

# AACRAO

## Shaping the Future of International Education and Exchange



AACRAO: Task Force on International Admission and Credential Evaluation  
Report to the AACRAO Board of Directors and the AACRAO Membership

July 2014

# AACRAO: Shaping the Future of International Education and Exchange

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## From the AACRAO Vice President International Education & AACRAO Executive Director

Dear Colleagues:

At the heart of the international admissions and credential evaluations fields is a commitment to serving and promoting global student mobility. To serve those students effectively, we must collaborate with partners across disciplines, associations and borders.

It is in the spirit of collaboration that we have gathered some of the best thinkers in our professions, to help set a course for our work in the next decade. This report lays a solid foundation from which the Board of Directors, the membership, and our strategic partners can build the programs and services that are required to carry the international admissions and credential evaluation profession forward to meet the current and future demands of our students, institutions and organizations. I am grateful to the members of the task force for their work, and hope that this report is only the beginning of many more collaborative efforts in years to come.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Gottlieb  
Vice President of International Education, AACRAO Board of Directors  
Vice President for Enrollment Management, Cottey College

Dear Colleagues:

It is with pleasure that we present the report from the AACRAO Task Force on International Admissions and Credential Evaluation. The Task Force, appointed by the AACRAO Board in October of 2012, was charged with an ambitious goal and they have ably delivered on that charge.

International admissions and credential evaluation is at a pivotal point in its development. International student enrollment at higher education institutions in the United States is at an historic high, and more institutions are seeking to enroll international students and to offer foreign study experiences for their students. At the same time the need for well-trained professionals to recruit international students and evaluate the educational experiences continues to grow. Just how do we insure that we will be prepared to meet these challenges? This report provides valuable insight into that question.

AACRAO has been a leader in the international admissions and credential evaluation profession for many years. This report comes at a critical time as AACRAO seeks to position itself to serve the needs of this profession into the future. Many thanks to Gloria Nathanson and the members of the Task Force for their thorough and thoughtful work on this report.

I look forward to working with the AACRAO Board, staff and partners to help bring the recommendations from the report to life.

Sincerely,  
Michael Reilly  
Executive Director, AACRAO

## A Summary Statement from the Task Force Chair

Brad Myers  
University Registrar  
The Ohio State University  
AACRAO President

Melanie Gottlieb  
Vice President Enrollment Management  
Cottey College  
AACRAO Vice President for International Education

Mike Reilly  
AACRAO Executive Director

Dear Colleagues:

**AACRAO: Shaping the Future of International Education, Admissions and Credential Evaluation:** The goal of the AACRAO Task Force on International Admission and Credential Evaluation.

A lofty goal to be sure. But with the talent, knowledge, expertise and dedication of 28 individuals from around the United States, who come from the different facets of the international education field, we have compiled this report that leads us in those directions.

We met in one large group for our first meeting in April 2013 at the AACRAO Annual Meeting in San Francisco. We followed with several smaller in-person groups, on-line interaction, and via teleconference to accomplish our task. At the first meeting, the members were divided into two committees - depending on their expertise and experience related to the topics for study. Each committee selected a chair to provide leadership and they selected their chairs well: Jasmin Saidi-Kuehnert, for the Credentials Committee and John Yopp, for the Research Committee. They provided outstanding direction for their committees, met the deadlines necessary for completion of the report, and provided dedicated support for the work to be done.

The finished report is a compilation of the reports submitted by the team members. Some worked in groups of two or three or more and submitted a joint report; others submitted individual reports; some sent comments to be included within a report. You may notice, as you read the report, the slight differences in styles of some of the writing. Although all of the reports have been edited to some extent, we tried to retain the message and words from the original reports as much as possible. The task of the editors was to organize the reports into in a single, readable, and sensible document. We anticipated overlap of topics within the individual reports as the field overlaps in many areas. In those cases, the editors' task was to ensure that all comments and recommendations would be included in the finished document. Some are stated more than once since the topics are so different; we agreed that it was important to do so.

Several points and recommendations are universal and arise in most reports: training and mentoring opportunities; membership policies and fees; vendor/non-vendor/institutional membership status; collaboration with other professional organizations; and support for research opportunities for our members.

Other topics include a plan for modifying the management structure of AACRAO EDGE and IES to better serve the profession; recommendations for expanded liaisons with other related organizations; and the use of technological methods as the norm in support of international education.

The report is in four parts:

Part I, *AACRAO and International Education*, which provides the history of AACRAO's move into the international arena, beginning in the 1950's. Starting with a small step, developing country educational publications, AACRAO has grown into a leader in international education and admissions. It provides resource for all phases of international education for the AACRAO membership and other entities.

Part II, *International Admission and Credential Evaluation* is the main body of the report. It responds to the charge of the proposal given to us by Melanie Gottlieb, AACRAO Vice President for International Education. In addition to descriptive sections on the profession of International Education and Exchange, it includes recommendations for AACRAO to shape, influence and develop the field of international education over the next ten years.

- Primary, throughout the reports, is the recommendation that AACRAO provide increased and new methods of training and professional development for the current and next generation of international specialists. The need is greater than ever before with colleges and universities actively seeking to increase the numbers of international students and scholars in their schools.
- In line with this, the Task Force recommends that the AACRAO Executive Director, in concert with the AACRAO Board of Directors, appoint a committee to review the policies regarding membership and vendor status. New policies to bring our colleagues in the credential evaluation agencies back into the active membership are strongly recommended and agreed to by all of the Task Force members.
- The AACRAO Executive Director, with the AACRAO Board of Directors, should examine the management structure of AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education). The task force recommendation to move the oversight of EDGE to the AACRAO Executive Director would provide assurance of its standing and credibility. In addition to its significant financial resource for AACRAO and its active use by the profession, it is utilized by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service as their reference point for credential evaluations for applications for the H-1B (work) Visa.
- "Best Practices" positions are needed in many of the fields of international education: credentials evaluation and those who perform them; study abroad with its many facets; recruitment of international students; the understanding of accreditation and recognition of foreign institutions, to name a few.
- AACRAO should strengthen its liaison with organizations in the international education and related fields and seek to add others.

- AACRAO needs to target communication with senior university administrators. They should be encouraged to provide their support of the new generation of international education specialists with AACRAO memberships and encourage their participation in AACRAO activities.

Part III, Contains a *List of Task Force Recommendations*. All of the recommendations in this section are also located throughout the report within their relevant sections. They are listed here as a convenience.

Part IV, *Appendices*, includes data reports on international exchange, a glossary, a bibliography, AACRAO'S Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions, and three reports in full which provide in-depth information on their topics for those who may wish to know more. These are: U.S. Accreditation and International Education; Technology in Support of International Admissions; and Assessment of Study Abroad. Condensed versions, with information from each of them, are included in Part II of this report.

We sincerely believe that we have met the charge of the AACRAO Board as we present this report with recommendations that look to the future of AACRAO and international education. We were an enthusiastic group as we tackled the project. We have provided you with actions that we consider crucial and hope that you will agree. We look forward to your comments as well as your actions.

International exchange is a dynamic and ever changing field and the profession must follow suit. Those of us who make up the profession of international admission and credential evaluation usually wear many hats. We delve into evaluation, visas, study abroad, recruitment, counseling, and research. We publish; some of us are managers at various levels; we work at universities and at organizations that are involved with international exchange; or we own and work in small to large credential evaluation agencies. We travel the world to learn and better understand the educational systems, as they continually change; we know each other and engage in ongoing communication with each other. We agree and we also agree to disagree, a phenomenon almost standard in our profession. In the end, we have great respect for each other and marvel at the extent of the knowledge we share.

It is this group for which I have had the privilege of providing leadership as we developed and wrote this report. I am honored to have done so and thank the AACRAO Board for giving me this opportunity.

With best regards,

Gloria Nathanson  
Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools (Ret)  
University of California Los Angeles  
Chair, AACRAO Task Force on International Admission and Credential Evaluation

## Part I: AACRAO and International Education

Almost a million people a year need to have their foreign academic credentials evaluated for placement in the United States. The reasons vary, but include college and university admission, academic placement and transfer of credit, professional licensure and labor certification. The people who do this work set the standards for interpreting the equivalencies of credentials based on their knowledge and experience and their conclusions often may vary from one to another. Since the standards they employ and the work that they do affects critical moments and opportunities in so many lives, a careful review of how this work is done and who develops placement recommendations for how individual foreign credentials are evaluated, has a broad impact of great importance. Given the decentralized nature of the work, how this work is to be done and supported is a role that AACRAO is in a unique position to make a difference in the field.

**Early History** The post-World War II period witnessed a new awareness on the part of U.S. Higher Education Institutions on events abroad during a time of Cold War competition. The U.S. Government invested in various projects designed to help other countries where U.S. strategic interests were seen to focus. AACRAO had existed as a U.S. association for Registrars for 35 years, but now saw issues involving international education as important. In 1948, *NAFSA: Association of International Educators* was formed and appeared poised to attract those primarily involved in international education, though in fact many such individuals joined both associations. Together, AACRAO and NAFSA collaborated on inter-associational committees and councils to identify and plan publications on various country educational systems.

AACRAO's involvement in the field of foreign credential evaluation began in the mid 1950's with the publication of the World Education Series, funded by the U.S. State Department (later the U.S. Information Agency). AACRAO would go on to publish the Joint Committee on Workshops (JCOW) and the renamed Projects for International Education Research (PIER) Reports. These were the major reference and training tools for those evaluating foreign educational credentials. By the late 1980's the funding from State had ended; AACRAO continued to publish Country Studies for sale though not at the rate previously enjoyed with U.S. funding.

**AACRAO EDGE** In 2001, a former AACRAO Vice President for International Education formed a concept for web based resource - an electronic database that includes information on educational systems around the world. This resulted in the creation of AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education). AACRAO members who had expertise in international education participated in the development of the format, wrote the profiles and presented it to AACRAO for implementation on its web site. Conceived as a tool for evaluators and admissions officers in the field of international admission and credential evaluation, AACRAO EDGE took on greater influence when the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) became a subscriber and used it as the main resource for adjudicating work visas. EDGE has proved to be an important tool for professionals in the field. Over 1500 institutions and organizations (including the USCIS) now subscribe to AACRAO EDGE as their 'go to' reference for the evaluation of foreign educational credentials.

**Credential Evaluation** There has been a shift within the profession of foreign credential evaluations in the past three to four decades. In the 1950's, the numbers of international students applying to U.S. schools were small and schools did their own credentials evaluations. As the numbers grew, several developments in international education occurred, affecting the field of Applied Comparative Education significantly. Private credential evaluation services came into existence in 1969 with the opening of International Education Research Foundation (IERF) in Los Angeles, followed by the opening of many additional credential agencies.

**AACRAO International Evaluation Services (IES)** At one time the U.S. Department of Education, Comparative Education Branch, offered a credential evaluation service. Initially planned for government employment purposes, this was soon used by those with foreign education for university admission and other purposes. In the early to mid-1960s, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) reviewed this practice and determined that such a service was not part of the U.S. Department of Education's responsibilities. As a result, the Department of Education commissioned a study to resolve the issue of where foreign education could be evaluated, other than by schools, for those not applying for admission but who needed their credentials evaluated. The resultant recommendation was that AACRAO create an evaluation credential service; however, at that time AACRAO was insufficiently staffed to undertake that service.

During the same time period, AACRAO entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide evaluators from its membership who would review foreign credentials for students who were being offered scholarships from the Third World to attend schools in the U.S. The USAID – Cooperative Agreement ended in 1991 when the scholarship program closed. With the staff now residing at AACRAO, the International Education Service (IES) was created to provide evaluations for institutions, organizations and the public.

**AACRAO Today** Educational information dissemination continues today largely in the form of conference session presentations, a variety of training programs, newsletters, and occasional publications. The Summer and Winter Institutes, given by AACRAO IES staff in Washington, D.C., provides training in understanding the international education systems. Whatever the most cost effective method for getting out information to the field on country educational systems, the process must continue in order to assure that a new generation of practitioners will gain the information they need, ideally from a diverse array of media. The success of AACRAO EDGE can be one method of procuring funds to set up professional development opportunities for the new generation who, in turn, become the trained and experienced professionals presenting at AACRAO Annual Meetings, writing articles in *College and University*, and providing information that refreshes and enhances EDGE itself.

## Part II: International Admission and Credential Evaluation

The U.S. government currently issues visas in the tens of thousands to foreign trained individuals who come here to work, conduct research, study, or obtain training. The United States attracts many foreign trained immigrants who immigrate in order to become engineers, doctors, nurses, architects, and other professionals in the U.S. Following World War II, the work of evaluating foreign educational credentials for academic placement was done by senior admissions officers working at large research universities. As the number of foreign students increased, this responsibility was delegated to junior staff, often with little or no training and few resources. The most recent iteration is the outsourcing of this work to private credential evaluation agencies.

Clearly the need to evaluate foreign academic coursework extends well past university admissions. This will continue to be a major factor in the future and should expand as our economy becomes more globalized and more transnational structures develop. The need for competent credentials agencies that employ reasonable standards and are characterized by a commitment to excellence and transparency will clearly be needed in order to properly place this large group of foreign trained professionals. Elements of the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) have adopted AACRAO's Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE) as a referential standard.

### Implications for the Future of Foreign Credential Evaluation

- While our work is little understood by the public, we need to be mindful that we are involved in highly complex work and that what we do affects many people's lives.
- Our continued presence will be felt in both AACRAO and NAFSA at the national and local levels. The work we do directly affects university offices of admission, study abroad, registrar and international education. We need training opportunities and assistance in building structures that can ensure proper regulation of the field.
- The "Golden Days", when there was money for publications and a fully funded *National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials*, are behind us. We need to look to new structures and opportunities.
- The AACRAO Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE) is an extremely useful tool which contains straightforward and well organized information on credentials from over 230 foreign educational systems. Never before has so much thoroughly vetted information on foreign educational systems (over 5,000 pages) been available in one place.
- Study Abroad will continue to grow vigorously and we must develop resources to make this a smooth transition for our students going overseas. Research on the best practices involved and utilized in the pre-approval process should be developed and published.
- The need to summarize essential bits of information for busy university administrators and faculty members, licensing boards and government agencies responsible for immigration, visas, and labor certification will also increase. Whether this work will be done by private credential evaluation services, professional associations, or some government entity, remains to be seen. Some combination of these, such as government or professional association oversight to insure consistency and minimal standards may be in our future.

- Universities will continue to outsource and consolidate the evaluation of foreign credentials. Because of the recent interest on the part of many institutions in higher education to recruit internationally in order to supplement domestic enrollment, senior management in higher education may become aware of the absolute necessity of the proper placement of these students and the need for the competent evaluation of foreign academic credentials.
- The setting of standards for credential evaluation is important for the field. Recent problems with existing practice in student financial aid and study abroad have led to attempts by interested parties to curtail bad practice in these fields. The field of foreign credential evaluation/applied comparative education has escaped scrutiny to this point but may not in the future. The question remains whether those in the field have the will to bring about reform from within or, like those in Study Abroad and Financial Aid, will have reform mandated by outside forces.

### **Credential Evaluation Services**

By the 1990s several developments in international education occurred affecting the field of Applied Comparative Education significantly. Private credential evaluation services, came into existence in 1969 with the opening International Education Research Foundation (IERF) in Los Angeles, and since then many new agencies have been opened. Reportedly, there are now as many as 300 credential evaluation agencies operating in the U.S. In 1987, at the request of the Department of Labor and the U.S. Immigration Service, and in an attempt to regulate the field, several credential evaluation agencies formed NACES (National Association of Credential Evaluation Services). In 1998, recognizing the need for quality assurance and an agreement on a common set of standards, several other credential evaluation services formed AICE (Association of International Credential Evaluators, Inc.). Currently, NACES has nineteen credential evaluation services as members and AICE has seven. Membership to AICE and NACES requires an application and is contingent on satisfying a set of criteria unique to each association. Nevertheless, given the growing number of independent agencies providing credential evaluation services, caveat emptor is prudent counsel to the consumer.

