There is a distinction within international higher education between the idea of a field of international education characterized by research and scholarship and the idea of a profession characterized by an established code of ethics and recognizable set of competencies. Professional work roles are defined differently within and between these two spaces, but the issues, challenges, questions, and opportunities are closely related. While practitioners make international education possible and scholars take up the study of international education as a line of academic inquiry, the scholar-practitioners of international higher education bridge both areas. They leverage existing research and scholarship to inform practice and they share the collective aim of scholars to advance the theoretical and empirical foundations of the field. The scholar-practitioner maximizes the value of connections between the field and the profession.

How do we best support scholar-practitioners? How do we take full advantage of the rich potential for these individuals to shape both the field and the profession? As editors of a new book, *International Higher Education’s Scholar-Practitioners, Bridging Research and Practice* (Symposium Books, 2016), we propose that by exploring these questions through multiple lenses, we can better inform the future of international higher education.

THE SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONER IDEAL
There is a false dichotomy that clouds the work of international educators; too often we think the world is divided into those who ‘do it’ and those who ‘study it’—the practitioners and the scholars. Practitioners are predominantly viewed as those who work daily in the expanding professional management of international education, while scholars are viewed as those who conduct research and publish scholarly reflections on the phenomenon of international education. We give these categories separate names but the dichotomy is overly simplistic and excludes the scholar-practitioners who engage in both kinds of activity.

The scholar-practitioners of international higher education are collaborative educators who engage in the research process and use and disseminate their knowledge and information in the form of concepts, procedures, processes, and skills for the benefit of those who are engaged in international education. While they do not necessarily need to maintain an active research agenda, it is important that they understand, utilize, and facilitate research directions. The model we propose for scholar-practitioner synergy is illustrated in the graphic on page 2.

Scholar-practitioners of international higher education do not view research and scholarship as a burden or an addition to an already demanding workload. Rather they understand that professional and educational success is closely tied to the ability to effectively identify, access, and utilize research and scholarship to inform practice.

It is important for scholar-practitioners of international higher education to challenge untested claims and avoid...
causal assumptions. It is important that research is used to support decisionmaking. Not all scholar-practitioners will themselves maintain an active research agenda; some instead may support research by providing time, personnel, and/or other resources to advance these efforts. However, the scholar-practitioner recognizes the gaps between scholarship and practice and seizes opportunities to leverage practice to inform the direction and scope of future research.

THE U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

The emergence of the scholar-practitioner in international higher education should be understood within the broader trends in education and institutions. In U.S. higher education today for reasons of institutional cost-saving and restructuring among other factors, the number of core faculty members with responsibilities for research and scholarship has been shrinking (Altbach, 2007; Gappa, Austin and Trice, 2005), while a broader classification of so-called alternative-academics or third-space professionals in nontenure track, adjunct, or administrative positions has been steadily growing (Bickford and Whisnant, 2013; Del Favero and Bray, 2015; Whitechurch, 2009; 2013). Many of these hybrid professionals possess high-level academic credentials, sophisticated research training, and aspirations to disseminate their work and thinking much as their faculty colleagues do. Titles like clinical professor or professor of practice have become common; often these individuals...
have roles that combine academic and administrative obligations.

While in some cases higher level administrators in management or research positions earn higher salaries than some faculty ranks (Chronicle Data, 2016), many are also dissatisfied to be stationed in narrow administrative positions or in insecure contracts that offer little upward mobility or limited time to contribute to a scholarly dialogue, according to Marc Bousquet in an October 20, 2015, article in Inside Higher Ed. Yet despite these constraints, increasing numbers of hybrid scholar-practitioner professionals today are sharing their reflective thinking through the intellectual contributions they make to the scholarly journals in higher education, in trade papers and institution magazines, through blogs and webinars, and in presentations at annual conferences and workshops.

The expansion of international education activities—including rising rates of student mobility, faculty and staff engagement, international partnerships, dual-degree programs and branch campuses, and other developments—have compelled universities to develop services and expertise in international education management and to hire specialized and highly trained professionals for key leadership and management positions. Training programs for these positions have grown significantly since 2000. Fiona Hunter, a consultant, trainer, and researcher in higher education based in Europe, and Laura Rumbley, associate director of the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, cite research showing that globally there are now 277 graduate degree-granting programs devoted to higher education studies; many of these provide training in comparative studies, globalization, and internationalization. Within the U.S. context, Taylor Woodman, a senior study abroad adviser at The George Washington University, and Katherine Punteney, program chair of the International Educational Management Program at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey, have identified 87 graduate-level programs at 57 different institutions with a typology of six distinct program types that include specific preparation for international education administration, management, and student affairs.

