



## INTRODUCTION

# Integrating Global Learning across the Curriculum for All Students

By Dawn Michele Whitehead

For nearly three decades, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has been engaged in the work of advancing integrative global learning as part of a well-designed liberal education across all disciplines and majors. In recent years, interest in global learning has increased significantly, and colleges and universities of all types are now engaged in global learning at some level. As the United States and other nations around the world continue to become more interconnected and diverse, students need to be able to do more than simply interact with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures. Indeed, students need preparation to explore, analyze, and attempt to solve the big societal challenges of today and tomorrow, challenges that are global in nature—including climate change, food and water security, global health, human rights, migration, sustainability, and technological innovation. Employers expect graduates to cooperate, to wrestle with diverse perspectives, and to build capacity to solve unscripted problems. In preparation for graduation, all students should have opportunities to explore the big questions of our time. When they graduate, students must be poised to ask questions that address the global nature of today's pressing challenges and problems.

Liberal education is essential in preparing students to address these challenges, and global learning is one dimension of a twenty-first-century liberal education. Liberal education requires students to search for answers to big questions beyond the formal classroom environment, and high-quality global learning situates students in the midst of global challenges and provides them with multiple opportunities for analysis from different perspectives and a real-world context for applying the knowledge

and skills they have gained. Carol Geary Schneider's article beginning on page 3, "Deepening the Connections," makes a strong case for connecting liberal education and global learning—and for developing curricular designs that equip students to address global challenges using multiple disciplines and perspectives.

In Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility—a multiyear, multiproject initiative that was generously funded by the US Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, the Henry Luce Family Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation—AAC&U partnered with thirty-two of its member institutions to create networks of interdisciplinary scholars focused on integrative global learning. Representatives from the Shared Futures institutions

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examined their own institutional practices and developed a common vocabulary and set of essential global learning outcomes, as well as institution-specific approaches to integrating global learning across general education. Through Shared Futures, AAC&U found that while global learning can occur both inside and outside the United States, to be truly effective it always must be rooted deeply in global learning outcomes.

Global learning outcomes should guide any global learning experience—global service learning; globally focused capstones, courses, and internships; international interactive videoconferencing; international research collaboration; study abroad; and study away. Despite the variety of global learning experiences, many institutions still focus on study abroad. But with only about 10 percent of American undergraduate students participating in study abroad programs (Farrugia and Bhandari 2014, 27), institutions must look to expand opportunities for study abroad and to offer significant opportunities for global learning *beyond* study abroad in order to provide all students with global learning experiences. These experiences



Occidental College students participate in a climate change rally in downtown Los Angeles.

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must be guided by learning outcomes that are explicitly connected to institutional learning outcomes, as Kevin Hovland argues in his article beginning on page 5.

Students' achievement of these outcomes must be assessed. As part of Shared Futures, an interdisciplinary group of faculty from a variety of institutions created the Global Learning VALUE Rubric as an assessment tool (see appendix A). In their article beginning on page 10, Chad Anderson and David Blair offer suggestions for using this rubric.

In order to advance global learning outcomes, faculty, staff, and administrators must collaborate across departments and disciplines to provide global learning experiences throughout undergraduate education. To do this, Fernando Reimers argues in his essay beginning on page 16, global learning must be moved from the margins to the core, a process that will require vision and action from administrators and faculty. It must be integrated into discussions about student learning and not confined in silos designated as global/international studies or area studies. In their article beginning on page 20, Leigh Ann Litwiller Berte and Margaret Davis offer a case for *radical interdisciplinarity*, through which students have opportunities to

engage in systems thinking by drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives as they solve problems. Paul Petrequin and Roy Schiesser also offer, in their article beginning on page 14, an example of interdisciplinary teaching and learning in which students examine natural disasters from multiple disciplinary perspectives.

Over the past three decades, AAC&U has published many articles advancing integrative global learning. In this compilation, we bring together many of the best. Our goal is to provide a working definition of global learning, frameworks for an approach to assessment, and case studies illustrating global learning on campuses. It is our hope that this publication will provide a foundation for exploring global learning opportunities for your students.

### Reference

Farrugia, Christine A., and Rajika Bhandari. 2014. *Open Doors 2014 Report on International Educational Exchange*. New York: Institute of International Education.

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