

Thursday, February 19

8:00 AM–1:00 PM: Conference Information Desk Open

8:00–9:00 AM: Breakfast with Exhibitors

Join sponsors and exhibitors in the Exhibit Hall for breakfast and informal conversation. Learn what's new, exchange ideas, and explore how international education leaders and industry partners can work together to address today's challenges and shape what comes next.

9:00–10:00 AM: Leadership Impact Block A

Professional Flourishing for SIOs in a Volatile World: Your Own Oxygen Mask First (RT)

We rightly focus, understandably so, on best practices and initiatives that serve our students, faculty, and institutions. But what are we doing to take care of ourselves--whether it's advancing our own professional development, prioritizing our mental and physical well-being, or preparing for life after being an SIO? In an age of unprecedented disruption, this roundtable will discuss the challenges to flourishing, and the means of finding fulfillment in turbulent times.

Presenter(s): Sonia Feigenbaum | Marta Wayne

Assuming the SIO Role: Leveraging the AIEA Professional Standards

Assuming leadership in higher education always brings challenges both expected and unexpected. New/transitioning SIOs need to quickly develop new skills to navigate new responsibilities, train (or re-train) new staff, negotiate new reporting relationships, manage budget constraints, and explain "what is an SIO, anyway?" This interactive panel will highlight opportunities to lean on the AIEA Standards of Professional Practice to guide new SIOs as they become the primary advocate for international education at their institution.

Presenter(s): Mandy Brookins | Jamie Weaver | Todd Lee Goen | Patricia Sagasti Suppes

Risk Management in Contracting and International Agreements

Effective risk management in international contracting involves bridging domestic and international legal expertise with international expertise while considering institutional risk tolerance, operational capacity, funding, and resource availability. This session will discuss key considerations for contracts with travelers, labor relations, institutional partnerships, and vendor contracts. Discussion will include evolving risk appetites, considerations in the current political environment, and leveraging positions during the negotiating process.

Presenter(s): Julie Pollard | Terence Miller | Tamara Cunningham

AI Won't Replace You—But It Will Expose You: Leadership in International Education's Next Frontier

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping international education, from student advising to admissions and credential verification. But the deeper challenge is leadership. This session explores how emerging technologies expose gaps in policy, ethics, and strategy - and what senior international officers must do to respond. Through case examples and interactive scenarios, participants will develop a framework for evaluating tools, drafting guardrails, and leading their institutions with confidence in the age of AI.

Presenter(s): Blair Thomson | Gretchen Neisler | Girish Ballolla

Meet-Up: Community of Practice for Partnerships Professionals

Does your work involve initiating and managing global partnerships? Please join the Community of Practice of Partnership Professionals (CoPP) – a growing group of higher education professionals working on international partnerships – for networking and discussion. This meet-up is a chance to hear updates from the leadership team of the CoPP on opportunities to get involved in 2026. There will also be ample time for discussion on topics we're all facing in our work in partnerships.

Presenter(s): Krista Northup | Eric Wirth | Stacy Burger | Tamara Cunningham | Sarah Olson

Using Worldbuilding Design Strategies to Foster Adaptive Leadership in Complexity

Traditional strategic planning practices have long been the staple of designing for the future of international education. However, the rate and pace of change in our field and the complexity of the pressures driving those changes require new ways of thinking and more adaptive leadership strategies. This session explores the value of applying worldbuilding design principles as an adaptive strategy for identifying the emergence of new opportunities in international education.

Presenter(s): Jennifer Evanuk | Tina Rousselot de Saint Ceran | Lorie Paulez

Action Session: How to Write a Thematic Forum Proposal

Ready to bring your Thematic Forum idea to life? Join this interactive info session to demystify the proposal process, unpack key components of a competitive submission, and gain practical tips for success. We'll workshop proposal elements in real time and hear briefly from past Forum hosts who will share lessons learned and insider advice. Whether you're refining a proposal or exploring a new idea, leave feeling confident, prepared, and supported to submit a strong application.

Presenter(s): Jolynn Shoemaker | JY Zhou | Elizabeth Langridge

10:15–11:15 AM: Leadership Impact Block B

Action Session: AIEA Presidential Fellows: What's New & How to Submit a Competitive Application

Join AIEA Presidential Fellows sub-committee chair Roopa Rawjee to learn about updates to the program, understand the components of a successful application, and envision your professional development with the help of this prestigious award.

Presenter(s): Roopa Rawjee

Meet-Up: Academic Leadership Community of Practice

Curious about the academic side of education abroad? Meet members of the Academic Leadership Community of Practice (ALCoP), affiliated with The Forum on Education Abroad, for an engaging meet-and-greet. Learn how the ALCoP fosters collaboration among professionals focused on academic content, delivery, and administration, and discover opportunities to share ideas, tackle common challenges, and connect with peers in similar roles within this supportive, dynamic community of academic leaders.

Presenter(s): Andrea Custodi | Rebecca Pisano

Generative Reflections (RT)

Conference conversations often leave us inspired—and wondering what comes next. This facilitated reflection session creates space, in small and large groups, for participants to process key insights, share takeaways, and translate learning into next steps. Through guided discussion, attendees will identify what resonated most, what challenged their thinking, and how they can apply conference learning in their own institutional contexts. The session is designed to help participants move from energy to intention, making learning more concrete and actionable.

Presenter(s): Ramesh Neupane

From Risk to Resilience: Peer Strategies for International Agreement Success (RT)

This roundtable invites international education professionals to explore how institutions can proactively manage legal, reputational, and operational risks in international agreements, particularly in politically sensitive regions. Through collegial dialogue, participants will share strategies for stakeholder alignment, faculty engagement, and evolving compliance frameworks.