Indeed, prospective employers increasingly seek candidates within the profession of international education who have this specialized graduate education and preparation (Dessoff, 2006; Mueller and Overmann, 2014; Urias, Deardorff, and Heyl, 2007). The Forum on Education Abroad conducts regular surveys of its membership to better understand the various pathways to careers in international education. In its 2013 survey it found that more than half of respondents held a master’s degree and another 27 percent a doctorate (PhD or EdD). A similar study by the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) found that 81 percent of its senior international officers (SIOs) held a doctoral or professional degree (AIEA, 2014).

Scholar-practitioners are ideally located to identify practical research questions and understand the relationship between data and decisionmaking. Today, the very nature of activities within international higher education produces a steady stream of rich quantitative and qualitative data. Analyzing these data requires skills in evaluation and assessment and the ability to use a variety of theoretical lenses and methodologies. Thoughtful professionals who facilitate internationalization, education abroad, and international student exchange, among other activities, are well positioned to disseminate their reflections and analyses through an increasing number of established academic journals, book publishers, and online platforms that now exist. The question is, do the professional positions these individuals occupy provide sufficient opportunities or time to engage in their field in a scholarly way?

“Those of us who care about higher education need to reevaluate and reimagine the systems and structures that limit the potential of scholar-practitioners in international education.”

SUPPORTING THE SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONERS IN THE FUTURE

Those of us who care about higher education need to reevaluate and reimagine the systems and structures that limit the potential of scholar-practitioners in international education. How do we reward a reflective mindset in administrative positions? How do we value the specialized knowledge and skilled expertise
that scholar-practitioners bring to their work? How do we create environments in which productive partnerships across faculty and administrative lines become the norm? We need to reinforce the value of productive partnerships between administrators and academics instead of rivalry or intractable hierarchical relationships. Some faculty may worry about partnerships with nontenured administrators if they believe they require relinquishing control over the intellectual development of their disciplines. To ease these concerns, we need examples of how those who work with a reflective mindset in administrative positions bring specialized knowledge and skilled expertise to improving the work of faculty, a synergy that strengthens the purpose, functions, and outcomes of international education activity more broadly. This mutually beneficial relationship should be seen as a positive development rather than one that threatens to take away faculty’s traditional right to steer the intellectual direction of the university.

Scholar-practitioners are eager to be valued for their specialized knowledge and expertise and to contribute intellectually to their fields by presenting, engaging within academia, and publishing in their fields and beyond. Allowing and indeed encouraging them to do this will require important changes in current reward structures, hiring practices, and budgetary priorities. John Hudzik, former dean and vice president at Michigan State University, in his contribution to our book, proposes six pragmatic strategies to advance the position of the scholar-practitioner in the future: 1) master’s and PhD programs should build in research knowledge and skills in the newer areas of internationalization scholarship; 2) the professional associations for international educators should increase professional development opportunities through workshops that enhance practitioner research knowledge and skills relevant to internationalization; 3) greater collaboration between faculty and academic departments and professional programs should be encouraged to train internationalization practitioners in ways that other fields have been doing for years; 4) “research notes” sections should be developed in the key journals of scholarship in international education to include short, focused pieces that help blend scholar-practitioner worlds; 5) hiring practices for practitioner-oriented jobs should include expectations and criteria that encourage engagement in research and scholarship in their areas of practice; and 6) upper-level administrators, such as SIOs, should encourage and find ways to team faculty with practitioners to engage in joint scholarship around programming. In another chapter, Jane Edwards, dean of international and professional experience and senior associate dean at Yale University, proposes bringing intentionality to one’s daily work by embedding activities that include “utilizing the intellectual habits of scholarship, and the fruits of research” (2016, 236) by studying the literature, informing program design with research, and utilizing discussions and analysis of the literature to inform student advising.

The momentum in recent decades toward the internationalization of higher education has begun to reveal new opportunities for scholar-practitioners of international higher education. As these hybrid professionals are increasingly required to have scholarly credentials, pursue active research agendas, and engage in various forms of teaching, research, and service, the existing paradigm within contemporary higher education will need to expand in ways that more systematically recognize, value, and incentivize their presence and contributions. In 2015 NAFSA published its International Education Professional Competencies, which represent the basic building blocks of the international education profession, and as such are intended to define the professional knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of international education professionals, regardless of their areas of specialization or role. Although research and scholarship do not emerge as distinct competencies in their list, the document is unambiguous that fulfilling each competency not only requires familiarity with relevant research, theory, and
As the collective authors in our new book emphasize, future scholar-practitioners can play a significant role in aligning the scholarship and profession of international higher education, which in turn will advance the entire enterprise and purpose of our work.

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NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

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