



# BREAKING DOWN WALLS

## THE SILO EFFECT

That universities are increasingly internationalised should not come as news to anyone working in our field. As international activities expand, however, the needs of different parts of the university tend to grow in complexity. It's easy for departments to lose sight of big-picture institutional goals and for central international offices to be out of the loop of activities taking place at their own universities.

**E**ffective and comprehensive internationalisation is at the forefront of many, if not most, strategic plans within the 21st century university. In our increasingly globalised universities, leaders have recognised the need to implement internationalisation plans to insure that our institutions remain academically and economically competitive. At the same time, internationalisation helps to prepare students and researchers for life and work in a multicultural world with fluid borders. A strong, strategic plan for internationalisation, however, is only as effective as its execution. While university leaders have an invaluable role to play, international officers within the institution perform a key function in embedding internationalisation in all its facets.

#### **DAY-TO-DAY INTERNATIONALISATION**

Many large universities may suffer from the 'silo effect', in which numerous different departments and schools are unaware of developments, ideas and strategies being implemented by other entities on the campus. This can be an especially large problem for internationalisation, which is typically managed by an international or global office at the university. While these offices act as an overarching driver of international services and internationalisation efforts on the campus, their effectiveness can be limited if they are not incorporated into the day-to-day operations of each individual department and generate buy-in for internationalisation activities in the wider campus community of academics, administrative staff and student leaders.



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To combat this ‘silo effect’, universities are adapting and developing new types of international officer roles to implement comprehensive and holistic internationalisation. These international officers are responsible for making the case for internationalisation to multiple stakeholders within the university and providing a

has, since 2012, created and expanded the role of ‘Global Officers’ who are responsible for implementing the overall global relations strategy on a micro scale. A small cohort of Global Officers work within individual schools at Trinity College Dublin to encourage internationalisation efforts, and to help the schools create their

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pathway for action within their own areas of expertise and responsibility.<sup>1</sup> This strategy allows the international office to in effect put down the roots of internationalisation within smaller departments or schools on the wider campus, enabling new trends and priorities with an international focus to spread from within.

### IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY

At Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin, the Global Relations Office

own international strategies – reflecting the strategic goals of the university.

The role of each Global Officer is varied, complex and dependent on the needs of the schools they work within. For many of the schools, it is a new departure to have an administrative staff role integrated within their school that is specific to the development and integration of international activities. A Global Officer can therefore be involved in non-EU student recruitment and marketing of

programmes, one-on-one student advising, alumni relations and the development and maintenance of international partnerships and exchange agreements.

In turn, faculty, administrative staff and students within a school working with a Global Officer feel more connected with activities related to internationalisation within the university, oftentimes offering ideas and suggestions for improvement that otherwise would have been unheard or unspoken. International students, in particular, now have an advocate within the school and someone who can aid them in navigating a different educational system and guide them to the most appropriate resource. This leads to clear lines of communication between individual schools and the Global Relations Office, making internationalisation efforts more effective, integrated and accessible.

### COMBATTING STUMBLING BLOCKS

When a university is looking to expand or revamp their international officer role, it is imperative to consider how that role can combat the main stumbling blocks to internationalisation. Integrating internationalisation at all levels of an institution, as opposed to segregating these activities to one office or area, while working to create institution-wide buy-in for institutional internationalisation strategic objectives, can and should be a large part of an international officer’s responsibilities. When carefully planned and executed, the role of the international officer, will act as the key force driving forward comprehensive internationalisation across the university.

— ERIN PAULLIN

1. Green, M. & Olson, C. (2008). *Internationalizing the Campus: A User's Guide*. ACE Centre for Institutional and International Initiatives.