CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Description of the Field
International education encompasses a wide range of careers including teaching, curriculum development, technical assistance, exchange, capacity building, training, and the promotion of international understanding. International education professionals work in colleges, universities, governmental agencies, nongovernmental/nonprofit organizations, foundations, and private firms.

Career Paths
Career paths in the field of international education are varied. In order to advance, one might work in a progression of positions within a particular organization or switch to similar work in another organization. One might also gain additional experience by working in several functional areas in the field. International education professionals benefit from developing a diversity of experience, permitting not only flexibility in job possibilities, but also qualifying themselves for management positions involving a variety of functional areas. For example, one might work within an international exchange organization assisting with the coordination of high school exchanges, and then work at a college study abroad office and/or international student office, which could lead to the position of overseeing an International Student Center or Education Abroad Program. Alternately, one might start with Peace Corps or English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching experience abroad and segue into working for education capacity building programs.

Demand
International exchange in education and capacity building programs in development and human rights have experienced dramatic growth in recent years. There are numerous organizations dealing with various aspects of international exchange; almost every college now has offices that assist international students and offer study abroad programs. In addition, efforts to increase educational and training programs in the areas of health, human rights, democracy building, and other development fields have been enhanced. Consequently, the demand for international education professionals has increased as well. On the other hand, due to the popularity of international careers as a whole, and the appeal of working in international education (intercultural environment, diverse and interesting responsibilities, and occasional overseas travel), the competition remains intense. Those with international education experience as a student or with general international work experience, in addition to foreign language skills, are usually most in demand.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field
Required qualifications vary depending on the particular position, but most may be expected to include some or all of the following:

- Master’s degree preferred in most cases, sometimes required.
- International study and/or work experience preferred (not just travel).
- Experience with ethnically and culturally diverse populations.
- Proficiency in a foreign language is helpful and often required.
- Knowledge of foreign educational systems or US immigration rules and regulations.
- Work experience in some aspect of international education/exchange often preferred.
- Program or project management experience.
- Strong oral/written communication skills and interpersonal skills.
Sample Groups of Employers

*Associations/Foundations/Government Agencies/Private Business*
- American Studies Association - www.theasa.net
- Ford Foundation - www.fordfoundation.org
- International Foundation for Education and Self Help - www.ifesh.org
- Jet Program - www.jetprogramme.org
- The Asia Society - www.asiasociety.org
- US Department of State - http://www.state.gov/
- US Information Agency - http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/

*Universities and Colleges/ International Exchange Organizations/Nonprofits*
- Academy for Educational Development - www.aed.org
- American Field Service - www.afs.org/afs_home
- American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) - www.aifs.com
- Council for International Exchange of Scholars - www.cies.org
- Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) - www.ciee.org
- Institute of International Education (IIE) - www.iie.org
- International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) - www.irex.org
- Rotary International - www.rotary.org
- World Learning - www.worldlearning.org
- Youth for Understanding - www.yfu.org

**Future Challenges of the Profession**
While the importance of international education has its share of advocates, particularly among universities and colleges, the dollars to expand and enhance programs are often not forthcoming. The case for ranking international education and exchange high on the list of institutional and national priorities must be made through continuous advocacy for internationalization.

In addition, challenges constantly arise from various developments in regions throughout the world. For example, the current concern regarding acts of terrorism directed towards Americans might impact both student interest and parents' willingness to send their children abroad. Instability in a country or region might disrupt programs or cause participants to be recalled, as well as impact the feasibility of educational capacity building programs in post-conflict areas or developing countries. Moreover, international student visa regulations and processes could also create challenges for international exchange programs.

**Resources for Additional Information**

*Associations*
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators - www.nafsa.org
- SIETAR International: Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research- www.sietarinternational.org
Internet Resources
- Chronicle of Higher Education - www.chronicle.com
- International Jobs Center - www.internationaljobs.org
- International Educator - www.tieonline.com
- Monday Developments Magazine - www.interaction.org/monday-developments
- NAFSA Job Registry – www.nafsa.org/career_center
- Transitions Abroad - www.transitionsabroad.com

LinkedIn Groups
- International Education Forum - www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3398823
- International Education Group - www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=3703401

Publications