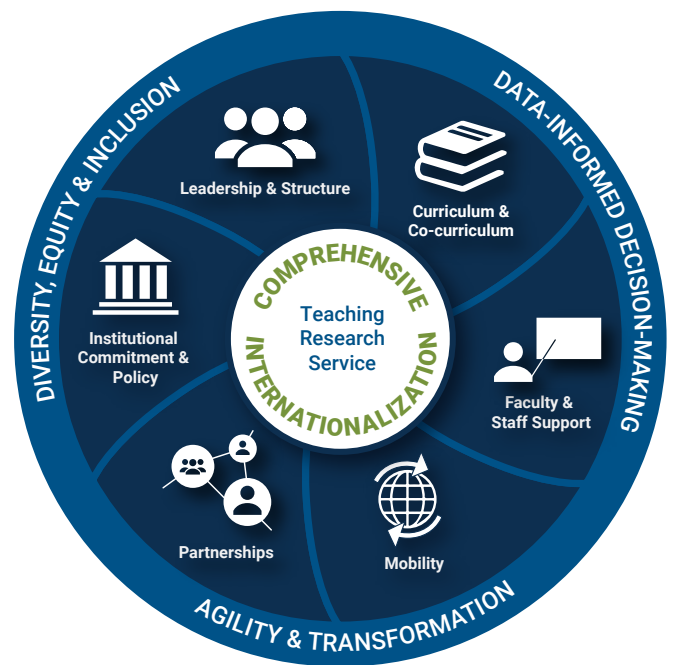


INTERNATIONALIZATION LAB

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION?

ACE defines comprehensive internationalization as a strategic, coordinated framework that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to make colleges and universities more globally oriented and internationally connected. In order to foster sustainable and just global engagement, the comprehensive internationalization model embraces an organizational growth mindset. It frames internationalization as an ongoing process rather than a static goal. To that end, it recognizes that all constituents at a college or university—students, faculty, and staff—are learners and central to the institution’s equitable, intercultural transformation. Intentional comprehensive internationalization is not an ancillary enterprise, but a means to advance an institution’s distinct teaching-research-service mission. In short, effective internationalization cannot happen in a few siloed offices, confined to certain disciplines, or reserved for a limited number of students. Internationalization is a collaborative, integrated ethos, the meaning of which must be discerned by each institution in the context of its unique mission and culture.



WHAT IS INTERNATIONALIZATION AND HOW IS IT RELATED TO GLOBALIZATION?

Globalization is a pervasive and contemporary reality. It is defined as the movement and interdependency of ideas, people, goods, capital, services, and organizations as well as threats that cross borders, such as environmental and health challenges. Internationalization is higher education’s intentional engagement with that reality. It not only impacts an individual institution, but the way an organization and its people relate to their local, national, and global community. Anchored by the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), internationalization is a means for understanding and advancing human and technical connectivity; fostering local and global interdisciplinary research and teaching; supporting social, economic, and civic development; and propelling higher education forward as an equitable and agile public good.

Based on scholarship, work with a variety of institutional types in and outside the U.S., and collaboration with colleges and universities through the [ACE Internationalization Laboratory](#), ACE has identified six interconnected target areas that require strategic attention and resources in order to achieve truly comprehensive internationalization and advance higher education’s teaching, research, and service missions. Together, these areas compose the [ACE Model for Comprehensive Internationalization](#), focused by three critical strategic lenses in the outer ring.

BRINGING INTERNATIONALIZATION INTO FOCUS

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Lens

This lens addresses the role of institutions, individuals, and internationalization in racial, economic, and social justice. It means going beyond numerical diversity to ensure that students and employees of all backgrounds feel that their campus is equitable, welcoming, inclusive, and supportive. Inclusive and equitable campus climates have a meaningful, positive effect on student persistence and success and faculty and staff engagement. They play a key role in realizing higher education's potential to address education and social equity gaps beyond the institution. Justice-oriented internationalization is critically self-reflective. It requires institutional and international leaders to actively consider who is part of planning and decision-making. It recognizes the vital importance of internationalization at home—that all students deserve and have access to a global education that prepares them for a contemporary, diverse workforce. It cultivates internationalization that is anti-colonial, anti-racist, and globally and locally inclusive. Whether through teaching, research, or civic engagement, equitable institutions promote historical and global understanding of systemic discrimination and injustice. They and their leaders account for national, economic, demographic, sexual, sociopolitical, gender, physical, and linguistic diversity, along with neurodiversity. Overall, they recognize their institution and its constituents as agents in the broader local and global context.