*In order to protect the consumer and the integrity of the credential evaluation profession, we would recommend that there needs to be a review mechanism in place by an independent body that oversees and certifies providers of credential evaluation services. This would encompass those that function as either single proprietorships or private for profit or not-for-profit organizations which may or may not be members of or affiliated with or a revenue-generating division of professional associations or regulatory boards.*

### **Recruitment**

Funding in U.S. higher education has now reached a crisis point with declining federal and state dollars, negative public (and governmental) attitudes toward rising tuition levels, and pressure by senior academic officers for enhancing revenue. While creative fee-generating programs and ideas help alleviate the revenue needs of an institution, colleges and universities often choose to increase the number of international students for the same purpose. For public institutions, the international student pays at least double the amount paid by the state resident. For private schools, more students from any source mean more tuition dollars. Unfortunately, demand outstrips expertise. Few institutions, especially among the smaller Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), have the skilled infrastructure to be effective in international recruiting. Out-sourcing becomes the preferred option. Many schools depend on recruitment agents and Independent Educational Consultants (IEC) to increase their enrollment of international students.

**Recruitment agents and Independent Educational Consultants (IEC)** The field of international student advisement is vast and diverse, ranging from counselors employed at individual schools, to the global network of Department of State-supported EducationUSA advisors, and to individuals and groups comprising the private sector, i.e. commercial advisement. Third party commercial enterprises themselves can be distinguished on the basis of the respective clients they serve: a college or university or a student and his/her family, or sometimes both. The Commission on International Student Recruitment convened by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) has examined the realm of incentive-based recruitment by third party agencies. The Commission's 2013 report includes a discussion of risks inherent in this practice, including the potential use of fraudulent academic and application documentation. The report also emphasizes the importance of accountability, integrity and transparency for institutions that elect to work with recruitment agencies. NACAC will also produce a related best practice resource to safeguard the interest of schools and international students, and highlight sound methods of student outreach and support. Looking further ahead, the Task Force hopes that an inter-associational alliance, to include AACRAO, can focus on this topic, and on related developments such as the emergence of proprietary 'pathway' programs, the vast networks of sub-agents on which they rely, and the commercialization of international education.

*Training AACRAO Annual Meetings must continue to address this important topic, particularly demonstrating and emphasizing how to train institutional staff on overseas recruiting best practices. AACRAO should work with NACAC as it develops its best practices in the area of third party agencies in order to provide guidance to universities and to protect clients – both schools and students and their families – from unscrupulous agents.*

## **Study Abroad: Its Current Nature, Challenges, and Trends for the Future**

**The purpose of Study/Education Abroad** has two interrelated aspects: the interests of the study abroad students and the purpose of the study abroad program provider, i.e., mission, goals, effectiveness, stated outcomes and marketing. Whether the provider is an institution of higher education or a third party, the institutional goals are critical in determining assessment criteria.

While most international students come to the United States for an undergraduate or graduate degree, US students generally study abroad for a short-term, a mid-length, or an academic year while enrolled in their home institution. U.S. institutions of higher education have, in the last two decades, experienced increasing demand both in standard study abroad programs and in-service learning programs abroad. This reflects the changing societal and philosophical attitudes of the current generation of students.

## **Recruitment Issues/Challenges Related to US Study Abroad**

- **Student Access to information and resources** U.S. students planning to study abroad get their information, primarily, from the home campus, which can provide the student with the transfer status of courses and programs. One of the key challenges in study abroad, is to diversify both the type of overseas programs and the students who study abroad.
- **Achieving Diversity** According to the *Institute of International Education (IIE)*, more than half of the students who study abroad major in the Social Sciences, Business/Management, and the Humanities. Minority students are significantly under-represented in study abroad. In order to diversify the range of students participating in study abroad, campuses may need to expand or modify the kinds of overseas programs they sponsor.

- **Financial Imperatives** Funding for study abroad is another major challenge. For most students, funding will come primarily from parents, personal savings, and some combination of campus-based aid plus portable federal grants and loans. Federally-funded Gilman Scholarships (available only to Pell-eligible students) have provided support to several thousand undergraduates in recent years.
- **Student Services in Support of Outbound and Inbound Study Abroad** As higher education has opened its door to more students from more diverse backgrounds, the range of student services has grown to meet the complex needs of the population. Although international students studying in the U.S. can avail themselves of any student services provided by the institution, the special services they need are generally centralized in one office of international students and scholars (ISSO) or similar department. For U.S. students, study abroad information tends to be decentralized among the academic departments. Students who choose to participate in a study abroad program are better served when there is one office equipped to provide the highly specialized services that these programs require.

*AACRAO should play a role in helping member institutions provide “best practice” services to students, including organizational structures that are most conducive to positive experiences for inbound international students and outbound American students alike.*

*AACRAO should conduct more research on the issue of transfer credit from direct enrollment in international universities. This is often the most cost-effective approach for individual students to pursue. This research should also develop frameworks for collecting data on and assessing non-traditional study abroad activity.*

### **Elements of Outbound and Inbound Study Abroad Programs**

- **Preparatory pathway programs** These programs provide international students – usually recent high school graduates – instruction in intensive English, and acclimation to U.S. academic culture and expectations.
- **For-profit higher education institutions overseas and international articulation agreements** As for-profit institutions grow in numbers overseas, so too does interest in forging articulation agreements with U.S. two and four year colleges and universities. In authorizing an international articulation agreement with an overseas school, the U.S. institution agrees to recognize and transfer the articulated coursework.
- **Foreign credential evaluation services** It can be challenging for students to navigate the numerous foreign credential evaluation service options available to them, and to make sound choices accordingly. It can be similarly difficult for U.S. colleges and university admissions officials to understand which quality assurance bodies, or other mechanisms, can be safely utilized and advertised to students. The proliferation of commercial credential evaluation services accentuates these challenges.
- **Study abroad vendors:** A large number of for-profit vendors play active roles in the realm of study abroad by American students. Commercial entities promote their own or others’ programs, maintain study abroad directories, and work with U.S. colleges and universities on the development of and recruitment for faculty-led experiences, among other activities.
- **MOOCs** Experimentation with MOOCs (Massive Open On-line Courses) is increasing at colleges and universities throughout the U.S., Europe, Asia and elsewhere.

### **Assessing the Quality and Effectiveness of Study Abroad Programs**

The interrelated purposes of study abroad as described above affect the nature of assessments of study abroad programs, presenting major challenges to measuring outcomes because so many are non-cognitive. The most relevant questions are what should be assessed for measuring outcomes and who will provide that answer. One potential unifying feature for achieving comparability and equivalency in the evaluation of credits and credentials between different higher education systems worldwide is the measurement of student achievement in terms of the acquisition of student learning outcomes and mastery of program competencies. The Award and transfer of credit and the recognition of credentials are facilitated when student learning outcomes and programmatic competencies are identified and listed in degree profiles by the respective and representative disciplinary faculty. Such standards should be developed by an organization representing a substantial consensus of the study abroad community.

In that student mobility is truly international and involves millions of students from virtually all of the countries of the world, few institutions have the resources and expertise to evaluate credential and degree equivalency. There is a need as never before for trained professionals in international admissions and credential evaluation within the provider organizations as well as among faculty and staff that serve these functions in higher education institutions. Because of the historically high mobility of international students among institutions and countries with differing educational systems, the need for cooperation among the professional organizations and among the faculty and staff in the sending and receiving institutions has never been greater.

AACRAO can play an important role in the guidance and support of this rapidly growing field. The developing diversity of programs offered, newly created types of exchanges, and the opportunities for students of all types to be included, creates a great need for professional support such as AACRAO's membership can provide. AACRAO should therefore:

*AACRAO should play a role in fostering the development of the oversight mechanisms that will ensure the academic integrity, quality and effectiveness of outbound and inbound international programs. AACRAO should provide best models/practices for the involvement of appropriate faculty, admissions officers, credential evaluators, and study abroad providers to ensure informed and equitable decisions in assessing the quality and effectiveness of study abroad programs.*

*AACRAO should investigate assessment methods for study abroad programs and provide guidance in this important area to the profession.*

*AACRAO should show what the foreign credential evaluation profession can do to provide for greater transparency and clarity regarding trusted foreign credential evaluation services.*

### **U.S. Accreditation and International Education**

**Types of Accreditation** In the United States quality assurance in higher education is highly decentralized, mirroring in many ways the nation's significant diversity among higher education institutions and lack of the central government authority and quality assurance, which exists in other countries. External quality assurance, or accreditation as it is called in the U.S., is provided by private organizations created and controlled by institutions of higher education and/or the professional programs they offer.

There are two basic types of accreditation: institutional and specialized. Both have long and distinguished histories, with institutional accreditation first offered by a regional association in 1913, just a few years after the American Medical Association (AMA) created an agency to accredit medical programs. As professions proliferated, so did associations offering specialized accreditation. Today seventy specialized agencies exist. Two institutional tracks have existed for many years: regional accreditation provided through multi-state commissions and national agencies, several for for-profit institutions but a few for highly specialized, religious, and non-degree granting institutions. Today six geographic regions house seven different institutional agencies while eleven other national agencies offer institutional accreditation.

**Almost every diploma mill establishes a fraudulent agency for its own accreditation, many with official-looking links to very legitimate organizations and including the names of many legitimate, accredited institutions. For international students it is therefore important that they seek confirmation that the institution or program they want to enter holds accreditation(s) from an agency recognized either by the Department of Education (<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>) or CHEA (<http://www.chea.org/Directories/index.asp>).**

**International Contexts** Institutional accreditation, especially regional accreditation, has always claimed to include everything that an accredited institution does under its name wherever it does it. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, accreditors defined international endeavors in two ways: (1) study abroad programs for registered and enrolled students and (2) recruitment and admission of international students who studied in the U.S. Most institutional accreditors broadly addressed study abroad by asking about faculty approvals of the programs and on-going review of the credits they carried. One region, the Middle States Association, created good practices for study abroad programs and actually sent evaluation teams to many study abroad sites. Most regional accrediting agencies deferred to NAFSA for best practices, often deciding that an institution's NAFSA membership and participation served as sufficient evidence of implementation of appropriate practices.

In the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new developments in international education called for a response from accreditors. Delivery of U.S. credit-bearing education abroad was the first. There was some talk about proclaiming that U.S. accreditation stopped at the water's edge, but ultimately all commissions agreed that they must find ways to extend institutional accreditation to include these new ventures. The delivery by U.S. accredited institutions of credit-bearing education abroad took several forms: (1) a single degree in an international site, often staffing it with U.S. faculty; (2) separate campuses abroad, delivering several degree programs all ostensibly under the control of the home campus; (3) partnerships with an international institution; (4) site-based add-ons to existing locally offered programs; and (5) relationships with an international institution that involved granting U.S. credits to students who started their education abroad but ultimately transferred to and completed a degree in the U.S. ("twinning"). By the 1990s, most regional accreditors implemented programs to assure on-site visits to international sites.

*AACRAO needs to provide research opportunities and training into the immense variety of overseas programs for U.S. students, including the relationships between and among the universities, reporting of academic work and how it is reported. Often, the overseas work appears on a U.S. transcript with no evidence that it was earned elsewhere.*

## Implications

- Admissions to U.S. programs offered abroad should be similar to if not exactly the same as admissions requirements for international students studying in the U.S., such as language proficiency and successful passing of any screening tests.
- U.S. credits are U.S. credits wherever they are granted. A receiving institution cannot on its own say, as some have done, that credits earned abroad are “not valid.”
- U.S. degrees are U.S. degrees wherever they are granted. A receiving institution cannot on its own say, as some have done, that a degree earned abroad is “not valid.” Nor should it refuse to honor such degrees simply because they were earned away from the home campus, even in the U.S.
- The receiving institution should feel free to contact the accrediting agency and ask for clarification of the offerings at an international setting and to confirm that those offerings are included in the institution’s accreditation.

**This is important, for in a few situations in past years, deans—even a few presidents—of schools signed agreements unknown to the home institution. Some agreements to “cooperate” led to inadvertent misrepresentation and use by the international “partner.” Official-looking but unauthorized degrees and transcripts circulated. Almost all Regional Accrediting Agencies have reasonably dependable institutionally specific information available on their websites, but when the information is unclear, it is always wise to contact the agency. Since web sites are more up-to-date than print publications, it is always wise to check web sites first.**

*AACRAO needs to provide training programs for its members to expand their knowledge of the types of Study Abroad programs offered and in what way they receive recognition/accreditation. As noted in the Task Force Report sections on Study Abroad, not only have the numbers of students in these programs greatly increased, but the types and variety of programs offered have also increased both globally and almost exponentially. The statement above briefly describes the serious pitfalls that institutions can find themselves in when insufficient information and knowledge interfere with institutional policies.*

## Recognition of Credentials and Degrees from Foreign Institutions

The U.S. system of accreditation is unique within the international education community. In most other countries, a Ministry of Education, or similar ministerial entity, provides the quality assurance element and recognition of degrees, diplomas and programs that are found in our system of accreditation. Web sites for foreign institutions and ministries are the best resources for credential evaluators and admissions officers to determine recognition of institutions in most countries. It is important for U.S. admission officers and international credentials evaluators to understand the criteria U.S. institutions should use to determine the recognition of credit from foreign systems. Most admission and transfer credit policies followed by U.S. institutions were written in the U.S. context whereby U.S. educated applicants must have attended a regionally accredited institution in order to have their previous study transferred or to have their degrees recognized for graduate admission. In other countries various ministries are responsible for the assurance of the quality of education offered at their institutions from elementary/secondary through college and university, and for the various diploma and certificate programs offered.

*AACRAO needs to emphasize in training programs that other factors of recognition need to be taken into account when considering admission from other countries. U.S. institutions need to understand that the recognition by other nations' ministries granting their institutions the authorization to award certificates, diplomas and degrees is comparable with U.S. regional accreditation. It is important for AACRAO to provide training and sessions at the Annual Meeting regarding resources and recognition of credentials from other countries.*

## **Authentication and Fraud**

Falsified and fraudulent documents are a problem that universities, colleges, and professional boards and organizations have been dealing with, for both domestic and international students, for many years. While the scale of falsified academic documents (transcripts/degrees/diplomas) is small compared to the overall number of students who possess legitimate credentials, academic fraud appears to be increasing around the world in both developing and developed countries. Advances in technology, increasing participation in formal education, competition to obtain academic credentials for educational and social advancement, and employment purposes in a market seeking highly-educated and skilled manpower, are some of the causes for the rise in document fraud and falsification of information about academic achievement. Falsification and omission of information on university applications and employment resumes are often difficult to identify and requires skill and experience to uncover. Increasingly, the transmission of documents electronically (a fast and efficient method) ensures that fewer fraudulent credentials will enter the system. Academic fraud is a costly threat to society as it diminishes public trust in the reliability and security of its institutions, placing the public at large in a vulnerable position.

*AACRAO can serve the profession by developing criteria and best practices in detecting fraudulent academic documents. The best practices guide for documentation needs to provide information on how to obtain authentic documents; address challenges such as the electronic transmission of transcripts; define diploma and accreditation mills; and address methods in how to identify bogus credential evaluation services engaged in spurious practices.*

The international education professional engaged in credential evaluation, research and/or recruitment must adhere to guidelines expressed by AACRAO in its criteria for best practices. This will promote continuous scrutiny of fraudulent activities and enhance individual and academic integrity.

