

BOOK REVIEW

Osfield, K.J., Perozzi, B., Bardill Moscaritolo, L. & Shea, R. (2016). *Supporting Students Globally in Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: NASPA.

Reviewed by Jennifer A. Hamilton*

The growth in opportunities for learning between international practitioners of student affairs and services has been exciting over the last number of years. As international students have increased in number on our campuses, and as local issues become global issues, the need for dialogue and sharing amongst student affairs professionals from different geographical regions is crucial. Professional associations based in the United States (ACPA, NASPA) and elsewhere have included international symposia, pre-conference workshops, and knowledge communities that focus on global issues and internationalisation at their conferences for some time. The creation and chartering of the International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) formalised the opportunity for those from different regions to engage with one another on shared interests. And in 2012, 2014 and 2016, NASPA and IASAS joined together in inviting international professionals together for the “Global Summit on Student Affairs and Services”. This volume is a testament to those efforts and the growing professionalisation of student affairs in many parts of the world.

The volume’s stated primary focus is “how student affairs professionals can provide students with the best student service opportunities possible”, (p.ix) and to examine student affairs and services in the worldwide context. It is divided into three sections: ‘An Interconnected and Interdependent World’; ‘Helping Ourselves to Help Our Students Succeed’, and ‘Responsible Global Interaction’. Taking on the topic of “supporting students globally” is a big issue and the title might suggest that this volume is meant for practitioners who have international student services or student exchange programmes in their portfolios. This volume may be of interest to those professional staff, but it is not meant to be a “how to” for supporting students, despite its title. In my assessment, this volume is directed at one of the following three audiences:

- Student Affairs professionals working in international student services who are looking to expand their professional knowledge beyond their day-to-day roles;
- Those who are highly involved in student affairs professional associations; and
- General student affairs practitioners or faculty from various countries interested in learning from others and gaining some perspective on international issues.

* Jennifer A. Hamilton is the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of College & University Student Services (CACUSS). Email: cacuss-ed@cacuss.ca

The volume has a number of strong chapters and in particular – beginning with the end – the Appendices are an excellent reference bringing together over 60 pages of international organisations both alphabetically and by country. These are an invaluable resource for anyone wishing to do research, outreach, engage in conversations about possible exchanges or learn about a particular country and its system of post secondary education. It is already a well-thumbed section of my own copy. The volume also does a good job in Chapter 2, ‘The Global Dialogue’, documenting evolution and execution of the Global Summit. While it may not be of interest to all practitioners, it is an important way to archive what transpired in a volume such as this. Chapter 7, on intercultural competence, is a useful summary of an importance competence for both ourselves as professionals and for our students. Chapters 8 and 10 are also helpful in examining exchange programmes for both staff and graduate students. Chapter 11 looks at the emerging trend of “branch campuses” and how student affairs may be structured in hybrid ways in those unique institutions. Chapter 12 does an excellent job of considering student mobility and its impact on the campus and the student. It is well researched and well written. While it is not possible to summarise each and every chapter, there are several which cover unique topics not covered in other books and journals.

Overall, it does well in attempting to shift the conversation about student affairs into the international arena. However, its lofty goals end up with a volume that is a bit disjointed and with a lack of focus. It isn’t clear that the central thesis ties all the chapters or the sections together. The book has multiple purposes and multiple audiences and it may not deliver or meet expectations in any one particular area. One may be left looking for answers to questions such as “how do we support students globally?” in other places.

Another criticism is the lack of diversity of the chapter authors. Of the 30, the majority are from North America (with half from the U.S.). Although several authors have some exposure to international experiences, there is a missing analysis of the impact of mostly dominant-culture voices and the potential for the colonising of the dialogue about the profession from a North American perspective. Because professional practice, graduate preparation and research in the United States is so very strong, we have all benefited from the shared knowledge of our American colleagues. We could work harder to invite more voices from countries outside of the U.S. and Canada to lend perspective on some of the deeper issues.

On the positive side, the book could help the student affairs practitioner consider the many ways in which we might be more globally minded, gives an introduction to many subjects in the global higher education space, and points to several resources for learning more. The book also leaves us with some great resources and an opportunity to explore further research. Areas that could be explored include the intercultural competency of student affairs professionals, a deeper examination and empirical review of trends, rather than listing individual countries as Chapter 14 summarises.

There is so much potential for exploring issues that may impact all of our students regardless of country or campus. Collaborative and comparative research is needed in areas such as employability, access, learning outcomes, rising costs/funding, participation

and success of racialised and marginalised students, sexual violence (and other forms of violence), civility, and promising practices and structures which engage faculty. Having truly international research and reflection about these issues would be stimulating.

I applaud the editors, authors, NASPA and IASAS for bringing together the excellent authors for this much anticipated book about the broad range of issues of an international nature in student affairs work. The volume offers the invitation for us to consider our work in different contexts and to reach beyond our borders to be better at our work and support the success of our students. This is an important job not only for those working in international student services, but for all of us.