Agility & Transformation Lens

Agility is an institutional willingness and capacity to evolve structures and practices in response to or, ideally, in anticipation of disruptive forces. Institutions that are comprehensive, mission-driven, strategic, and adaptable demonstrate core stability and capacity to not only be resilient, but to grow—to transform—in adverse situations. They leverage current resources along with innovative, entrepreneurial thinking to explore creative solutions in time of crisis. The transformation lens is a strategic, coordinated, intentional process through which higher education institutions align and integrate policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals. This process enhances the institution's local and global value proposition and empowers it to better serve its mission and increasingly diverse students, faculty, and staff. This lens emphasizes that internationalization is not static, but an ongoing journey of transformation, discernment, and growth.

Data-Informed Decision-Making Lens

A data-informed decision-making lens ensures that internationalization goals, progress, and outcomes are developed from a foundation of institutional self-study, measurement, and ongoing assessment. Being data-informed means building metrics into initiatives and goals from the beginning and asking thoughtfully, “How will we know?” Institutional research or decision support staff are involved in helping leaders identify global engagement assets and challenges across the institution. Metrics and collective reflection provide a qualitative and quantitative way to take stock, analyze, and make sense of actual strengths and barriers to learner and organizational success—moving beyond perceptions and assumed narratives. Data-informed strategies include careful, inclusive listening across a broad spectrum of institutional stakeholders and a focus on growth mindset learning and development for students, faculty, and staff.

COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION TARGET AREAS

Institutional Commitment & Policy

Internationalization requires priority in an institution's strategic plan. This is an explicit commitment by institutional leaders or, for systems with centralized governance, national higher education managers. A more specific internationalization strategy includes provisions for iterative improvement, assessment, and implementation. A critical part of developing institutional commitment is organizational self-reflection. In addition to identifying assets, opportunities, challenges, and barriers through data gathering and dialogue, an institutional community discerns essential questions about their commitment to global engagement, such as:

- **What does internationalization mean** to our institution/system's unique mission, culture, and community?
- **Why** should our institution internationalize? What are our hopes for global engagement? What would we dream for our organization if time and resources were not an issue?
- **What role** will our institution play in the local, national, and global landscapes? How does our institution connect and contribute sustainably to each of these communities?
- **Who are the stakeholders** we should involve in our discernment and decision-making? Who has been left out of past conversations? How can we engage inclusively and creatively to leverage diverse perspectives and experiences? How do we involve and meld voices from all areas and levels of the institution?

Strategic plans provide a roadmap for implementing goals and policies that align with an institution's response to these questions. Formal assessment mechanisms reinforce that commitment and hold leaders accountable. Policies that align with and systematize the institutional commitment ensure that equitable global engagement extends beyond a public statement, is sustainable, and provides agility for growth and improvement.

Leadership & Structure

The involvement of senior leaders and appropriate administrative and reporting structures form an essential framework for internationalization and institutional transformation. These include the president and chief academic leaders; offices that are designated to coordinate campus-wide global engagement, international student services, and off-campus learning experiences; and units that are responsible for research, institutional research, faculty development, student support services (e.g., academic advising, counseling, career exploration), enrollment management, finance, community and alumni relations, and advancement. Critical staffing and structural support include:

- **A committee or task force** that leads internationalization and carries the implicit directive of the president or provost so that members prioritize their responsibilities, and their work is taken seriously across the administration and campus units.
- **International leadership** that reports directly to the chief academic officer or president and, ideally, regularly interacts with and advises the institution's top leadership.
- **Adequate human and financial resources** that account for ongoing assessment, communication, and coordination across campus units, and agility to respond to shifts in the higher education and global landscapes.