## **Technology in Support of International Admission**

We are experiencing a revolution in technology evident in our work and in our everyday lives. Even though technology is ubiquitous, our campus processes and procedures have yet to realize the benefits of the technological revolution. Rather than focusing on *technology*, we should be thinking about automation and information access. Nothing is more crucial to our profession than ensuring that our student records are complete and uncompromised throughout the entire administration.

## **Technological Innovations**

- **Standards and Authenticity in Technology:** In the world of electronic data exchange, standards in the United States are set by the American National Standards Institute (aka ANSI). Called Transaction Sets, ANSI sets standards for how you organize data elements to create data files for electronic transmission of digital documents. ANSI doesn't necessarily develop these standards

themselves, but rather will pass as standards the proposals that are submitted to them by parties representing the industry for which the standard will serve.

- **AACRAO and the AACRAO SPEEDE (Standardization of Postsecondary Education Electronic Data Exchange) Committee** were at the forefront of the development of electronic student records exchange. The AACRAO SPEEDE Committee was first appointed in 1988. The development of a standard format and server network for the exchange of electronic records was a truly visionary achievement resulting in the first SPEEDE EDI format to be released in 1990. It helped pave the way for significant changes in the way student records and data are exchanged, and how institutions conduct their business processes. The AACRAO SPEEDE Committee continues to contribute to the development of standards and best practices for the electronic exchange of student record data through presentations at AACRAO and state and regional meetings, webinars, and through participation in the P-20 Educational Standards Council (PESC).
- **Student mobility** is growing in popularity as students are increasingly earning educational credentials from more than one higher education institution, and often from institutions in different countries. Expanding the elements of SPEEDE to international operations can yield equally impressive results.
- **The European Association for International Education (EAIE) and AACRAO** recognize fraud, particularly document falsification as a serious problem in higher education. EAIE has been involved in the development of a global network of centralized student data depositories which aims to make digital student data portability a reality.
- **The Groningen Declaration** seeks common ground in best serving the academic and professional mobility needs of citizens worldwide by bringing together key stakeholders in the Digital Student Data Ecosystem. Since the inaugural meeting in Groningen, The Netherlands, in April 2012, the Groningen Declaration initiative has continued to grow, and the most recent meeting held at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, in April of 2014 represented the largest gathering of countries to date and added new signatories to the Groningen Declaration. Representatives from more than 30 countries gathered to share and learn about the many initiatives aimed at facilitating academic and professional mobility through the exchange of digital student data. From secure exchange networks to digital student record depositories, the projects under the Groningen Declaration Network are forging new approaches to data verification and security, business process efficiency, environmental stewardship, and student-centeredness. These projects are helping to shape the future of global student and economic mobility.

The numbers of students and documents are vast. Any solution developed to effectively manage the storage and exchange of education records must scale to significant numbers. Supported by advances in computing power, interoperable networks, open systems based on national and what should become international standards and applied principles of technology will meet the demand for these large scale networks and data depositories.

The capacity to integrate these technologies and systems into the work of credential evaluation are evident and important. Reducing fraud, speeding the transmission of records, being able to automatically load records and manipulate the information in them, will become important aspects of our work. The Taskforce recognizes the importance of ensuring that the field of credential evaluation is in tune with these developments and is an active participant and supporter of these efforts.

We are now at a time where print publications, will rarely constitute where credential analysts draw their research. Web-based publications, government and institutional web sites etc. will be the places we go to identify and verify required information.

*AACRAO should provide basic, intermediate and advanced training in how to conduct this research via technology with an end goal of producing researchers who can manage the most complex problems faced in evaluating credentials and come to sound, definitive, and well reasoned solutions. Training could be offered at the Summer and Winter Institutes, the Annual Meeting and at state and regional associations. It is essential that we train interested parties to the highest level possible and expect that this core of highly trained professionals can provide the leadership the field will require in the coming years.*

*The SPEEDE and Groningen Declaration projects are of significant importance to electronic exchange and therefore to international exchange. We recommend that AACRAO participate in these worthy projects.*

## **Part III: Policies which will Enhance AACRAO's Future in International Education**

### **Membership and Vendor Policies**

*The Task Force has determined that AACRAO's current membership structure and its vendor policies need review and updating. First, it is important that we bring our colleagues in the international credential evaluation profession back into the membership. These colleagues bring expertise for sessions and training for international credential evaluators for which universities and colleges have neither the research time nor the funding. At the same time, universities are increasingly recruiting international students and need the knowledge and training that these experienced professionals in the field can provide. Secondly, we need to find new and creative ways to bring new members into the organization.*

*The Task Force has discussed these issues at length and the members are in agreement that a new category should be implemented for the professionals in the credentials evaluation agencies. The Task Force recommends that the AACRAO Executive Director, with the AACRAO Board, appoint a working group to study strategies for recommending policies that will result in more inclusive membership opportunities. The team should examine the AACRAO membership categories and create a new fee structure more appropriate for these colleagues. The Task Force further recommends that credential evaluation agencies be permitted to give professional presentations at the Annual Meeting, and be allowed to serve on AACRAO committees. Their expertise would serve the association well, not only at the national level, but also in the state and regional associations. We understand the need to continue a "Vendor" type category; therefore, we recommend that a new category, such as "Non-university Academic Service Provider" be established to address this need.*

*The suggested change by the Task Force to AACRAO policies on session presentations and committee memberships is significant, but necessary in order to continue to grow the next generation in*

*international admissions, represent an environment of inclusiveness, and assure a stronger and more diverse population of potential session presenters.*

*In the course of the review and update of membership policies, the Task Force also recommends that the working group look at other changes which will give new members opportunities to join the organization such as: offering individual memberships, encouraging university upper management to add members, and encourage and support them to attend conferences and training programs, give presentations, and serve on committees.*

**Urgency for Action by the AACRAO Board** *The Task Force encourages the AACRAO Board of Directors to take an early review of these recommendations.* The current status of the AACRAO membership structure is one of the key issues that the members of Group II (International) have expressed dissatisfaction with and wish to see changed. The Task Force would like to see a new and more collegial membership structure developed and implemented as soon as possible.

The current status for the credential agencies has been a difficult and contentious issue in the international education field for over ten years. It needs immediate attention by the AACRAO Board and the AACRAO Executive Director to bring to a close a period of dissatisfaction and begin a renewed and positive relationship between AACRAO and its international education colleagues.

### **AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Data Base for Global Education) - Long Term Strategies for Management of EDGE**

The creation of AACRAO EDGE, its development, implementation and establishment within AACRAO in 2001, led to what is now a significant resource for the AACRAO membership, the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS), and for U.S. and world-wide external users. In addition to its academic use, it is a large source of revenue for AACRAO. How EDGE is managed directly affects its credibility and its standing within elements of the U.S. government and is important for its continued success.

The Task Force recommendations outline a ten-year plan to transition EDGE to a new generation and provide a viable oversight structure. It is designed to see that the work is done in a way that maintains quality, provides professional and vigorous oversight of how placement recommendations are approved, and adds a layer of oversight at the macro level that is diverse and composed of individuals who function at a senior and executive level.

**Internal Management Group** *To ensure that this takes place, EDGE should move to the direct oversight of the AACRAO Executive Director. To facilitate its daily operation, an Internal Management Group should be established under the AACRAO Associate Executive Director for International Initiatives and the Director of AACRAO International Education Services (IES) which would include both IES staff and AACRAO members with expertise in international education. These individuals would respond to inquiries, do the research, and refer new placement recommendations to the AACRAO International Education Standards Council (IESC). They would be in a position to ensure the continued maintenance of EDGE.*

*As the current members of IESC rotate off, new IESC members should be drawn in a staggered timeframe from the membership and could include other deserving individuals who have expertise in the field. IESC should also report to the AACRAO Executive Director with members selected by recommendations from the Director of IES and the AACRAO Vice-President for International Education.*

**External Oversight Group.** *It is also recommended that AACRAO establish an External Oversight Group that is not solely practitioner oriented and is more connected to emerging institutional, organizational and governmental issues. It would be the job of this group to see that EDGE continues to be viable and modified as needed to serve its constituents. The AACRAO Executive Director would be responsible for determining appointments to this committee, term limits, and how often meetings would need to take place. It would provide oversight for the AACRAO EDGE project on an annual or bi-annual basis. These individuals should come from a diverse group of both institutional and membership based higher education entities. It would include representatives from Universities, the Educational Testing Service, NAFSA, ACE, CGS, The College Board, the Forum (a well known Study Abroad group), the American Association of Community Colleges, the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service and so on. AACRAO would host the meetings.*

*The Task Force further recommends that a set amount of money, 10 percent of EDGE revenue, be set apart on an annual basis for international education activities within AACRAO. This was one of the original intents in creating EDGE so as to encourage initiatives, training, and opportunities to publish or offer new programming.*

## **Professional Development**

Given its increased international profile, AACRAO needs to encourage and support the next generation of professionals in the international education field by providing strong programs for professional development. As AACRAO continues to increase the number of sessions devoted to international education in general, and international admission and credential evaluation in particular, it is rapidly establishing itself as the leader in this area of educational training. At the Annual Meeting in Denver there were over 30 sessions devoted to international admissions and credential evaluation.

Training and mentorship are areas that require investment and which tie in critically to maintaining standards in the field (See Appendix E: *AACRAO's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions*). They are the key to the development of the next generation of AACRAO professionals in the international admissions and credentials evaluation fields.

- Mentorship is a critical element in the development of foreign credential evaluators. An in-depth mentoring program would breathe new life into old ways of training the next generation, which would provide a chance for individuals new to international responsibilities to be matched with an experienced professional with similar responsibilities in the international arena.
- Due to university budget constraints, those who evaluate would also benefit from online modules (streaming video) and webinars or podcasts (preferably of the free or low cost variety). Teaming up with other organizations such as Education USA would also enhance AACRAO's reputation as the place to obtain training on foreign credential evaluation.
- AACRAO should create specialized training programs designed for international recruiters consisting of country-specific sessions on educational systems and credentials, providing the information they need to have a successful recruitment trip in terms of credential requirements and review.
- Incentives to encourage meeting attendance could include: (1) blogs from the Annual Meeting floor that would enable individuals not attending the Annual Meeting to see and experience what they are

missing; and (2) a discount for the Annual Meeting registration fee for presenting, which would help the session programming committees populate their session submissions with willing presenters while encouraging conference attendance.

### **International Enhancements to Institutional Job Descriptions**

The Task Force made special note of the lack of professional recognition within the admissions and credential evaluation field of international education officers. The field of foreign credential evaluation is a complex and challenging one. With little understanding by many of what the field entails, the practitioner may be overlooked as a candidate for promotion to higher administrative posts. That is beginning to change with the higher profile that the field is enjoying due to the increased desire to recruit and attract international students. Individuals who understand the educational systems of the top sending countries (China, India, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to name a few) are suddenly more attractive to those involved in strategic enrollment management. Knowledge of foreign educational systems and cultures enhances any job description or resume.

**Cultivating the Next Generation** Implementing the recommendations below would lead to increased recognition of practitioners in the field by offering new opportunities including membership and participation. With improved programming for all AACRAO training venues, and value-added resources available to institutions, organizations, and international educators at all professional levels, the new generation of international professionals would be more visible.

- *Target mailings to Presidents and Provosts, Directors of Admissions, Registrars, and Enrollment Managers to invite and encourage staff members responsible for foreign credential evaluation and transfer credit to join AACRAO and to participate in professional development opportunities.*
- *Encourage membership by providing individual membership options and modifying the “vendor” fees for non-university academic service providers (see Membership and Vendors section).*
- *Increase training opportunities and utilize technology to provide low-cost country-specific training for credential evaluators. The addition of a mentoring program would provide the new evaluators with both training and a resource and would enhance the professional resume for the mentor.*
- *Offering both on-line and local/regional programs would serve all professionals.*
- *Coordinate with other agencies/organizations to provide comprehensive training for professionals working in international education.*
- *Support the update and maintenance of AACRAO EDGE, increasing the number of sample documents and continuing to provide electronic versions of out-of-print publications so that newcomers to international education can build a foundational reference library.*

*AACRAO should search for additional professional development opportunities in international education beyond the few now available, using funds from AACRAO EDGE to support them. Group research projects overseas would be excellent ways to enhance AACRAO publications and products, which could include short monographs published behind the EDGE firewall or stand-alone electronic pieces offered at low or no cost.*

## Strategic Collaborations

*The strategic collaborations forged with other entities in international education need to be continued and strengthened.*

- Partnership with EducationUSA: inclusion of EducationUSA advisors and Regional Educational Advising Centers (REACs) in the Annual Meeting and other AACRAO endeavors.
- The Liaison Group (TLG): Washington area organizations active in international education such as IIE, NAFSA, College Board, etc., coordinating efforts among the organizations on international actions and initiatives.
- College Board: AACRAO has been participating in College Board forums through panels and presentations.
- National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC): participate in joint activities including the overseas arm, Overseas Association of College Admissions Counselors (OACAC).
- Institute of International Education (IIE): AACRAO participates in various activities, including the collection of data for their seminal publication, *Open Doors*.
- NAFSA: The Association of International Educators: AACRAO has worked to bring in NAFSA members to present at Annual Meeting and other AACRAO venues on immigration matters. AACRAO recently renewed with NAFSA and the Ministry of Education, Science and Research of the State of Baden-Wurttemberg the Memorandum of Understanding for the Baden-Wurttemberg Seminar held each fall.
- USCIS: An unexpected outgrowth of the creation of AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education) has been the collaboration with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service of the Department of Homeland Security. This includes presentations at the various centers by EDGE Administration Group members as well as frequent e-mail contact responding to questions regarding credentials.
- Fulbright Commission: Reach out to the various Fulbright Commission offices abroad that are not already part of the EducationUSA network to investigate collaborative opportunities.
- The Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange: The Alliance, founded 20 years ago, consists of 80 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in international educational exchange. *AACRAO should be part of this important international outreach and join the Alliance at the earliest opportunity.*

*By cementing current collaborations and making new ones in the field of international education exchange, AACRAO positions itself as a critical player in the international education arena. The Task Force strongly recommends enactment of the ideas presented here.*

## Part IV Brief Summary of Recommendations in the Task Force Report

The list of recommendations below is a consolidation of those within the report. As mentioned in the Part I Summary Statement, training has been a recommendation throughout the report and therefore the various training recommendations have been combined into several items below as they relate to each other. However, it is important to review these recommendations in Part II which helps to explain and clarify their purpose.

### **Review and update of AACRAO's current membership structure and vendor policies**

The Task Force recommends that the AACRAO Executive Director, with the AACRAO Board, appoint a working group to study strategies which will be more inclusive in membership opportunities. The Task Force would like to see a new and more collegial membership structure developed and implemented as soon as possible. A new category, such as "Non-university Academic Service Provider", should be established to include credential evaluation agencies. Members of the agencies should be permitted to give professional presentations at the Annual Meeting and be allowed to serve on AACRAO committees. **We recommend that the Board take an early review of this recommendation.**

**Incentives to encourage membership** Target mailings to Presidents and Provosts, Directors of Admissions, Registrars, and Enrollment Managers to invite and encourage staff members responsible for foreign credential evaluation and transfer credit to join AACRAO and to participate in professional development opportunities.

### **Incentives to encourage meeting attendance**

Blogs from the Annual Meeting floor would enable individuals not attending to see and experience what they are missing; a discounted registration fee for presenters at the Annual Meeting would help populate committees and session submissions with more presenters while encouraging conference attendance.

