

FOREWORD

Global Learning: Shifting from an Option to a Priority

In the past decade, the importance of global awareness and engagement has increased significantly for students at US colleges and universities. Initially, institutional efforts focused on structural changes to facilitate the mobility of students and scholars and to increase the number of participants in global learning activities to enrich the experiences of students on the home campus. However, as global work on campuses has matured, external actors such as employers and accreditors have also made a strong case for global learning. This maturation has caused an intentional focus on student learning; institutions have gone from counting participants to focusing on quality and on what students are learning, doing, and applying across the disciplines.

In this digital information age, it is impossible to ignore the interconnectedness of the world in daily life and work. Local problems have global connections and implications, and these problems cannot be solved by individuals in a single country. Food and water security, health and economic disparity, sustainability and fair trade are global issues by nature, and students need to be prepared to address these problems in the broader context of the world, not just the United States. With intentional, high-quality global learning, students are prepared to engage multiple perspectives as they explore the seemingly unanswerable, contested questions of our times. They are also given multiple opportunities to evaluate evidence from diverse sources and consider the varied ramifications in different global contexts. It is in this spirit that this publication was written. As institutions across our nation and the world are grappling with these issues, they have gone beyond simply including the words international or global in their mission statements to identifying ways to provide students with meaningful understanding, engagement, and experience with global issues.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has been a leader in advancing integrative global learning for nearly thirty years. This work has been done hand in hand with a wide range of member institutions from all types, and it has been done for students across majors and disciplines. Global learning is no longer viewed as important just for students who focus on area studies and world languages; it is important for *all* students—from STEM to the health sciences to education. To support institutional efforts to provide global learning for all students, AAC&U has continued to provide resources and materials to assist institutions as they develop and revise their curriculum to reflect more global integration, and *Models of Global Learning* is another useful tool to explore how global learning initiatives can move from ideas to well-integrated efforts across institutions.

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Shared Futures was AAC&U's multi-year, multi-project initiative, funded by the Henry Luce Family Foundation from 2005 to 2013. The emphasis of the initiative was integrating global learning into general education and the majors, but it also created institutional and cross-campus networks of interdisciplinary global learning scholars. Based on their interviews with participants from the initiative, *Models of Global Learning* authors Indira Nair and Margaret Henning have identified key elements for institutional practices and approaches to advance and sustain global learning once the external support ends. Curricular change is never easy, and the examples shared in this publication provide sound advice to guide this type of change. The importance of shared language and common understanding is highlighted, and most participating institutions found this to be an essential step to start the process as well as to maintain globally focused work across the institution. It is still critical to guide understanding of global

learning beyond study abroad because, although study abroad is one aspect of global learning, it is synonymous with global learning on many campuses. Once a common language is established, offices, departments, schools, and units must be integrated to ensure the common definition of global learning guides the work of faculty, staff, and students, and to facilitate promotion of global learning activities in cocurricular and curricular experiences to engage the big problems and challenges of society. Professional development must also be offered widely to support faculty and staff, including interoffice and interdisciplinary planning, thinking, and collaboration. Opportunities for collaboration among academic and student affairs must also be explored and cultivated. Finally, assessment of global learning is another key dimension that has been underdeveloped at some institutions. With increased awareness and use of the global learning VALUE rubric, more initiatives are beginning the assessment process to determine the impact of global learning initiatives.

In *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*, AAC&U's 2015 employer survey conducted by Hart Research Associates, findings showed that nearly 96 percent of employers agreed that students needed to be able to solve problems with people with different views from

their own, and 78 percent felt students needed intercultural skills and understanding of societies and countries outside the United States. These are the types of skills that students learn from high-quality global learning experiences. These types of experiences require an investment of time by the administration, faculty, and staff to create structures that allow ethical community-based learning, meaningful engagement with people from diverse backgrounds, and the development of transparent, intentional assignments that are guided by clear global learning outcomes. Students must be prepared for this type of experience, and they should be able to clearly articulate their learning when they graduate. These are the types of experiences that all students should have, and *Models of Global Learning* provides strong examples and structures to lead institutions to develop high-quality global learning for all.

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