Curriculum & Co-curriculum

As the core mission of higher education, student learning is a critical element of internationalization. The curriculum is the central pathway to learning for all students regardless of their background, goals, abilities, or the type of institution they attend. An internationalized curriculum ensures that all students are exposed to international perspectives and that they can build global and intercultural competence at home regardless of their study focus. Workforce-ready global competencies are included in institution or system-wide learning outcomes and assessments. Co-curricular programs and activities deliver high-quality learning experiences that complement course-based instruction and align with competencies and skills for working in a diverse postgraduate environment. The following elements contribute to making this possible:

- **Undergraduate general education/first-degree compulsory curricula** require focus on foreign language, regional studies, global issues, and intentional opportunities for self-reflection, intercultural interaction, and identity exploration. All students engage with global and national issues of historical and contemporary racism, colonialism, and systemic injustice.
- **Courses in each major, program of study, discipline, or research area are internationalized** by incorporating international perspectives and highlighting global issues in the field. They provide a global and historical context as well as resources and scholarship.
- **Co-curriculum** programs and activities address global issues, reinforce international and intercultural elements of the curriculum, facilitate discussion and interaction among learners of different backgrounds, and support the integration and success of diverse/international students, faculty, and staff. Learners have opportunities to engage with culturally diverse individuals and organizations in the local community through projects and partnerships with just reciprocity and collaborative development.
- **Technology** is used in innovative ways to enhance global learning; communication and social skills; research; and collaboration through interactions with students, faculty, and staff abroad. This might be facilitated through collaborative online international learning (COIL), research partnerships, virtual exchange, guest speakers, or administrative collaboration.

Faculty & Staff Support

As the primary drivers of teaching and knowledge production, faculty play a pivotal role in learning, research, and service (to varying degrees depending on an institution's unique mission). Their commitment is imperative to the success of internationalization. Institutional policies and support mechanisms ensure that faculty have opportunities to develop intercultural competence themselves and are able to maximize the impact of these experiences on student learning, research, and service. Professional development including workshops, seminars, and other programs are provided to help faculty and staff share expertise; explore classroom innovations; mentor and advise students and junior colleagues; and address challenges in teaching, learning across disciplines, and administrative work with diverse students and colleagues. Tenure (for faculty) and promotion (for faculty and staff) guidelines reward those who contribute to the work of brainstorming, implementing, and assessing internationalization, institution and community partnerships, global research connections, student success, and mobility opportunities. This might be done in the following ways:

- **Tenure and promotion policies** state explicitly that international work and experience, as well as efforts that significantly advance institutional equity and inclusion practices, should be considered in tenure and promotion

decisions. **Incentives and rewards** are provided to encourage faculty and staff to engage with the local and global communities. Successful institutions or departments use various approaches, such as financial incentives; opportunities to teach and research globally; recognition through publicity, awards, or special titles; fundraising or grant-making assistance; and support for employee participation in outside programs (e.g., Fulbright, externally hosted training).

- **Hiring guidelines** include international and diverse backgrounds, experience, and interests among the criteria upon which faculty and staff candidates are evaluated.
- **Faculty and staff mobility** is recognized as an asset. Faculty and staff have opportunities to teach, conduct research, participate in virtual exchange and collaboration, and attend domestic and international conferences. Administrative and funding mechanisms, as well as promotion and tenure policies, support employee participation in outside programs (e.g., Fulbright, externally hosted training).
- **On-campus professional development** is expected, encouraged, and rewarded. Workshops, seminars, and other programs help faculty and staff build intercultural competence and incorporate diverse and global perspectives into their teaching, research, service, administrative responsibilities, and local-global community connections.