### **Long term strategies for management of AACRAO EDGE**

How EDGE is managed directly affects its credibility and its standing within elements of the U.S. government and is important for its continued success. The Task Force recommendations outline a plan to transition EDGE to a new generation and provide a viable oversight structure. **To ensure that this takes place, EDGE should move to the direct oversight by the AACRAO Executive Director.** To facilitate its daily operation, an Internal Management Group should be established under the Director of AACRAO International Evaluation Service (IES) and the AACRAO Associate Executive Director, Business Affairs, which would include both IES staff and AACRAO members with expertise in international education.

### **AACRAO should establish an EDGE External Oversight Group**

It should be more connected to emerging institutional, organizational and governmental issues and not solely practitioner oriented. It would be the job of this group to see that EDGE continues to be viable and modified as needed to serve its constituents. The AACRAO Executive Director would be responsible for determining appointments to this committee, term limits, and how often meetings would need to take place.

**Revenue from EDGE (10 percent)** should be set apart, on an annual basis, for international education activities within AACRAO.

**It is recommended that IESC report to the AACRAO Executive Director** Members are to be selected by recommendations from the Director of IES and the AACRAO Vice-President for International Education. As current members rotate off, new IESC members could be drawn in a staggered timeframe from the membership and other deserving individuals with expertise in the field.

#### **Strategic collaborations**

AACRAO should forge ahead with other entities in international education, including joining with the Alliance for International and Cultural Exchange, which consists of 80 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in international education exchange. Current collaborations need to be continued and strengthened.

#### **Training and professional development**

AACRAO needs to provide increased training opportunities at professional meetings as well as assistance in building structures that can ensure proper regulation of the international education field. The organization can also serve its membership by developing “best practice” criteria to inform the practitioners in the field and to ensure their credibility.

**Training** could be offered at the Summer and Winter institutes, the Annual Meeting and at state and regional associations. It is essential that we train interested parties to the highest level possible and expect that this core of highly trained professionals can provide the leadership the field will require in the coming years.

**Utilize technology** for country-specific training for credential evaluators. Coordinate with other agencies to provide comprehensive training for professionals working in international education. Those who evaluate would also benefit from online modules (streaming video) and webinars or podcasts (preferably of the free or low cost variety).

**Mentorship** is a critical element in the development of foreign credential evaluators. An in-depth mentoring program would breathe new life into old ways of training the next generation, which would provide a chance for individuals new to international responsibilities to be matched with an experienced professional with similar responsibilities in the international arena.

#### **To protect the consumer and the integrity of the Credential Evaluation Profession**

We recommend that there needs to be a review mechanism in place by an independent body that oversees and certifies providers of credential evaluation services.

**“Best Practice” studies and findings** are needed in many areas of international education: e.g. credential evaluation, detecting fraudulent documents, overseas recruiting, and organizational structures for study abroad for inbound international students and outbound American students.

#### **Publishing and technological training**

We are now at a place in time where the future of print publications, except in rare circumstances, will not constitute the primary source for credential analysts. Web-based publications, government and institutional web sites etc. will be the places we go to identify and verify the required information. AACRAO should provide basic, intermediate and advanced training in how to conduct this research with an end goal of producing researchers who can manage the most complex problems faced in evaluating credentials and come to sound, definitive, and well-reasoned solutions.

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## Appendices

Appendix A: Selected data reports on international exchange. (Courtesy of the *Institute of International Education*, from Peggy Blumenthal)

Appendix B: *U.S. Accreditation and International Education*, (Steven Crow)

Appendix C: *Technology in Support of International Admissions*  
(Dr. William J. Paver & V. Shelby Stanfield)

Appendix D: *Assessment of Study Abroad*, (Dr. John Yopp)

Appendix E: *AACRAO's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions*

Appendix F: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Appendix G: Bibliography

## **Appendix A: Selected Data Reports on International Exchange. (Courtesy of the *Institute of International Education* from Peggy Blumenthal)**

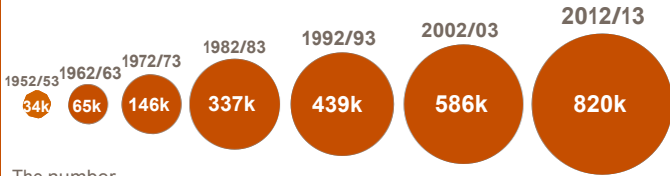
The Reports on the next five pages show the latest data published (2013) by the Institute of International Education (IIE) on international student and scholar exchange.

1. *A Quick Look at U.S. Students Studying Abroad*
2. *A Quick Look at International Students in the U.S.*
3. *Open Doors 2013 “Fast Facts” (International Students in the U.S.)*
4. *Project Atlas: Trends and Global Data 2013*

In 2012/13

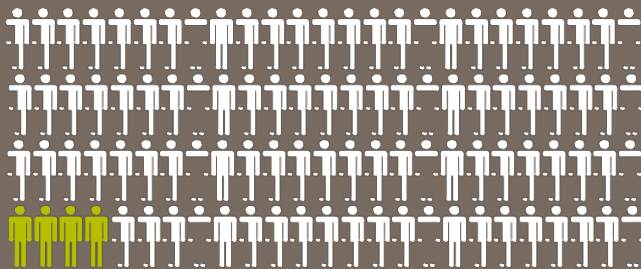
# 819,644

international students studied at U.S. colleges and universities



The number of international students studying in the U.S. grew by **7%** over the prior year and is now at a record high.

International students constitute



Primary source of funding of international students



In 2012/13 international students contributed over **24 billion\*** dollars to the U.S. economy.

\*Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

The top 10 states together host **61%** of all international students.

#1

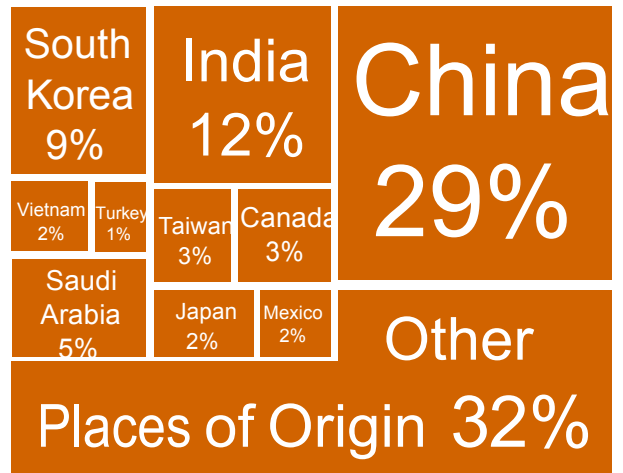
#3

Top 3 states

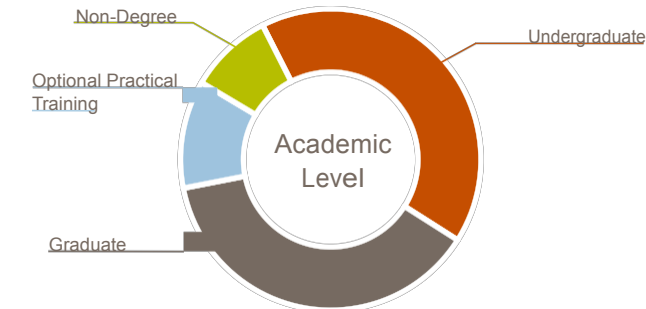
California, New York and Texas

host **32%**.

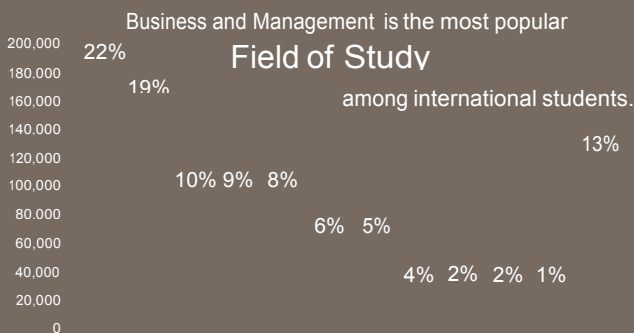
Places of origin of international students



**49%** of international students come from China, India and South Korea.

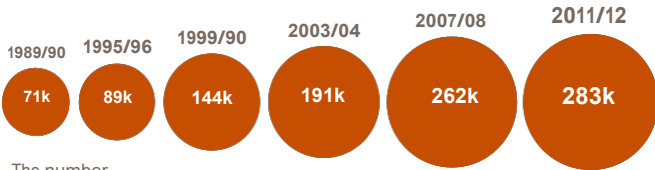


The majority of international students are at the undergraduate level.



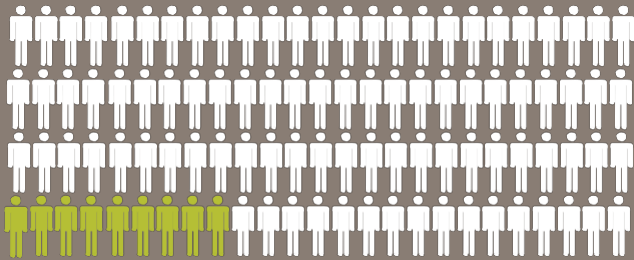
In 2011/12  
**283,332**

U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit

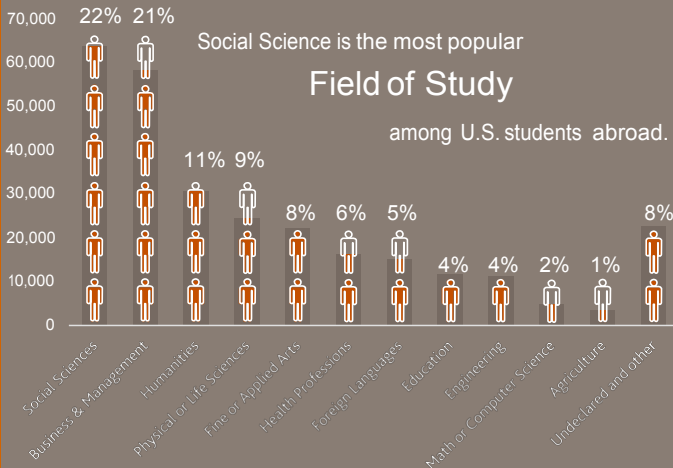
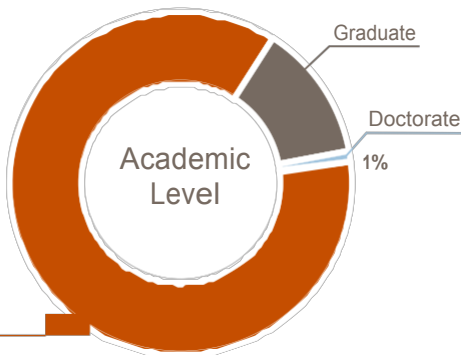


The number of the U.S. students studying abroad grew by **3%** over the prior year and now is at a record high.

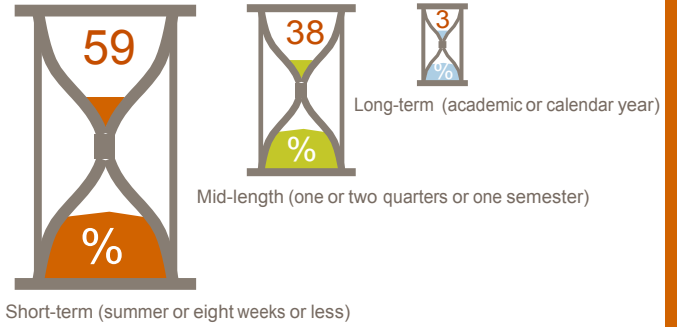
### Undergraduate Study Abroad



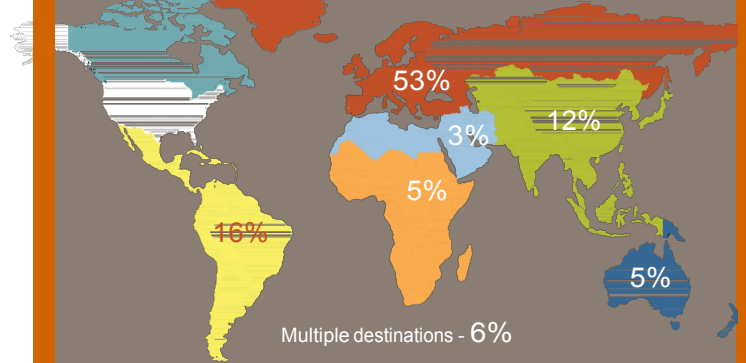
9% of U.S. undergraduates studied abroad before graduating.



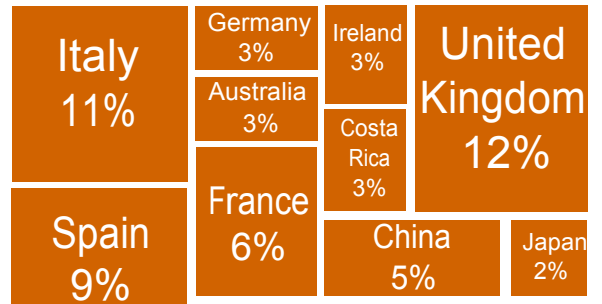
### Duration of Study Abroad



### Host Regions of U.S. Study Abroad Students



### Leading Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students



Other Destinations 43%

United Kingdom, Italy and Spain host **32%** of U.S. students.

# opendoors® 20|13 “Fast Facts”

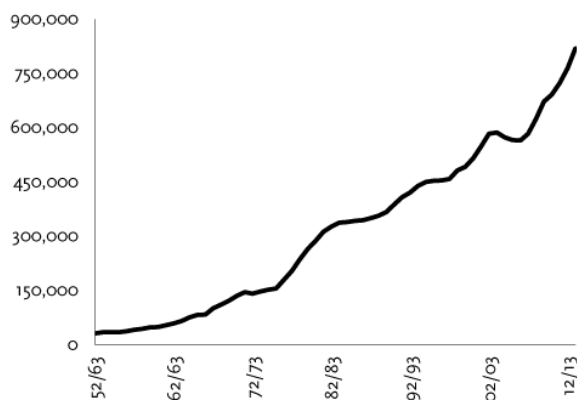
## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

### A. NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT

New international student enrollment – students enrolling for the first time at a U.S. institution in fall	Year	Total	% Change
	2007/08	173,121	10.1
	2008/09	200,460	15.8
	2009/10	202,970	1.3
	2010/11	214,490	5.7
2012 – increased 9.8% over the previous year.	2011/12	228,467	6.5
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>250,920</b>	<b>9.8</b>

### B. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRENDS

In 2012/13, the number of international students in the U.S. increased 7.2% to a record high of 819,644 students.



