



AIEA SERIES: 5 THINGS AN SIO SHOULD KNOW

MAY 2024

5 Things SIOs Should Know About Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

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INTRODUCTION

In the complex ecosystem of higher education, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives are not just moral imperatives but strategic ones that enhance the educational environment and prepare students for a globalized world. For Senior International Officers (SIOs) tasked with fostering an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for students from diverse backgrounds, understanding the nuances of DEIB efforts is crucial. Here are five key insights that SIOs should be aware of when navigating and contributing to DEIB initiatives in higher education.

1. THE MULTIFACETED NATURE OF DIVERSITY

Diversity extends beyond race and ethnicity to encompass a wide range of identities, including nationality, gender identity, sexuality, ability, religion, and socioeconomic background. SIOs should recognize and appreciate this complexity, ensuring that DEIB initiatives are comprehensive and address the needs of the entire campus community. This includes creating programs and policies that support underrepresented groups, however defined, and fostering an environment where all students, faculty, and staff feel valued and included.

2. EQUITY VS. EQUALITY

While equality means providing everyone with the same resources, equity involves acknowledging the different needs and circumstances of individuals and allocating resources accordingly to achieve an equal outcome. SIOs should focus on equity in their initiatives, which may involve targeted scholarships, mentorship programs, and accessibility resources. Understanding the distinction between equity and equality is crucial for developing policies that effectively address the systemic barriers faced by underrepresented groups.

3. THE CRITICAL ROLE OF INCLUSION

Inclusion involves creating environments where individuals not only are present but also feel welcomed, respected, and able to fully participate. For SIOs, this means ensuring that international students and faculty have the support they need to thrive academically and socially. This can be achieved through inclusive teaching practices, diverse hiring, and programming that encourages cross-cultural exchange and understanding.



4. BELONGING AS A CORNERSTONE

A sense of belonging is the ultimate goal of DEIB initiatives, where individuals feel personally valued and an integral part of the institution. SIOs can foster belonging by celebrating cultural differences, providing platforms for underrepresented voices, and ensuring that DEIB efforts are visible and integrated throughout the institution. Building a sense of community among students from diverse backgrounds can help mitigate feelings of isolation and enhance student success.

5. CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND ADAPTATION

DEIB is not a static goal, but a dynamic process that requires ongoing effort, reflection, and adaptation. SIOs should be committed to continuous learning about DEIB best practices and be open to feedback from the community. This includes staying informed about global DEIB trends, challenges, and successes and applying these insights to their initiatives. Regular assessment of DEIB programs and policies is essential to ensure they are effective and meet the evolving needs of the campus community.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, SIOs play a vital role in advancing DEIB initiatives within higher education. By understanding the multifaceted nature of diversity, focusing on equity, fostering inclusion, creating a sense of belonging, and committing to continuous improvement, SIOs can contribute significantly to creating a more inclusive, equitable, and dalso help in garnering support and resources.