

Marlene M. Johnson

Executive Director and CEO, NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Marlene Johnson is executive director and chief executive officer of NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education. NAFSA's nearly 10,000 members worldwide are the professionals that make international education opportunities possible for thousands of students each year. The association seeks to increase awareness of and support for international education and exchange in higher education, government, and the community, believing that citizens with international experience and global awareness are crucial to U.S. leadership, competitiveness, and security. Under Johnson's leadership, NAFSA has become the leading advocate on behalf of international education, actively participating in the public and policy debates that impact the field and emerging as a respected voice in support of educational exchanges as a key tool of U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy.

Johnson's leadership in government, business, and the nonprofit sector spans more than three decades. From 1983 to 1991, she served as lieutenant governor of Minnesota. Strengthening and expanding the state's connections with the rest of the world – in trade, tourism, education, and the arts – was a hallmark of her time in office, and she was a particularly outspoken advocate of international educational exchange at the secondary and post-secondary level. Johnson also served as associate administrator for management services and human resources in the U.S. General Services Administration during the Clinton Administration.

Johnson currently serves on the Board of the Communications Consortium Media Center in Washington, DC, the Advisory Council of the US-China Education Trust, the Senior Advisory Council of Business for Diplomatic Action, and the Advisory Board of the Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership at St Mary's College -University of Notre Dame. She is a former Board member of the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, AFS-USA, AFS Intercultural Programs, the World Press Institute and the National Association of Women Business Owners. In 1988, she was awarded the Royal Order of the Polar Star by the Kingdom of Sweden.