Year	Total Int'l	% Change	U.S. Higher Ed Total*	% Int'l
2001/02	582,996	6.4	15,928,000	3.7
2002/03	586,323	0.6	16,612,000	3.5
2003/04	572,509	-2.4	16,911,000	3.4
2004/05	565,039	-1.3	17,272,000	3.3
2005/06	564,766	-0.05	17,487,000	3.2
2006/07	582,984	3.2	17,672,000	3.3
2007/08	623,805	7.0	17,958,000	3.5
2008/09	671,616	7.7	18,264,000	3.7
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5
2011/12	764,495	5.7	20,625,000	3.7
<b>2012/13</b>	<b>819,644</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>21,253,000</b>	<b>3.9</b>

\* Data from the National Center for Education Statistics

### C. TOP PLACES OF ORIGIN of International Students

Rank	Place of Origin	2011/12	2012/13	% of Total	% Change
	<b>WORLD TOTAL</b>	<b>764,495</b>	<b>819,644</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.2</b>
1	China	194,029	235,597	28.7	21.4
2	India	100,270	96,754	11.8	-3.5
3	South Korea	72,295	70,627	8.6	-2.3
4	Saudi Arabia	34,139	44,566	5.4	30.5
5	Canada	26,821	27,357	3.3	2.0
6	Taiwan	23,250	21,867	2.7	-5.9
7	Japan	19,966	19,568	2.4	-2.0
8	Vietnam	15,572	16,098	2.0	3.4
9	Mexico	13,893	14,199	1.7	2.2
10	Turkey	11,973	11,278	1.4	-5.8
11	Brazil	9,029	10,868	1.3	20.4
12	Germany	9,347	9,819	1.2	5.0
13	United Kingdom	9,186	9,467	1.2	3.1
14	Nepal	9,621	8,920	1.1	-7.3
15	Iran	6,982	8,744	1.1	25.2
16	France	8,232	8,297	1.0	0.8
17	Hong Kong	8,032	8,026	1.0	-0.1
18	Indonesia	7,131	7,670	0.9	7.6
19	Nigeria	7,028	7,316	0.9	4.1
20	Thailand	7,626	7,314	0.9	-4.1
21	Malaysia	6,743	6,791	0.8	0.7
22	Colombia	6,295	6,543	0.8	3.9
23	Venezuela	6,281	6,158	0.8	-2.0
24	Kuwait	3,722	5,115	0.6	37.4
25	Spain	4,924	5,033	0.6	2.2

### D. ACADEMIC LEVEL TRENDS of International Students

Year	Undergrad	% Change	Graduate	% Change	Non-degree	% Change
2001/02	261,079	2.6	264,749	11.0	34,423	1.6
2002/03	260,103	-0.4	267,876	1.2	30,551	-11.2
2003/04	248,200	-4.6	274,310	2.4	20,659	-32.4
2004/05	239,212	-3.6	264,410	-3.6	28,418	37.6
2005/06	236,342	-1.2	259,717	-1.8	30,611	7.7
2006/07	238,050	0.7	264,288	1.8	38,986	27.4
2007/08	243,360	2.2	276,842	4.8	46,837	20.1
2008/09	269,874	10.9	283,329	2.3	51,812	10.6
2009/10	274,431	1.7	293,885	3.7	54,803	5.8
2010/11	291,439	6.2	296,574	0.9	59,233	8.1
2011/12	309,342	6.1	300,430	1.3	69,566	17.4
<b>2012/13</b>	<b>339,993</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>311,204</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>73,528</b>	<b>5.7</b>

### E. TOP U.S. INSTITUTIONS Hosting International Students, 2012/13

Rank	Institution	City	State	Total Int'l Students
1	University of Southern California	Los Angeles	CA	9,840
2	University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign	Champaign	IL	9,804
3	Purdue University - Main Campus	West Lafayette	IN	9,509
4	New York University	New York	NY	9,362
5	Columbia University	New York	NY	8,797
6	University of California - Los Angeles	Los Angeles	CA	8,424
7	Northeastern University	Boston	MA	7,705
8	University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor	MI	6,827
9	Michigan State University	East Lansing	MI	6,759
10	Penn State University - University Park	University Park	PA	6,693
11	Arizona State University	Tempe	AZ	6,645
12	Boston University	Boston	MA	6,615
13	Indiana University - Bloomington	Bloomington	IN	6,547
14	University of Washington	Seattle	WA	6,491
15	Ohio State University - Main Campus	Columbus	OH	6,478
16	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities	Minneapolis	MN	6,178
17	University of Florida	Gainesville	FL	5,961
18	SUNY University at Buffalo	Buffalo	NY	5,804
19	University of Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	PA	5,751
20	University of California - Berkeley	Berkeley	CA	5,632

### F. TOP U.S. STATES Hosting International Students

Rank	State	2011/12	2012/13	% Change
1	California	102,789	111,379	8.4
2	New York	82,436	88,250	7.1
3	Texas	61,511	62,923	2.3
4	Massachusetts	41,258	46,486	12.7
5	Illinois	35,920	39,132	8.9
6	Pennsylvania	33,398	37,280	11.6
7	Florida	32,567	32,746	0.5
8	Ohio	26,427	28,401	7.5
9	Michigan	25,551	26,930	5.4
10	Indiana	22,194	24,408	10.0

The Institute of International Education (IIE) has conducted an annual census of international students in the U.S. since its founding in 1919. Known as the *Open Doors Report* since 1954, and supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State since 1972, the report provides detailed data on student flows into and out of the U.S. Visit us online at: <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. (CONTINUED)

### G. TOP FIELDS OF STUDY of International Students

Field of Study	2011/12	2012/13	% of Total	% Change
Business and Management	166,733	178,984	21.8	7.3
Engineering	141,285	154,186	18.8	9.1
Math and Computer Science	71,364	77,560	9.5	8.7
Social Sciences	66,163	73,274	8.9	10.7
Physical and Life Sciences	66,007	69,152	8.4	4.8
Fine and Applied Arts	41,710	45,850	5.6	9.9
Intensive English	38,887	39,990	4.9	2.8
Health Professions	29,535	31,222	3.8	5.7
Humanities	16,294	17,121	2.1	5.1
Education	17,200	17,011	2.1	-1.1
Agriculture	9,750	10,463	1.3	7.3
Other Fields of Study	77,252	79,876	9.8	3.4
Undeclared	22,315	24,955	3.0	11.8

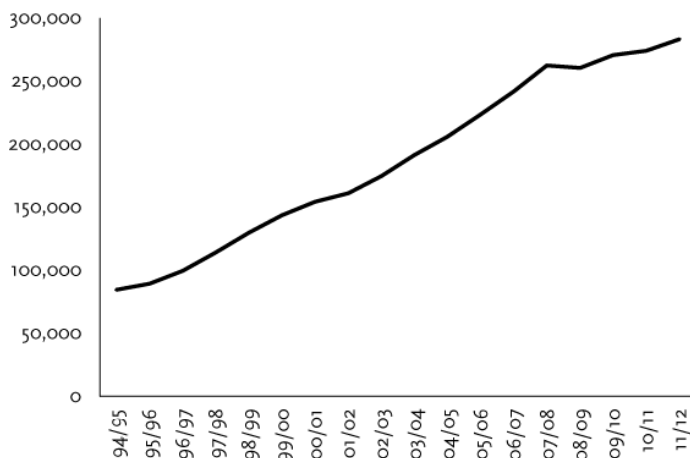
### H. PRIMARY SOURCE OF FUNDING of International Students

Primary Source of Funds	2011/12	2012/13	% of Total	% Change
Personal and Family	486,524	520,920	63.6	7.1
U.S. College or University	164,394	169,566	20.7	3.1
Foreign Gov't or University	44,344	57,898	7.1	30.6
U.S. Government	4,746	6,399	0.8	34.8
U.S. Private Sponsor	5,871	5,218	0.6	-11.1
Foreign Private Sponsor	9,670	9,229	1.1	-4.6
International Organization	1,869	1,412	0.2	-24.5
Current Employment	40,494	43,800	5.3	8.2
Other Sources	6,583	5,202	0.6	-21.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>764,495</b>	<b>819,644</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.2</b>

## U.S. STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

### I. U.S. STUDY ABROAD TRENDS

283,332 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2011/12, an increase of 3.4% over the previous year. U.S. student participation in study abroad has more than tripled over the past two decades.



### J. LEADING DESTINATIONS of U.S. Study Abroad Students

15 of the top 25 destinations are outside Europe.

Rank	Place of Origin	2010/11	2011/12	% of Total	% Change
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>273,996</b>	<b>283,332</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.4</b>
1	United Kingdom	33,182	34,660	12.2	4.5
2	Italy	30,361	29,645	10.5	-2.4
3	Spain	25,965	26,480	9.3	2.0
4	France	17,019	17,168	6.1	0.9
5	China	14,596	14,887	5.3	2.0
6	Germany	9,018	9,370	3.3	3.9
7	Australia	9,736	9,324	3.3	-4.2
8	Costa Rica	7,230	7,900	2.8	9.3
9	Ireland	7,007	7,640	2.7	9.0
10	Japan	4,134	5,283	1.9	27.8
11	Argentina	4,589	4,763	1.7	3.8
12	India	4,345	4,593	1.6	5.7
13	South Africa	4,337	4,540	1.6	4.7
14	Brazil	3,485	4,060	1.4	16.5
15	Mexico	4,167	3,815	1.3	-8.4
16	Ecuador	3,107	3,572	1.3	15.0
17	Czech Republic	3,291	3,477	1.2	5.7
18	Israel	3,441	3,189	1.1	-7.3
19	Chile	3,280	3,064	1.1	-6.6
20	New Zealand	2,900	2,969	1.0	2.4
21	Denmark	2,478	2,876	1.0	16.1
22	Greece	3,428	2,701	1.0	-21.2
23	South Korea	2,487	2,695	1.0	8.4
24	Peru	2,448	2,680	0.9	9.5
25	Austria	2,736	2,657	0.9	-2.9

### K. TOP FIELDS OF STUDY of U.S. Study Abroad Students

Field of Study	2010/11		2011/12		% Change
	Total	%	Total	%	
Social Sciences	62,745	22.9	63,427	22.4	1.1
Business	56,169	20.5	58,091	20.5	3.4
Humanities	30,962	11.3	30,667	10.8	-1.0
Physical or Life Sciences	21,646	7.9	24,413	8.6	12.8
Fine or Applied Arts	22,468	8.2	22,138	7.8	-1.5
Health Sciences	14,522	5.3	16,138	5.7	11.1
Foreign Languages	15,344	5.6	14,890	5.3	-3.0
Education	11,508	4.2	11,539	4.1	0.3
Engineering	9,590	3.5	11,149	3.9	16.3
Math or Computer Sciences	4,932	1.8	4,861	1.7	-1.4
Agriculture	3,562	1.3	3,360	1.2	-5.7
Other Fields of Study	13,150	4.8	14,294	5.0	8.7
Undeclared	7,398	2.7	8,365	3.0	13.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>273,996</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>283,332</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>

### L. HOST REGIONS of U.S. Study Abroad Students

Host Region*	2010/11		2011/12		% Change
	Total	%	Total	%	
Sub-Saharan Africa	11,878	4.3	12,859	4.5	8.3
Asia	32,081	11.7	35,016	12.4	9.1
Europe	149,663	54.6	151,143	53.3	1.0
Oceania	13,156	4.8	12,755	4.5	-3.0
Middle East & North Africa	7,206	2.6	6,947	2.5	-3.6
Latin America & Caribbean	40,000	14.6	44,677	15.8	11.7
North America	1,426	0.5	1,639	0.6	14.9
Antarctica	37	0.0	42	0.0	13.5
Multiple	18,549	6.8	18,254	6.4	-1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>273,996</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>283,332</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3.4</b>

\* Cyprus and Turkey are included in Europe; Mexico is included in Latin America

### M. PARTICIPATION RATE of U.S. Students in Study Abroad, 2011/12

	U.S. Study Abroad Total	U.S. Higher Education Total	%
All US students studying abroad in 2011/12	283,332	19,626,742*	1.4
All US undergraduates who study abroad during their degree program	245,649	2,624,996**	9.4
US bachelors students who study abroad during their degree program	238,566	1,680,530**	14.2

\*Total enrollment of U.S. students (excluding international students) in higher education.

\*\* Undergraduate degrees awarded to U.S. students (excluding international students).

### N. DURATION of U.S. Study Abroad

	2010/11 %	2011/12 %
Short-term (summer or eight weeks or less)	58.1	58.9
Mid-length (one or two quarters or one semester)	38.0	37.9
Long-term (academic or calendar year)	3.9	3.2

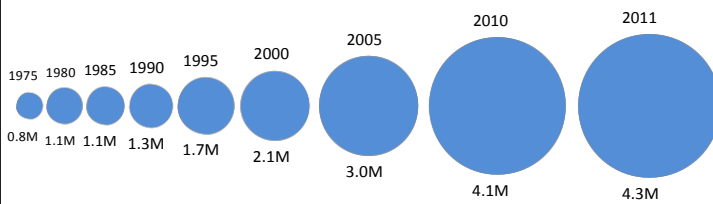


# Project Atlas®: Trends and Global Data 2013

## About Project Atlas:

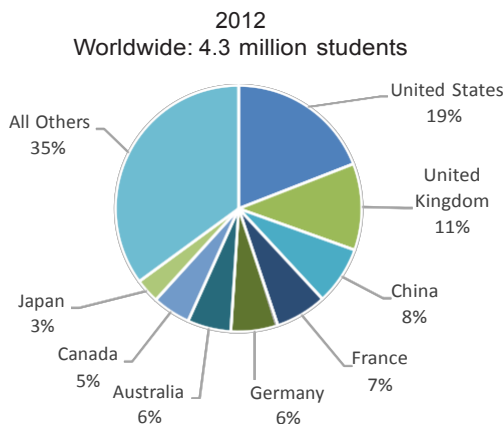
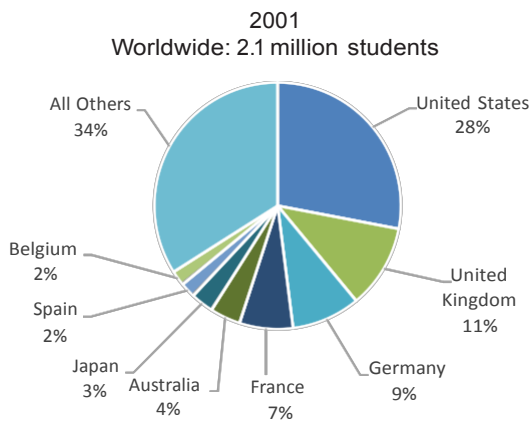
Project Atlas® was launched in 2001 with support from the Ford Foundation and is now supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and the participating organizations in each country. The goal of this collaborative global project is to share accurate and timely data on student mobility at the higher education level, addressing the need for improved research on academic migration and comparability of mobility data among leading host and sending countries.

### A. International Students Worldwide, Selected Years



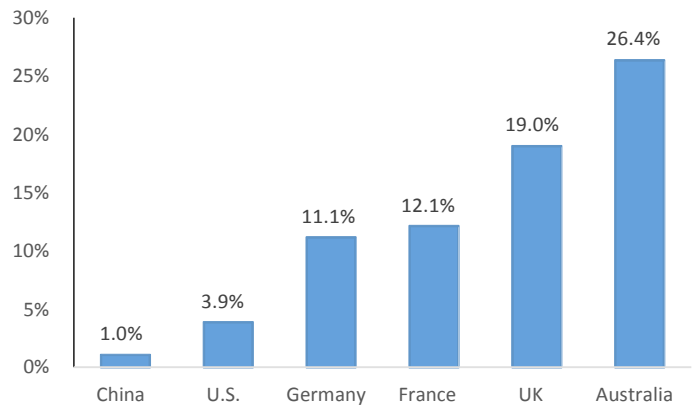
Source: OECD Education at a Glance, 2013

### B. Top 8 Host Countries of Globally Mobile Students



Source: Project Atlas

### C. International Enrollment as a Percentage of Total Higher Education Enrollment for Top Countries, 2011/12



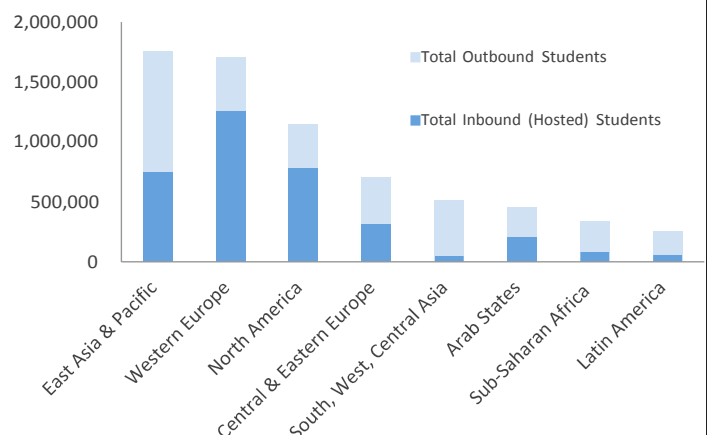
Source: Project Atlas

### D. Top Host Destinations Worldwide, 2011 and 2012

Destination	2011 Total Int'l Students	2012 Total Int'l Students
United States	764,495	819,644
United Kingdom	480,755	488,380
China	292,611	328,330
France	284,945	289,274
Germany	252,032	265,292
Australia	242,351	245,531
Canada*	193,647	214,955
Japan	138,075	137,756

Source: Project Atlas; \*Data from Canada is an estimate

### E. Global International Educational Exchange Balance, 2010



Source: Project Atlas and UNESCO, 2012

## Appendix B: U.S. Accreditation and International Education (Steven Crow)

### TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

In the United States quality assurance in higher education is highly decentralized, mirroring in many ways the nation's significant diversity among higher education institutions. Moreover, external quality assurance, or accreditation as it is called in the U.S., is provided by private organizations created and controlled by institutions of higher education and/or the professional programs they offer.