Mobility

Mobility refers both to the outward and inward physical movement of people (students, faculty, and staff), programs, projects, and policies to off-campus communities and other countries to engage in learning, research, and collaboration. Technology has expanded the opportunity for mobility to include academic engagement of all learners beyond their domestic borders. This might be accomplished through collaborative online international learning (COIL) or virtual exchange; research cooperation; faculty and staff exchanges or expertise shared virtually; internship and service experiences; and virtual partnerships. Equitable, intentional mobility includes:

- **Inclusive accessibility.** All students have physical or virtual global education opportunities. Funding and financial aid support all types of learners from across the disciplinary spectrum. Technical infrastructure and training are available for all students, faculty, and staff to succeed in virtual and off-campus spaces. **Assessments** continually explore whether in-person, off-campus, and virtual mobility opportunities are equitable and inclusive for students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds. Special consideration is given to environmental sustainability and the social, economic, and cultural impacts of off-campus mobility in particular.
- **Funding and financial aid.** Student financial aid is applicable to approved study away programs, and resources are available to help students locate additional funding. Scholarships and other funding are available for international students. Funding is available or applications for external financing are supported for both in-person and virtual faculty and staff mobility.
- **Ongoing support and programs for international students.** Academic and social support structures and programs facilitate international students' full integration into campus life, from the time of enrollment through their alumni experience. This includes development opportunities for domestic faculty, staff, and students and emphasis on their role creating an inclusive environment for learners from all backgrounds.
- **Orientation and re-entry programs** help students maximize learning during in-person and virtual mobility programs so they may integrate knowledge, identity development, ethical engagement, and self-reflection into their academic program of study and/or research. Academic and cultural orientation sessions are provided for all incoming international students, faculty, and staff, as well as domestic learners who interact with them.

Partnerships & Networks

Partnerships and networks, both internal and external, can be local or international, primarily transactional, or they can generate new ideas and programs that span all partners. These relationships—essential to comprehensive internationalization—bring different viewpoints, resources, activities, and agendas together to illuminate and act on global issues. They provide global and intercultural experiences for faculty, staff, and students; expand research capacity; enhance the curriculum; generate revenue; diversify knowledge production; and raise the visibility of institutions domestically and globally. Regardless of the relationship format, ethical standards of practice, commitment to mutual benefit and decision-making, sustainability, and awareness of historical and systemic injustices (e.g., North-South power dynamics, partisan town-gown relationships) are paramount. So are articulated institutional guidelines, policies, and procedures for selecting partners, sustaining relationships over time, keeping records, and reviewing the entire institutional partnership portfolio. Partnerships can originate either top-down or bottom-up, but effective ones derive their strength from bridging these two poles over time. Three categories of institutional collaboration include:

- **Partnerships with institutions, organizations, governments, and communities abroad.** These include student exchanges, education abroad arrangements, and other forms of curricular collaboration (e.g., 2+2 programs, binational student cohorts that travel together back and forth, COIL classrooms). They also include research collaborations and centers, and joint development and capacity-building projects. These relationships require strong long-distance communication plans; legal compliance; deepening knowledge of the partner institution and nation; and navigating different cultural, national, and academic structures.
- **Local and community collaborations.** Organizations, governments, and individuals in the local community often have deep international or cross-cultural connections, backgrounds, and knowledge. They can provide research partners for faculty and experiential learning opportunities for students. Academic institutions can partner with immigrant and diaspora populations, ethnically and racially diverse sub-communities, primary and secondary schools, civic organizations, and globally connected businesses. Individuals from such groups and organizations are invited to institution-hosted initiatives and to be partners in knowledge production, learner development, and civic engagement programs.
- **Internal institution networks.** Many units across an academic institution or system have knowledge of and ownership for inclusive, intercultural engagement. The central global affairs office works collaboratively with an array of administrative and academic units to design research, teaching, and service initiatives that support diverse faculty, staff, and students and communicate internationalization successes internally and externally. It is particularly important for the international office to collaborate with those who carry out diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as those connected to student success, civic engagement, career development, enrollment management, finance, community and alumni relations, and advancement.