The session emphasizes practical tools, shared experiences, and collaborative approaches to navigating complex global landscapes with clarity, confidence, and mutual support.

Presenter(s): Marianne McClelland | Stacy Burger | Daniel Katz

Metaphors, Messages, and Strategy: Research on Leading Internationalization Through Complexity

Three doctoral researchers, each with years of senior-level international education experience, present new studies on how leaders use language, metaphor, and strategy to steer institutions through complex political, policy, and social conditions. Drawing on phenomenology, critical narrative analysis, and cross-institutional synthesis, the panel examines how leaders frame challenges, adapt approaches, and sustain momentum under pressure. Participants will take away research-informed frameworks they can adapt to strengthen their own leadership practice in institutional and global uncertainty.

Presenter(s): Iyonka Strawn-Valcy | Chad Hoseth | Tina Rousselot de Saint Ceran

Clarity Before the Pivot: Leading Through Complexity in International Education

In volatile policy environments, institutional clarity is more critical than ever. This session offers a practical framework for helping international education leaders cut through internal ambiguity, align strategy with shifting mandates, and build adaptive teams. Drawing on leadership coaching work with deans and senior faculty, we'll explore how to lead through noise, recalibrate in real time, and maintain coherence amid external disruption; without losing sight of your global mission.

Presenter(s): Tade Ayeni

Boss, Mentor, or Coach? Leveraging Relationships for Agile Professional Development

Relationships are at the core of international education – from students to partnerships to professionals. This session redefines how bosses, mentors and professional coaches expand the value, investment and impact of professional learning and development. Applying research, participants will reflect on these distinct relationships, resources required and how to leverage them as leaders. This session invites colleagues to reflect, discuss and determine how to implement.

Presenter(s): Sarah Spencer | Stacey Hansen

Your Old SEO Approach No Longer Cuts It: AI as Friend or Frenemy?

Generative AI is transforming SEO and digital marketing – reshaping how students search, how content ranks, and how institutions connect with prospects (and how prospects respond to

institutions). This session explores the nuances of AI-powered search, from semantic algorithms to ChatGPT and Gemini. Learn how AI affects student behavior, your institution's content strategies, and the incoming application patterns – and how to adapt. Discover where automation helps and where human insight remains essential.

Presenter(s): Carrie Bishop | Iliana Joaquin | Balaji Krishnan

11:30 AM–12:30 PM: Leadership Impact Block C

Action Session: Publishing with AIEA

Join members of AIEA's Publications and Resources Committee for an interactive discussion on how to get involved in publishing with AIEA. Participants will learn about current and emerging publication opportunities, explore new directions for AIEA's resources and scholarship, and gain insight into how members can contribute ideas, content, and leadership in this space. The session is designed for those interested in learning more, asking questions, and engaging with the future of AIEA publications.

Presenter(s): Blair Thomson

Leadership Reimagined: 7 Behaviors for Respectful Disruption in Global Education

This session introduces Respectful Disruption Leadership (RDL), a groundbreaking framework grounded in the first empirical study of its kind. Participants will explore seven core leadership behaviors that empower global educators to lead systemic change with clarity, courage, and respect. Whether advancing access in study abroad, reimagining partnerships, or challenging exclusionary norms, this session offers a transformative approach to leadership rooted in listening, integrity, and purposeful action for lasting impact in international education.

Presenter(s): Christina Thompson | Roopa Rawjee | Kory Saunders

Effective & Innovative Leaders Use Humor. Seriously.

Injecting humor and levity into work can instantly elevate your professional presence; making you a more confident, competent, and effective leader. This session inspires us to lead more successfully at work based on data (yes! data!) demonstrating that using humor will enhance interactions, boost morale, and spark creativity. This helps leaders build trust, connect people and enhance productivity.

Presenter(s): Rich Kurtzman | Devika Milner | Kris Holloway

Adaptive Leadership: How to Pivot without Spinning

International education is continuously challenged to evolve and overcome new obstacles. How can leaders more effectively pivot within this rapidly changing landscape and foster new approaches to thinking and working? How can we tap into everyone's ideas and beliefs and leverage those for positive change? This session explores 'adaptive leadership' as a useful model for navigating uncertainty and experimenting with new solutions. Participants will examine implementation strategies and plan for action within their own organizations.

Presenter(s): Amy Henry | Martha Johnson | Amy Conger

Efficiency by Design: Rethinking the Lifecycle of International Agreements for AI-Augmented Administration

What if international partnership agreements could be both faster and smarter? This session reimagines the lifecycle of international agreements, an important component of international partnership, from initiation to renewal, through the lens of design thinking and process optimization. We will explore how cross-functional collaboration, standardized templates, and digital tools can reduce turnaround times, improve transparency, and enhance data-driven decision-making. Real-world examples will illustrate how institutions have transformed their agreement processes to better support internationalization goals.

Presenter(s): Marianne McClelland | Travis Senzaki | Rachel Rui

Leading Through Division: Strategies for Navigating Polarization in International Education

In an era of increasing polarization, international education remains a vital force for bridging divides. This session invites participants to engage in guided dialogue and reflective practice to explore strategies for understanding and navigating tensions and polarization within teams, institutions, and communities. Participants will gain insights into strengthening organizational resilience through intentional leadership approaches that honor complexity and promote connection across cultural and ideological boundaries.

Presenter(s): Marissa Lombardi | Uttiyo Raychaudhuri

1:00–5:00 PM: Community Connections: Exploring DC

Network with colleagues while engaging with Washington, D.C. through a shared museum experience. These unguided visits offer an opportunity to connect, learn, and continue conference conversations in a more informal setting. Advanced registration is required.

Participants must meet at the designated time and location to enter together, as group tickets require all attendees to arrive and enter at the same time.