There are two basic types of accreditation: institutional and specialized. Both have long and distinguished histories, with institutional accreditation first offered by a regional association in 1913, just a few years after the American Medical Association created an agency to accredit medical programs. As professions proliferated, so did associations offering specialized accreditation. Today seventy specialized agencies exist. Most but not all only accredit programs housed in institutionally accredited institutions. Two institutional tracks have existed for many years: regional accreditation provided through multi-state commissions and national agencies, several for for-profit institutions but a few for highly specialized, religious, and non-degree granting institutions. Today six geographic regions house seven different institutional agencies while eleven other national agencies offer institutional accreditation.

Validation of these various agencies is also decentralized. Institutional and specialized agencies that choose to serve as "gatekeepers" for federal student aid and research funds must seek and hold recognition from the U.S. Department of Education. The regional agencies, some qualified national agencies, and most specialized agencies also choose to seek recognition from an independent organization, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). A few specialized agencies base their validity primarily on reputation and/or connections to state licensure processes.

**Almost every diploma mill establishes a fraudulent agency for its own accreditation, many with official-looking links to very legitimate organizations and including the names of many legitimate, accredited institutions. For international students it is therefore important that they seek confirmation that the institution or program they want to enter holds accreditation(s) from an agency recognized either by the Department of Education (<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>) or CHEA (<http://www.chea.org/Directories/index.asp>).**

Institutional accreditation, especially regional accreditation, has always claimed to include everything that an accredited institution does under its name wherever it does it. Most accreditation executives would agree that the real focus of external quality assurance is on education and training, and even then much more on credit-bearing courses and programs than others such as non-credit bearing continuing education offerings. Institutionally branded auxiliary enterprises such as study and research centers and corporate incubator programs, seldom figure into accreditation activities unless they might constitute a financial drain on the institution.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, accreditors defined international endeavors in two ways: (1) study abroad programs for registered and enrolled students and (2) recruitment and admission of international students who studied in the U.S. Most institutional accreditors broadly addressed study abroad by asking about faculty approvals of the programs and on-going review of the credits they carried. It was possible that some institutions with large student abroad programs received more focused attention, particularly those serving as the coordinating/credit-granting institution for several other colleges. One region, the Middle States Association, created good practices for study abroad programs and actually sent evaluation teams to many study abroad sites. Most accreditors, however, relied solely on interviews conducted on campus, and most did not devote significant attention to study abroad. With recruitment and admission of international students, most regional accrediting agencies deferred to NAFSA for best practices, often deciding that an institution's NAFSA membership and participation served as sufficient evidence of implementation of appropriate practices. Of course, large or unusual populations of international students triggered some focused attention during an on-site evaluation visit. With the exception of MSA, as mentioned above, most regional agencies had no separate standards related to either, relying on the agency's broadly worded standards on quality assurance of academic programs and implementation of good practices in recruitment and admission.

In the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, new developments in international education called for a response from accreditors. Delivery of U.S. credit-bearing education abroad was the first. There was some talk about proclaiming that U.S. accreditation stopped at the water's edge, but ultimately all commissions agreed that they must find ways to extend institutional accreditation to include these new ventures.

The delivery by U.S. accredited institutions of credit-bearing education abroad by U.S. accredited institutions took several forms. Some institutions

- delivered a single degree in an international site, often staffing it with U.S. faculty who travelled abroad and/or a few academically qualified ex-pats;
- established separate campuses abroad, delivering several degree programs all ostensibly under the control of the home campus (NOTE: In the 1980s Japan alone had over two dozen U.S. institutions delivering programs on newly-constructed campuses throughout the nation);
- partnered with an international institution and awarded degrees to its students who ostensibly completed a U.S. approved curriculum;
- offered site-based add-ons to existing locally offered programs, usually variations of the latter two years of a baccalaureate degree delivered on campuses of a two year institution/businesses;
- entered into relationships with an international institution that involved granting U.S. credits to students who started their education abroad but ultimately transferred to and completed a degree in the U.S. ("twinning").

It took institutional accreditors a few years to appreciate the fact that all of these ventures were something different from U.S.-based “off-campus” sites, although almost all initially extended accreditation by relying on their policies and procedures for “off-campus” sites. By the 1990s, most regional accreditors implemented programs to assure on-site visits to international sites, even those with relatively small enrollments. Through those visits, most discovered that the “duplication-replication” model for off-campus sites simply did not fit the dynamics of providing effective and relevant education abroad. While the regional commissions failed to adopt a uniform set of rules for these international endeavors, all of them in one way or another tried to extend meaningful evaluation to them.

While it should probably seem beyond question that U.S. degree and program offerings should be in English, there have been a few exceptions, all clearly identified in the program and the degree. In some unique situations, U.S. institutions have offered a specialized program for personnel in an international agency providing U.S. content but in the language specified by the host agency.

Following the international educational offerings of a U.S. accredited institution/program was one major task. Extending U.S. accreditation to non-U.S. institutions was a very different challenge. Two regional associations, for a variety of reasons, extended U.S. accreditation to international campuses. Many international institutions with the name of “American University of . . . (Cairo, Beirut, London, etc.)” were incorporated in New York or Washington, D.C., and sought and gained accreditation from Middle States. They were U.S. based institutions that offered education only in an international setting. A few Mexican branches of institutions accredited by the Southern Association ultimately broke from the U.S. parent institution and sought and won separate accreditation from SACS. In the latter twenty years of the Twentieth Century, institutions around the globe sought U.S. accreditation. A few succeeded, but primarily those whose development as a matter of national policy had been paired with a U.S. university and who through that pairing had been under the umbrella of U.S. accreditation. Middle States was the most ambitious regional, for a few years extending accreditation to U.S.-styled institutions in the Middle East and Canada.

A somewhat unseemly discussion emerged about just which U.S. regional agency should be dominant in what geographic area even as regionals gave serious consideration to creating a new agency solely for extending U.S. regional accreditation to foreign institutions. Today each regional agency with the exception of The Higher Learning Commission (excluded by its bylaws from offering accreditation to foreign institutions), extends accreditation to one or more international institutions and claims to have made that extension following agency policies and procedures and applying the same standards applied to U.S. campuses.

Although federal financial aid can follow U.S. students to institutions holding U.S. accreditation abroad, the federal recognition process essentially pays little attention to the matter. CHEA, however, over the past ten years has tried to position itself as the definer of best practices, and most recently amended its recognition requirements to explicitly include the extension of U.S. accreditation in international settings.

## IMPLICATIONS

1. U.S. degrees are U.S. degrees wherever they are granted. A receiving institution cannot on its own say, as some have done, that a degree earned abroad is “not valid.” Nor should it refuse to honor such degrees simply because they were earned away from the home campus, even the U.S. But it can certainly determine whether the contents of the degree are appropriate to the institution’s requirements for admissions, particularly at the graduate level. U.S. regional agencies typically determine whether the international course offerings are of a length and rigor appropriate to the awarding of a degree, but they often allow for comparability rather than duplication (for example, general education offerings may be localized as long as they emphasize the basic skills expected in such a course). Flexibility in upper division course content is more limited. Specialized accreditation undoubtedly limits it even more. Nonetheless, as in the U.S. some students complete a degree without taking courses that might be considered prerequisites to graduate study in a given field.
2. U.S. credits are U.S. credits wherever they are granted. A receiving institution cannot on its own say, as some have done, that credits earned abroad are “not valid.” As with any other credits, the receiving institution is free to determine whether the learning in a course is substantially equivalent to the learning expected by the receiving institution or whether the content mirrors appropriately an institution’s requirements.
3. Admissions to U.S. programs offered abroad should be similar to if not exactly the same as admissions requirements for international students studying in the U.S.: language proficiency, successful passing of any screening tests, and so forth.
4. The receiving institution should feel free to contact the accrediting agency and ask for clarification of the offerings at an international setting and to confirm that those offerings are included in the institution’s accreditation. Unfortunately, the agency will use the privacy shield to protect most information, but it should share how the international site has been evaluated for inclusion under the institution’s accreditation umbrella.

**This is important, for in a few situations in past years, deans—even a few presidents—of schools signed agreements unknown to the home institution. Some agreements to “cooperate” led to inadvertent misrepresentation and use by the international “partner.” Official-looking but unauthorized degrees and transcripts circulated. Almost all regionals have reasonably dependable institutionally specific information available on their websites, but when the information is unclear, it is always wise to contact the agency. USE THE WEB SITE, NOT A PUBLICATION WHICH CAN BE RAPIDLY OUT OF DATE.**

## Appendix C: Technology in Support of International Admissions (Dr. William J. Paver & V. Shelby Stanfield)

*“How today’s technology can aid both university effectiveness and global student mobility”*

### Technology in College Offices

We are experiencing a revolution in technology that is ever present in our everyday lives. If we don’t feel the impact directly, just look at the generations who have followed us. Technology can no longer be identified as a specific object in-and-of itself; rather it is infused in objects we use every day. Technology is ubiquitous.

Interesting though, that our processes and procedures have yet to realize this revolution, and in many cases at best, we observe a gradual evolution in our adoption of technology into our office operations. We must shift our perspective from technology as individual solutions to weaving technologies together as components of our total work systems; an ecosystem if you will, that comprises, balances, and integrates people, culture, practices, principles, methodology, and tools into an interlocking framework that contributes to an outcome we strive to achieve. As opposed to thinking about *technology*, we should be thinking about automation and information access. And, given tools readily available today, automation and access should not be limited to geographical boundaries, yet approached broadly to both national and international operations. Obviously this could have a direct effect on the security of exchanging international records and impact processing processes that would save both time and money.

### Technological Innovations

One such line of thinking is The Groningen Declaration. The Groningen Declaration calls for an integrated global solution in the form of a nodal network of trusted central student data depositories. In particular, the Declaration calls for making current systems internationally compatible and data more easily comparable, as well as promoting the acceptance of digital student data.

In U. S. higher education, and in our work in the area of foreign credential analysis, we have seen the creation, adoption, and maturation of technology and technological approaches, which have automated numerous administrative operations. Along with the development of large data bases and information now available on the INTERNET for credential evaluation, another of the most significant technological advances is in the area of electronic data exchange.

SPEEDE (Standardization of Postsecondary Education Electronic Data Exchange) was the seed of an idea that began from a small beginning in 1996, and now, some 17 years later has matured into a US national standard to aid the electronic exchange of education records within this country. SPEEDE was developed

to tackle the problem created by the increase in labor-intensive manual operations. As of August 2013, the SPEEDE Server, developed and implemented by The University of Texas at Austin, has delivered over 38 million educational documents since its inception in September 1996. Averaging almost 6 million documents per year, the savings realized by the institutions using SPEEDE technology for the processing of educational records is tremendous. SPEEDE is used by hundreds of institutions nationally in the US to send, receive, store, and process huge amounts of student and curricula data via automated systems. The benefits are tremendous; ranging from personnel and process costs, to time-savings, to the preservation in the accuracy and integrity of crucial institutional data assets

Student mobility is growing in popularity as students are increasingly earning educational credentials from more than one higher education institution, and often from institutions in different countries. Institutions in the US are enrolling students from countries other than the United States in greater numbers than ever before. In addition to enrolling students from countries other than the US, US institutions are seeing a significant increase in domestic students studying abroad. With the growth in student population and student mobility, we also see the growth in paper documents being sent from institution to institution internationally. Expanding the elements of SPEEDE to international operations can yield equally impressive results.

## **Standards and Authenticity in Technology**

In the world of electronic data exchange, standards in the United States are set by the American National Standards Institute (aka ANSI). Called Transaction Sets, ANSI sets standards for how you organize data elements to create data files for electronic transmission of digital documents. ANSI doesn't necessarily develop these standards themselves, but rather will pass as standards the proposals that are submitted to them by parties representing the industry for which the standard will serve. Standards are critical to support a later principle mentioned in this article and should be developed in the exchange of international records.

Even in the best of controlled environments, manual operations are prone to human error. Once automated and tested, processes such as accessing, sending, receiving, processing, and storing electronic documents are extremely accurate. Research shows that even in the most tightly controlled conditions, operations that are performed by hand result in a 3% margin of error. However, well tested automated processes reduce such margin of error to a nominal amount. Maintaining the accuracy and integrity of our student records is paramount to higher education. Nothing is more crucial to our profession than ensuring our student records are complete and uncompromised throughout the entire administration.

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) and AACRAO recognize fraud, particularly document falsification, as becoming a serious problem in higher education, receiving attention worldwide. EAIE goes on to state that to overcome the challenges arising from heightened international mobility, diversity in educational credentials and fraud, the EAIE has been involved in the development

of a global network of centralized student data depositories which aims to make digital student data portability a reality.

Within the SPEEDE framework, via the use of encryption technologies as well as transcript and functional acknowledgements, fraud detection and unauthorized data changes are easily identified. There is any number of proven techniques to ensure the authenticity of documents upon receipt.

Lastly, the numbers of students, and documents, are vast. Any solution developed to effectively manage the storage and exchange of education records must scale to significant numbers. Supported by advances in computing power, interoperable networks, open systems based on national and what should become international standards, applied principles of technology will meet the demand for these large scale networks and data depositories to scale to the size needed.

If we see the same trajectory in computing power, network bandwidth, and open systems architecture and data storage capabilities, the only limiting factor would be for those with the vision, courage and willingness to pioneer new development beyond their traditional borders.

The capacity to integrate these technologies and systems into the work of credential evaluation are evident and important. Reducing fraud, speeding the transmission of records, being able to automatically load records and manipulate the information in them, will become important aspects of our work. The Taskforce recognizes the importance of ensuring that the field of credential evaluation is in tune with these developments and is an active participant and supporter of these efforts.

## **Publishing and Technological Training**

*We are now at a place in time where the future of print publications, except in rare circumstances, will not constitute where credential analysts draw their research. Web based publications, government and institutional web sites etc. will be the places we go to identify and verify the information we require. AACRAO should provide basic, intermediate and advanced training in how to conduct this research with an end goal of producing researchers who can manage the most complex problems faced in evaluating credentials and come to sound, definitive, and well reasoned solutions.*

*Training could be offered at the Summer and Winter institutes, the Annual Meeting and at state and regional associations. It is essential that we train interested parties to the highest level possible and expect that this core of highly trained professionals can provide the leadership the field will require in the coming years.*

## Appendix D: Assessment of Study Abroad (Dr. John Yopp)

*The **purpose** of study affects the **assessment** of study abroad programs and of the participants' credential evaluation. (e.g. preparation for careers, liberal education, life-long learning, etc.)*

### ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS

The “purpose of study” has two interrelated aspects. These are, first and foremost, the purpose and interests of the study abroad students. Secondly, the purpose (i.e. mission, nature, goals, implementation effectiveness, stated outcomes, and marketing) of the study abroad program (provider) must be understood for appropriate assessment. The intersection and interaction of the “two purposes” are, in themselves critical for assessment of both. Whether the provider is an institution of higher education or a third party, the institutional purposes “(e.g. internationalization of the campus or global inter-cultural literacy of the graduates) and how well they are achieved are considerations important to the second purpose.

