

Preface to the International Experiences Special Issue

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The theory and practice of transformative learning has been embedded in higher education in significant and impactful ways over the past four decades. The *Journal of Transformative Learning* has focused on providing substantive review and dissemination of quality approaches and scholarly work, which continues to inform our understanding and effectiveness in providing transformative learning and experiences for students. One area where significant research and focus is continuously needed, is in our assessment of transformative learning in the international diaspora. Our goal with this special issue is to provide much needed illumination on the best practices and current examinations on transformative learning with an emphasis on global learning and engagement.

We live and work in a global environment which requires our students to be prepared to operate professionally and personally in the most connected world in human history. It is imperative we continue to develop and offer programs which encourage students to advance their cultural competence and understanding of the diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals throughout the world.

While international study and student exchanges have been present in higher education opportunities and curricula for some time, a deep understanding of the impacts these programs maintain on a participant's personal growth and transformation is limited. Many of these experiences are individual in nature, preventing robust application to broader populations. Location of these programs also impacts learning, as context and culture can have strong impacts on a participant's understanding and interaction. These are just two realities which challenge research and findings when considering international learning and student transformation.

The goal of this special issue is to broaden our understanding and application of research and experiences to remedy some of the longstanding issues with transformative learning and international experiences. This special issue provides essays and original research, covering several courses and projects which assess student learning, outcomes, and research methods related to short- and long-term study abroad programs, development of cultural competence in participants, and the role of collaboration and partnership in creating meaningful experiences. The research and essays cover multiple contexts and locations, providing our readers with approaches and practices we hope inform your current work, and future plans in providing international learning opportunities for students.

Essays in our special summer issue include Chiang and Yao's perspectives on combining short-term study abroad experiences with undergraduate research. Barker communicates the need for universities and colleges to examine transformative learning, global learning, and indigenization holistically, providing more opportunities to provide learning outcomes related to inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity. Norton, Mora, Boden, and Ambriz provide a case-study approach which focuses on partnerships developed between the U.S. and Colombia through the Women4Peace program. Continuing the emphasis on partnerships and student learning outcomes, Carr and Vaughn provide assessment of a US – Dominican Republic partnership, connecting cultural humility with substantive growth in student learning.

Raven, Singleton, and Scaramuzzo provide our first research-centered article, examining international based in-service training in Costa Rica and its impact on teachers. Their research includes a focus on the impact this involvement maintains on participants implementing place-based learning experiences. Kennedy-Reid focuses on the cultural intelligence quotient (CQ) and its influence on

transformative learning, particularly how it can inform an individual's transformative learning. Newell, Antola Crowe, Erickson, Pratt, and Davison Aviles study the impact intentional course design has on students and their cultural intelligence. This course includes international immersion, focused curriculum, and student reflection as vital pieces to the student learning. Wood and Jobe examine student transformative learning related to global competencies, leadership, and service learning through courses which included international locations as their primary learning space.

The challenges we face in today's world are global in nature and will remain this way. The included essays and research further concentrate our understanding on global learning and education. Let us continue to examine these efforts to ensure we are providing the most effective and impactful opportunities for our students to engage across their communities and the world. We hope you enjoy reading and learning this special edition of the *Journal of Transformative Learning* as it informs your work.