amendment) which showcases the lives, pursuits,
and innovations of all womxn including those historically overlooked, e.g., women of color, women from the global south, women with disabilities, transgender women, and non-binary communities. This initiative is now embedded into the **NYU BeTogether Global Innovators & Scholars Series**.

NYU, through initiatives such as BeTogether, draws on our vast network of partners including over 50 **Global Inclusion and Equity officers** (all schools and units) to collect data, learn, and grow through self-assessment. As a result, we continue to critically examine who we are, strive to be nimble, forge new paths, seek innovation, and work to create, sustain, and grow diverse, inclusive, equitable, globally dynamic communities at NYU and beyond. As we prepare our communities to navigate the now, and the future, we are finding opportunity in disruption (Coleman 2020) that allows us to co-create new partnerships; experiment with innovative platforms to best position us to confront systemic oppressions; address the execrable structural inequities; and deliver on initiatives that increase inclusive pedagogical, research, and learning tools.

Many communities are requesting concrete action. At NYU our disability and remote access work, as well as NYUBeTogether, allowed us to quickly scale action efforts up and out. As a result, during the COVID-19 disruption we have been able to pivot to online scholarly discourses and panel discussions such as: **Coping with and Contextualizing Anti-Asian Racism and Pandemics**; a **Juneteenth program**, a **panel discussion focused on Blackness, Racism, and Protest**; and “**Interrogating Racist Ideologies, Free Speech and Hate Speech: A Critical Conversation**”. OGI also launched the **NYU Summer Reads initiative** featuring Dr. Nell Irvin Painter, Kenji Yoshino, and Matthew Frye Jacobson, which has continued this fall, featuring Imani Perry, Safiya Noble, Nikhil Singh, Ibram Kendi, Kathleen Belew, and Bryan Stevenson, among others.2 Related reading guides, questions and recommendations are available to support continued action. OGI has also reimagined all learning, research, and development opportunities with emphasis on action-oriented tools including but not limited to:

- **Responsive Dialogues Guidance Document**
- **Anti-Racism Education, Programs, and Resources**
- **Global Inclusive Leadership Management Institute**
- **Digital Inclusion Toolkit**

The current crisis has intensified the urgency for change, collaboration, and strategic partnerships. We collectively have the opportunity to maximize sustainable, structural, and pervasive change by assessing histories, locations, institutions, and residual oppressions; collecting data (e.g., **Being@NYU**); co-creating inclusive equitable spaces by embracing diverse (sometimes conflicting) perspectives as generative spaces for innovation (e.g., OGI responsive dialogues); and developing sustainable transgenerational DEI embedded strategies (Coleman 2020). Disruptions are inevitable, and DEI work is situated to analyze, leverage, accelerate, and maximize potential solutions offered by the clarity of divergent perspectives. So the question is: are we (you) ready? Let us work together to innovate, transform, and build equitable global communities.

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2 To stay updated on additional resources and upcoming programs, you can visit our [OGI website](#) or follow the @nyuogi, @nyucmep, and @nuylgbtq social media channels.
References


In Loco Parentis for International Students in Times of Pandemic

University as one’s alma mater is that place which gives birth to one’s intellectual, personal, social, and professional selves. Yet universities are responsible not just for students’ education but also for their physical and moral safety, which is legally defined under in loco parentis. In loco parentis (Latin for “in the place of a parent”) refers to “a legal relationship, in which a temporary guardian or caretaker of a child takes on all or some of the responsibilities of a parent” (Lee, 2011). Even though in loco parentis has evolved in the 21st century from the parent to the facilitator model, in times of crisis it may require some additional adjustment, especially when it comes to international students.

Challenges While Studying Abroad

Going to university can be an exciting opportunity, yet it is also a jump into the unknown, away from the comfort of school and home life. Adapting to that change alongside striving for academic success can be full of challenges. International students have additional burdens of simultaneously dealing with language barriers, culture shock, homesickness, financial pressures, and newfound personal independence unavoidably affecting their mental health.

Alongside the student mental health crisis, food insecurity has become a public health concern affecting students’ academic success. According to a 2018 study Why Are Hungry College Students Not Seeking Help, international students reported higher prevalence of food insecurity compared with domestic students (El Zein et al., 2018). However, the international student population has received little attention when discussing food security despite being exposed to factors that increase their vulnerability to financial hardships, including significantly higher tuition and general costs of earning a degree in the US (West, 2019).