The “purpose of study” also differs substantially with respect to the nature of the participant in study abroad. Most international students come to the United States or a country other than their own, for an undergraduate or graduate degree. Students from the United States generally study abroad for a **short-term** (summer or eight weeks or less), a **mid-length** (one semester or one or two quarters) or a **long-term** (academic year) educational experience. These studies are done while enrolled, or after accepted, in their home institution and preferably for receipt of credit that can usually be applied to their degree program. The Institute of International Education (IIE)'s Open Door research program tracks and publishes the percentage of U.S. students participating in the programs of these three durations. The majority of U.S. students participate in short-term programs (58.1% - latest Open Doors) and this type continues to grow.

The structural and organizational nature of the study abroad program certainly contributes to “purpose”. The program may be led by faculty from the sending institution with different degrees of programmatic relationship to the students or by faculty/staff from another institution or third-party provider. The “purpose” may be curricular immersion that includes off-site living quarters or living with a host family.

“Purpose” is influenced by whether the program is linked to reciprocal exchange or one-way study. If purpose includes interaction of the students from both sides of the exchange, the nature of the program can be substantially different. It is also increasingly influenced by the growth of “Gap Year” programs and initial educational and cultural experiences in high school study abroad programs, both of increasing frequency.

U.S. institutions of higher education have, in the last two decades, experienced increasing demand for service learning programs as part, or entirely related, to the study abroad experience. Here the purpose of study reflects the changing societal and philosophical attitudes of the current generation of students.

Study abroad programs and the interests and attitudes of student participants are often influenced by another “purpose” on the part of sponsors, third-party providers, and sending and host institutions. This is service as ambassadors for American society and participation in public or “soft” diplomacy. This is generally part of the marketing, orientation, and pre-departure preparation of students in study abroad programs of all types.

The “purposes” of study abroad on the part of the students may be individually “purpose-driven” and related to educational requirements, institutional encouragement, public diplomacy, or satisfaction of extra-curricular personal developmental interests or curiosity. Commonly, they are multiple, complex and increasingly experiential. These include:

- Having a self-reflective experience in another country and culture to better understand themselves as an American in a less known and challenging environment
- Learning about another country, its people, politics, society, and its culture and educational system
- Gaining skills that will enhance their potential for jobs and professions in a globalized economy and world
- Earning credit toward their degree in a different country and educational system
- Broadening their educational experience in liberal education and acquisition of transferable skills for life-long learning
- Taking advantage of unique research opportunities in universities or particular locations
- Acquiring relevant experience in an internship related to educational and professional advancement
- Satisfying a desire for learning about and serving the societal needs of others through service learning
- Satisfying a desire for an exotic experience and adventure
- Choosing a length of study that meets time, financial, and scheduling constraints while providing a quality experience
- Taking advantage of a “gap year” program offered by their higher education institution for any of the above reasons
- Being a cultural ambassador for America, American students, and the U.S. Education System thereby serving a public diplomacy role

The purposes of study abroad on behalf of the sending institution or organization should be primarily student participant-centered. In this sense, these relate to the above-mentioned student “purposes”. However, achievement of the desired purposes (outcomes) of the program *per se* also

relate to the stated mission and goals of the institution (e.g. internationalization and graduation of “globally literate” students prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace) or other provider (e.g. affordable, high quality experience, servicing the educational institution).

The two-fold, interrelated purposes of study abroad described above do affect the nature of assessments of study abroad programs, presenting major challenges to measuring outcomes because so many are non-cognitive.

**The most relevant questions are what should be assessed for measuring outcomes and who provides that answer.** Valid and reliable assessments are required to measure the extent to which participants achieved these outcomes and to determine the degree to which the study abroad program met the claims made in its description (or marketing) and implementation. Validity refers to extent to which an assessment is actually measuring what it was **purposed** to measure.

*What should be assessed should then ideally correspond to a set of standards of best practice for study abroad programs that also take into consideration the purposes and interests of the student participants. Such standards should be developed by an organization representing a substantial consensus of the study abroad community.*

The Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, developed by the Forum on Education Abroad, meet these essential criteria. In addition, the U.S. Justice Department recognizes the Forum as the “Standards Development Organization (SDO)” for education abroad.

The Forum’s Board of Directors and its Forum Council explicitly confirm that the standards are “open, balanced, transparent, and the product of consensus.” ([www.forumea.org/standards-standards.cfm](http://www.forumea.org/standards-standards.cfm)). The nine standards were designed to cover the diverse complement of study abroad programs, including direct enrollment, institutional and third-party provider, hybrid, field research, service learning, and island programs of all three lengths of study. The Forum recognized that the type or organization or provider was a variable with respect to implementing the standards but “decided against creating standards documents to fit different kinds of organizations”.

Particularly relevant to measuring outcomes matched to the Forum’s Standards of Good Practice is that each has an accompanying and detailed set of derived **queries**. These **queries** are the means whereby organizations can develop outcomes and valid assessments to evaluate how well they meet the standards in relation to the institutions’ or organizations’ stated mission and goals, as well as the participants’ purposes of study. The outcomes derived from the queries can also be used to assess student learning and development and course credits and credentials earned. In other words, each query can be re-written in the form of a claim or outcome upon which directly related assessment items can be created. The types of assessments that can be created are discussed later.

For purposes of illustration, the following are some of the Standards’ queries that relate to the assessment of study abroad programs, courses, student learning and development, and credits and credentials earned:

### Standard 1. Mission

Query a. iii: How does the organization define expected outcomes?

Query b: The organization regularly collects and analyzes data to assess the degree to which it is achieving its overall mission and its mission and its mission statement for each program and utilizes these findings to assure continuous improvement.

Query b. iv: How do these assessment processes purposefully correspond to the institution's mission statement and program objectives?

### Standard 2. Student Learning and Development

Query a. Inter-cultural understanding:

Query a. v: What assessments are made of students' comparative knowledge of multiple cultures before and after the program and compared to those of a control group?

Query a. vii: What assessments are made of students' abilities to adapt to a different culture?

Query c: Academic growth:

Query c. i: How do courses available to students effectively support students' academic progress in their major fields or their general education?

Query c. ii: How does the program integrate its curriculum with curricula of the students' home institution?

Query c. iv: How often is the curriculum assessed by faculty from sending institutions?

Query d. Student Development: The program provides opportunities that encourage student development (e.g. leadership skills, service orientation, maturity, tolerance for ambiguity).

Query d. iv: How are student development skills assessed before and after the program and compared to those of a control group?

### Standard 3. Academic Framework

The organization maintains clearly stated and publically available policies on academic matters related to education abroad; regularly reviews them for relevance and effectiveness; and implements appropriate changes as needed.

Query a. Academic Credit: The organization has clearly stated and publically available policies on the awarding of academic credit.

Query a. i: How clearly articulated are the organization's policies and procedures for awarding or recommending course grades and course credit?

Query a. ii: How consistent is the award of academic credit with the standards expected by the students' home institutions.

Query b. Academic coursework

Query b. i: How well do courses meet the academic requirements of students' home institutions?

Query b. ii: If courses are taken at a host institution abroad, how does the program ensure that students will be appropriately evaluated in the courses?

Query b. iii: If courses are taken at a host institution abroad, how do the provider and/or organization ensure that the amounts of credit and grade conversions are based on clear and careful guidelines?

Query b. v: How clear are the guidelines provided to students for what is expected of them, for how performance in the course will be evaluated, and on the host country teaching styles and expectations?

Query b. viii: If the program involves direct enrollment in host university courses, how effectively does the program advise students on enrollment in courses that best suit their interests, needs, and preparation? *(This query is of singular importance in that it brings together the purposes of study of the participant and those stated by the program, thereby linking the two interrelated assessments.)*

Query b. x: How effectively does the program make use of modes of instruction, assessment, and learning at the site that may differ from the home institution models?

Query c. Internships and Field Research

Query c. v: How consistent is the award of credit for internships, or field research with home institution standards for awarding such credit?

Query g. Career Planning: The home institution has a process in place to stay abreast of academic and co-curricular offerings on its programs and provides program selection advising that takes into account a student's career goals and interests.

Standard 6. Policies and Procedures

Query a. ii: What are the organization's standards for accepting and reporting student credits from a program?

The other five Standards have derived queries that are essential for defining the quality, effectiveness, and fairness and other ethical dimensions of study abroad. Assessments incorporating the outcomes and claims based on them directly influence determinations of program quality and student satisfaction.

The examples provided above also illustrate how Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad relate those purposes for student participation in study abroad and the study abroad programs (i.e. missions, goals) to the evaluation of participants' credits and credentials earned. This is particularly the domain of the queries derived from Standard 3: Academic Framework.

The queries derived from this standard call for assessment of how clearly articulated are the provider's policies and procedures for awarding or recommending course grades and credit; the need for appropriate evaluation for equivalency to the host institutions' standards; the credit conversions for transfer to the host institutions; and, importantly, how evaluation will be related to credit.

**The next relevant question is how to evaluate student performance in a manner that allows credit to be awarded for course equivalency transfer, and credential evaluation.**

The award of credit for student performance and its accumulation toward a degree or qualification differs significantly among the educational systems of different countries. Acceptance and transfer of credit essentially require determination of equivalency to the credit earned and accumulated to the host institution and/or the determination that the credits earned or degree earned will satisfy the admissions requirements for a program leading to another, generally higher degree.

In that student mobility is truly international and involves millions of students from virtually all of the countries of the world (see IIE's Open Doors for figures), few institutions have the resources and expertise to evaluate credential and degree equivalency.

There is a need as never before for trained professionals in international admissions and credential evaluation within the provider organizations as well as within faculty and staff that serve these functions in higher education institutions. Equally important, because of the historically high mobility of international students, between institutional types and countries with differing educational systems, there is great need for cooperation between the professional organizations and between these groups and the faculty and staff in the sending and receiving institutions.

One of the most relevant, and certainly the most studied example, of the influence of different educational systems on credential evaluation and credit determination is the types of degrees now created and awarded in Europe as a result of the Bologna Process. Many of these are three-year bachelor's degrees that institutions awarding them feel are equivalent to the four-year degree awarded by U.S. institutions. This is an issue of great importance to holders of the "Bologna-compliant" three-year degrees who apply for admission to the U.S. graduate programs.

It is likewise a major issue for U.S. graduate schools because the holders of the three-year bachelor's degrees are generally highly qualified for admission based upon their strong performance in the

disciplinary major of the degree sought. This is borne out by subsequent success in U.S. graduate programs. Surveys by the Council of Graduate Schools, the IIE, and other organizations over the past decade showed increasing acceptance of the three-year Bologna-compliant degrees by U.S. graduate schools. However, satisfaction of graduate admissions requirements and equivalency of the three-year and four-year bachelor degrees are not necessarily the same. This is made obvious by the lack of the liberal education requirement (i.e. general education), an essential component of the U.S. baccalaureate, in the major-intense curriculum of the Bologna-compliant, three-year degree. This is not to rule on the acquisition of the learning outcomes and programmatic equivalences during the secondary education programs of these European students.

Complicating this issue of equivalence and satisfaction of graduate admissions requirements is the consideration of fairness in at least two dimensions. First, what about the acceptance of three-year bachelor's degrees from non Bologna-participating countries? Some major professional organizations in admissions and credential evaluation made this a major issue. Secondly, some in the U.S. educational and political arenas questioned the fairness (and expense) to U.S. students having to satisfy a four-year requirement.

Graduate education researchers have pointed out that the fairness issues require internationally accepted quality assurance and transparent credential evaluation.

The principal international admissions and credential evaluation organization utilized by U.S. higher education institutions, the non-profit American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), did effectively address the equivalency versus qualifications for admissions question in a policy statement involving leaders from its international and international credential evaluation constituency. The prior creation of EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education) within AACRAO by these leaders gave the community an informed service for comparing the educational systems of the world. The resultant policy statements include:

“So even though EDGE continues to deem a four-year degree to be most comparable to the U.S. bachelor's degree, it is also clear that Graduate Departments of U.S colleges and universities may consider admitting qualified applicants to their programs. Given the preparation that graduates of Bologna-compliant degree programs possess, EDGE suggests that, under certain conditions, U.S Graduate Schools may wish to admit these students to their degree programs.”

The “certain conditions” include the criteria of adequate preparation matching major fields of study, national quality assurance, and institutional and program equivalency.

Equivalency and adequacy of preparation for admission are only one side of the equation, however. The other side is the determination of, and comparability of how, credit is related to educational performance and achievement of the students in different higher education systems. This is the essential feature governing credit transfer and, hence, student mobility.

Again, the most relevant example of this issue is the comparison between the system of determining and awarding credit with its accumulation towards a degree, in Bologna-compliant countries and the U.S. This is a comparison of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the U.S. Carnegie Credit Hour System.

The signatory countries of the Bologna Process have recognized the ECTS as one of the “cornerstones” of the European Higher Education Area and a principal tool to reform and make comparable the diverse national education systems of Europe. It is a student-centered system of credit accumulation and transfer based on **student workload** required to achieve the objectives of a program of study. These objectives are ideally specified in terms of student learning outcomes. These outcomes are sets of competencies that express what the student knows, understands, and is able to do after completion of the specified process of learning. Student workload is calculated in large, multi-national comparison studies, involving both the instructors and students, as the time required to accomplish all of the learning objectives. Sixty ECTS credits measure the workload (class time, study time, times for all assignments, etc) of the average, full-time student over the course of one year. Therefore, one ECTS credit equates to 25 to 30 hours of work. Credits are awarded after the work is completed following an appropriate assessment (details are in the ECTS User’s Guide of the Directorate General for Education and Culture).

Among the important tools in the ECTS User’s Guide is the system used to calculate comparable grades for students from the different educational systems of Europe based on comparable percentages of student achievement in the courses.

The guide for the credit and credit transfer policies of U.S. higher education institutions is found in the joint statement on the transfer of credit of AACRAO, ACE, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

The U.S Carnegie Credit Hour System has been traditionally based on time-and location for recording learning (classroom hours of instruction). Although instructors can estimate and recommend how many hours (i.e. workload) beyond classroom hours or seat time are expected for a credit, this varies widely by course format, course delivery mode, and instructor objectives. More importantly, the estimate varies by degree of preparation and other student characteristics. In the U.S., unlike Europe and many other countries following the Bologna Process practices or modifications of it, the credit hour system is also closely tied to faculty workloads and is employed for other administrative uses related to determine costs and efficiency of instruction. While there is evidence of attention to this issue, the process of change is justifiably deliberate and slow.

**The potential unifying feature for achieving comparability and equivalency in evaluation of credits and credentials is the practice in both systems of measuring student achievement in terms of student learning outcomes and mastery of program competences.** This is directly achieved in the ECTS system and is called for in the policies governing measurement of student achievement in the regional and professional accreditation bodies in the U.S. It has become an

increasingly utilized practice in U.S. higher education institutions with the focus on “real world” applications and needs.

One example is the system of “competency-based education” (e.g. Western Governor’s University) in which the degree is awarded after specifically designed assessments verify student acquisition of the learning outcomes and competencies in required subject areas. The system employs time to achieve the specified and required student learning outcomes and competencies rather than seat time. The participating students pay for time in the program rather than credit hours.

Of wider import in this key issue in the U.S. is the widespread adoption by U.S. institutions of higher education of the LEAP (Liberal Education and America’s Promise) initiative to reform higher education of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Key to this initiative is its definition of “essential learning outcomes”. These are “clear descriptions of the knowledge, skills, responsibilities, and applied learning that college graduates will need as thoughtful people, as democratic and global citizens, and for economic opportunity and success.” These require “authentic assessments” which “challenge students to present their best work rather than only grades and number of credit hours earned..”(AAC&U Statement on the Lumina Foundation for Education’s Proposed Degree qualifications Framework, 2011). The AAC&U’s statement goes further:

“The existing standards that guide our enterprise are based mainly on credit hours which signify time spent in formal courses...this may have made sense when it was introduced a century ago, but the credit hour approach is seriously out of touch with society’s current need for graduates who can adapt and expand existing knowledge to meet new challenges and unscripted problems in every sphere of life- personal, economic, civic, democratic, environmental, global. “ This is consistent with earlier calls by ACE for acquisition of “global literacy” and of authentic assessments of it.

AAC&U also states that this is the “right time to move examinations of the meaning of a degree to a new level of shared focus.”

**How could the meaning of what constitutes a degree in a specific disciplinary area be determined?**

An agreement on the essential core of a discipline’s learning outcomes and program competencies seems to many stakeholders concerned with credit awarded and credit transferred to be an important first step. ***Most importantly, how can this be determined by faculty, with the input of other stakeholders, without leading to standardization of the degree program, loss of cultural distinctiveness, and compromise of the autonomy of the higher education institution?*** These concerns and assurances were built into the goals of the Bologna Process to reform European Higher Education. However, any degree of standardization to achieve comparability requires attention to these concerns and they continue to exist among educators in the international community. Any reform should be done for the good of the student, the society that will be served by the learning outcomes and competences achieved by the student, and the quality and relevance of the educational systems impacted.

**How then can the relevant and core learning outcomes and competences of a disciplinary degree program be determined to assure transparency and comparability without the undesirable compromises described above?**

One example is also seen in Europe. In order to support the reform goals of the Bologna Process, a group of higher education institutions launched the “Tuning Educational Structures Project 2000”. This project partnered with the European organizations responsible for the recognition of academic and professional degrees in the European Commission and council of Europe/ENESCO in order to create a process of defining **degree profiles** for each discipline. The degree profile created by the disciplinary faculty consists of the:

- Title (name of degree)
- Purpose of the degree program
- Characteristics of the program
- Employability of the graduates
- Education style
- Programme competences
- Student learning outcomes

These are described in detail in the CORE2 project and [A Tuning Guide to Formulating Degree Programme Profiles](#)).

The Lumina and Hewlett foundations created and funded a pilot program based upon the European Tuning model but adapted to the U.S. educational system called Tuning USA (2008). This is currently described in the Foundations’ operational partner and implementer, the Institute for Evidenced-Based Change’s (IEBC) [Tuning American Higher Education: The Process](#).

Five individual states, a Midwestern consortium of states, a U.S.-wide professional association, and several other groups have engaged or are currently engaged in the Tuning USA project.

The Tuning USA project and process differ from the European Tuning process in its adaptation to the decentralized U.S higher system (i.e. no Ministries of higher Education). However, the Tuning process outcomes are similar. The Tuning USA produces a **Degree Specification** that is virtually identical to the European **Degree Profile**. Yet, again because of the decentralized U.S. system, the Tuning USA process must localize the degree specification within the participating universities according to their curricular integration processes.

**[What is the possible relevance of the Tuning Process in Europe and so many other countries of the world \(those of Latin America, Europe outside the EU, Africa, Asia, and Australia\) to international credential evaluation and credit transfer processes ?](#)**

The Tuning leaders in the European CORE2 project propose the following potential uses:

- An informational component in the degree descriptions of the catalogues of higher education institutions ( of importance to students, employers and receiving institutions)
- Addition to the Diploma Supplement
- An information source for recognition authorities (e.g. admission officers and credential evaluators) to evaluate the qualification as it provides additional information not found in catalogues, the Diploma Supplement, and transcripts
- A useful source of information for obtaining accreditation for a program because accreditation procedures are increasingly focused on student learning outcomes at the program level

Each of these uses for the Degree profile could be considered for the Degree Specification product of the Tuning USA process.

Another current difference between Tuning in Europe and Tuning in the U.S. is that the former process provides tools for determining factors that influence ECTS calculations regarding workload.

These differences in determining credit and equivalencies of degrees constitute continuing problems for credential evaluators but these recent educational reform initiatives offer promise for their resolution.

### **What types of assessments could be developed to determine the extent to which the purposes of the participants and their study abroad programs have been met?**

The type of assessments to be used to assess study abroad programs and the extent to which the purposes of their participants have been met should be principally based on the queries derived from the Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad of the Forum on Education Abroad for reasons given above. Other sources may include NAFSA's Best Practices and Lumina's Degree Qualifications Profile. These queries make it obvious that the desired outcomes are both cognitive and non-cognitive. The assessments must measure both.

The queries from the Standards also make it obvious that some component of the assessments must be formative in nature (e.g. "utilize the findings to assure continuous improvement"). Likewise, the assessments must include pre-and post study abroad experiences and measure the knowledge, attitudes, inter-cultural development skills acquired before and after the program. The psychometric and ethical issues in identifying and using appropriate control groups must be addressed.

It is also clear that the queries should be re-written in the form of student learning outcomes and program competences. In other words, focus should be on outcomes that reflect what the participant now knows, understands, and is able to do. These may be similar to those designed to measure "competency-based education".

Strong consideration should be given to developing **systemically valid tests**. It is understood that a problem of validity arises if an educational system (like study abroad) adapts itself to the characteristics of the outcome measures.

Systemically valid tests are those "that induce curricular and instructional changes in an educational system (and learning strategy changes in students) that foster the development of the cognitive (and

non-cognitive-added) traits that the tests are designed to measure”. (Fredriksen and Collins, A Systems Approach to Educational Testing – CTE Technical Report Issue, No 2, 1990). In addition to **indirect, objective tests**, it is appropriate to consider **direct, subjective tests** that “directly reflect and support the development of the higher level aptitudes and traits they are supposed to measure.” The change in the participants’ achievement of the outcomes relative to their purposes in doing study abroad should be a component of the overall test validity. “A test’s validity cannot be evaluated apart from the intended use of the test (Messick, Validity, 1988).

### Recommendations for Next Steps/Solutions

1. Examine and evaluate the nature, purpose, effectiveness, transferability, equivalency, and fairness of the systems of credit determination and transfer worldwide. This would include the ECTS conversion scale for grades earned by students from all European educational systems to the ECTS equivalents,
2. Research how the practices for conversion of ECTS credit to the U.S. credit system by professional evaluators be improved.
3. Consider how the Degree Profiles and Degree Specifications from the Tuning European Structures and Tuning USA could or should be used in the EDGE country profiles.
4. Discuss the possibilities for AACRAO/EDGE providing professional development training for faculty and staff in departments, admissions offices and Study Abroad Centers. This would include how to better use the EDGE information and how to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their study abroad programs. Professional development of a parallel nature is offered by NAFSA and third-party providers of study abroad.
5. Use the queries derived from the Forum’s Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad as a principal basis for developing assessments of study abroad programs and achievements of the purposes of participants in these programs.
6. Add to the assessment, the nature of, and the extent to which, **student services** contribute to the achievement of the purposes of study abroad from both the standpoint of the student and the program.

# Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions

## Preamble

*In response to a growing need for policy guidance on issues related to the delivery of programs and services to international students, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), with guidance from members of the international education community, has developed this Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions (Bill of Rights). As signatories to the Bill of Rights, we reserve the right to display the official logo signifying our support of the principles and practices articulated herein.*



## Definitions

*An **international student** is defined as any person engaging in learning outside of his or her country of citizenship.*

*An **institution** is defined as any institution or entity providing information, facilitating the enrollment of or providing learning opportunities to international students or scholars.*

*The **international community** is defined as a complex system of educational entities, government agencies, private organizations, regulatory bodies and individuals delivering education programs and services.*

## **ARTICLE I: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS of the International Student**

### **Section 1**

International students have the right to know who the provider of educational services is and all of the provider's affiliations.

### **Section 2**

International students have the right to a clear explanation from the institution to which they are applying of the admissions process and documentation necessary to complete their admissions dossiers.

### **Section 3**

International students have the right to a clear and complete explanation and description of the academic course offerings and the approximate time normally required to complete an intended program from the institution to which they are applying.

### **Section 4**

International students have the right to receive a clear and accurate account of all costs for the academic year or a reasonable estimation of the full cost of their educational program. This should be explained in application material sent to them by the institutions to which they are applying. International students also have the right to a clear and detailed explanation of costs for services provided by placement agencies or other third parties assisting them in the admissions process. Such service costs should be readily distinguishable from the standard costs associated with a course of study at the students' intended institutions.

### **Section 5**

International students have the right to know what personal information is collected about them, why it is being collected and how they may review their files and correct any errors. International students should have assurance that personal information about them may be used only by those persons with a legitimate right to know.

### **Section 6**

International students have the right to have their applications for admission and their prior learning experiences evaluated by admissions officers or credential evaluators trained to evaluate international applications and learning.

### **Section 7**

International students have the right to a clear explanation from their home institution of whether, or the extent to which, course work at their host institution may be transferable to their program of study at their home institution.

### **Section 8**

International students have the right to services and information that support their unique needs as international students, such as counseling on immigration regulations, cultural adjustment, orientation to the host institution, and information on insurance and taxes.

**Section 9**

International students have the right to have their language abilities assessed to determine if their skills are sufficient to enable them to benefit from the host institution's academic course offerings.

**Section 10**

International students have a right to a clear and complete explanation of all legal requirements governing their enrollment, including how to maintain their student status.

**Section 11**

International students have ownership rights over their intellectual works unless the works are subject to specific published institutional policies to the contrary or ownership rights are relinquished by the students.

**ARTICLE II: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES of the International Student****Section 1**

International students shall be honest in their representations to institutions, government entities and others in the international education community. International students shall abide by the host institutions' honor systems. Fraud or misrepresentation of achievements are valid reason for expulsion from the institution.

**Section 2**

International students shall recognize, honor and properly attribute the intellectual property of others.

**Section 3**

International students shall adhere to the laws, rules and regulations of the host nation and institution.

**ARTICLE III: RIGHTS of Educational Institutions****Section 1**

Educational institutions have the right to establish appropriate admissions criteria and deadlines consistent with their educational programs.

**Section 2**

Educational institutions have the right to establish appropriate and realistic deadlines for completion of the international student's program.

**Section 3**

Educational institutions have the right to deny admission or continuing enrollment if evidence proves fraud or lack of achievement by the international student.

**Section 4**

Educational institutions have the right to be informed if an international student is being assisted in admission by a placement agency or other third party.

**ARTICLE IV: RESPONSIBILITIES of the Educational Institution****Section 1**

Educational institutions claiming an affiliation with another institution shall explain to students the nature of their affiliation, particularly as it might relate to the recognition of academic credentials. Similarly, the institution's official recognition or accreditation shall be disclosed to students.

**Section 2**

Educational institutions shall provide students with a clear explanation of their admissions process and what documentation is necessary to complete the students' admissions dossiers.

**Section 3**

Educational institutions shall provide students with a clear and complete explanation and description of the academic course offerings and the approximate time normally required to complete the intended program.

**Section 4**

Educational institutions shall provide students and their financial sponsors with accurate information about all reasonable costs for the academic year or an estimation of the full cost of their educational program. This information should appear in literature provided to prospective students with application materials. Placement agencies or other third parties assisting students in the admissions process shall provide students with a clear and detailed explanation of the costs associated with these services. These service costs should be readily distinguishable from the standard costs associated with a course of study at the intended institution.

**Section 5**

Educational institutions, upon request of the student, shall let the student know what personal information is collected about him or her, why it is being collected and how the student may review the file and correct any errors. Institutions shall treat all files on students as confidential, examining or disclosing the contents only when authorized by the owner of the information, approved by the appropriate institutional official on a need-to-know basis, or as required by law. Institutions shall develop, implement, and maintain security procedures to insure the integrity of their files.

**Section 6**

Educational institutions shall ensure that students' applications for admission and their prior learning experiences are evaluated by admissions officers and/or credential evaluators trained to evaluate international applications and learning.

**Section 7**

Educational institutions considered home institutions shall provide clear explanations as to whether, or the extent to which, students' course work may be transferable to their programs of study in their home countries.

**Section 8**

Educational institutions shall provide services and information that support the unique needs of international students, such as immigration regulations, cultural adjustment advising, orientation, insurance, and tax information.

**Section 9**

Educational institutions shall assess whether international applicants possess sufficient command of the language of the host country to ensure that students will benefit from the academic course offerings. If the institution lacks proficiency programs to remedy an applicant's language deficiency, it shall not admit the applicant until he or she shows evidence of facility in the host language.

**Section 10**

Educational institutions shall inform international students and their financial sponsors of all legal requirements governing the students' enrollment.

*December 1996*

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**Permission:** Permission is hereby given to make and distribute copies of the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions for non-profit purposes on condition that the Bill of Rights or any publication in which it appears is attributed to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Please forward a copy of the publication in which the Bill of Rights appears to AACRAO, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520 Washington, DC 20036-1135.

**Information:** Questions or comments regarding the Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions should be addressed to AACRAO at the above address or voice: (202) 293-9161 or Fax: (202) 872-8857.

## Appendix F: Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

AACC	American Association of Community Colleges
AACRAO EDGE	Electronic Database for Global Education
AAI	Africa America Institute
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
ADSEC	Admissions Section of NAFSA: AIE (see below)
AICE	Association of International Credential Evaluators
AIFS	American Institute for Foreign Study
AMIDEAST	America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc.
AMPEI	Mexican Association for International Education
CEC	National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board
CGFNS	Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools
CHEA	Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CIEE	Council on International Education Exchange
CIES	Council for International Exchange of Scholars
CGS	Council of Graduate Schools
DS-2019	Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (aka <i>Form DS-2019</i> )
DSO	Designated School Official who has authority to sign Forms I-20 and DS-2019
EAIE	European Association for International Education
ECE	Educational Credential Evaluators
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System European
EDGE	Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE)
Education USA	US Department of State advising centers for foreign students wishing to study in the United States (see also REAC)
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ETS	Educational Testing Service
I-20	Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status (aka <i>Form I-20</i> )
IERF	International Education Research Foundation
IES	International Education Services (AACRAO, see also OIES)
IESC	International Education Standards Council (AACRAO EDGE)
IIE	Institute of International Education
IPAC	International Publications Advisory Committee (AACRAO)
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
JCOW	Joint Committee on Workshops (of AACRAO and NAFSA)
LASPAU	Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas
NACAC	National Association for College Admissions Counseling
NACES	National Association of Credential Evaluation Services

NAFSA	National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (see also NAFSA: AIE)
NAFSA: AIE	NAFSA: Association of International Educators (formerly NAFSA)
NAGAP	The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation
OIES	Office of International Education Services (see also IES)
OPE	Office of Postsecondary Education (US Department of Education)
PIER	Projects for International Education Research (see also AACRAO WES)
REAC	Regional Education Advising Center (US educational advising centers abroad)
SEVIS	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SEVP	Student and Exchange Visitor Program (formerly SEVIS)
SPEEDE	Standardization of Postsecondary Education Electronic Data Exchange
The Alliance	Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange
The Forum	Forum on Education Abroad
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USCIS	US Citizenship and Immigration Services
USIA	US Information Agency
USICE	US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
WES	World Education Series (AACRAO series of country studies, see also PIER)
WES	World Education Services

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