In Loco Parentis for International Students During the Global Pandemic

As COVID-19 spread throughout the US in March and campuses closed and switched to online learning, most international students, unlike their American peers, could not go back home because of travel restrictions and the potential impact on their immigration status. Since campus jobs largely closed, many students lost their main source of income that covered their food and
housing expenses. On top of financial challenges, the uncertainty during the global pandemic has been negatively affecting the mental health of international students being away from home.

In early July 2020, the Department of Homeland Security issued a new rule prohibiting international students from returning to or remaining in the US if their colleges adopt an online-only instruction model for the fall. It threw colleges and the lives of a million international students into clambor. At least 20 states, the District of Columbia, and about two dozen universities filed various lawsuits to block the policy change from going into effect. Harvard and MIT argued in their lawsuit that the directive “reflected an effort by the government to force universities to reopen despite the continuing dangers posed by the coronavirus pandemic” (Redden, 2020). Hundreds of colleges and higher education associations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, along with companies such as Facebook, Google, and Microsoft filed amicus briefs in support of Harvard and MIT’s case establishing their in loco parentis.

Many U.S. colleges and universities have stepped up to assist their international students in various ways as they navigate the new normal. The Office of International Education of the University of Wisconsin at Stout has reportedly worked closely with its students throughout the pandemic, through COVID call-in virtual meetings to ensure that students maintain their visa status. UW-Stout has also held virtual optional practical training and curricular practical training workshops (UW-Stout OIE; Daiya, 2020).

A number of institutions of various types established COVID-19 emergency relief funds. The University of Pittsburgh created the International Student Emergency Assistance Fund especially to address the needs of international students through the summer months due to COVID-19 interruptions in travel (The University of Pittsburgh). The Institute of International Education (IIE) has committed over $2 million to aid international students caught in the crossfire of the coronavirus pandemic (Institute of International Education, 2020).

Pandemic-related counseling is available at some institutions. UCF Global hosted a Zoom workshop with the institution’s Counseling and Psychological Services on managing stress in times of uncertainty (West, 2020). The Student Counseling Center of a Midwestern mid-size four-year public institution started a virtual program One Chat at a Time, creating a safe space where international students can talk and learn how to cope with the stress of college in time of pandemic.

Some universities set up resources to navigate short-term housing logistics. The College of William & Mary set up a housing resource website with information on a mix of short-term rentals, hotels, and volunteers from the surrounding community who were willing to host students who had nowhere else to go (West, 2020). A private Midwestern college with about 15% international students, in order to decrease the occupancy of their on-campus housing during the global crisis, took responsibility to sign leases with local landlords to accommodate their students. Moreover, new incoming international students were provided with free off-campus housing and meals during their mandatory two-week quarantine.

A large four-year public university in the Midwest with a 4% international student population developed a partnership with a faith-based community organization to ensure food security for international students on their campus. This partnership was developed partly due to the institution’s constraints in operating their food pantry in the absence of student workers and meeting the dietary needs of an ethnically diverse international student body. To ensure safety and security while serving the needs of the international students, the faith-based community organization utilized available web-
based survey tools to receive grocery orders from the students. Following the COVID-19 safety guidelines by the Center for Disease Control, the orders were fulfilled weekly through curbside pick-up. The food pantry, working closely with the university’s international office, catered to the needs of the international student population by providing ethnically relevant groceries. This partnership also helped attenuate any stigma among international students associated with accepting donated food. The ministry is supported by community volunteers and retired university faculty. In addition to some organizational funding and public donations, the institutional caterer donated a high volume of food products to the food pantry in order to support the students. This effective university-community partnership was a great success, providing a timely support to the international students in need.

Conclusion

International students have become “a hot global commodity” (Pandit, 2007), and not just in terms of financial benefits. They enrich the intellectual and cultural atmosphere for domestic students interacting with them, and later they graduate with a richer worldview and cultural perspectives and a set of life skills, including empathy and intercultural competency (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). Certainly, as an outcome of current perplexing times, the new normal is triggering all domains of our society to adjust, including higher education. In this context, the question is whether higher education is adequately equipped to honor its promise in loco parentis of providing an optimal learning environment for students including those from abroad, and more importantly whether it is ready and willing to make serious adaptive organizational structural changes and establishing new university-community partnerships prioritizing institutional values.


The University of Pittsburgh. (n.d.) *International Student Emergency Relief Fund.* [https://www.ois.pitt.edu/](https://www.ois.pitt.edu/)


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— Philina Wittke (she/her/hers)
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