



**The Global Learning Podcast Episode 7:
Understanding and Operationalizing Global Learning
with Dawn Michele Whitehead**

Meet Dawn Michele Whitehead, PhD:



Dawn Michele Whitehead is the Senior Director for Global Learning and Curricular Change at the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Washington, DC. At AAC&U, Whitehead's work focuses on advancing practices, strategies, and projects for integrative global learning across the undergraduate curriculum. Her work focuses on integrated global learning with an emphasis on thematic local and international educational experiences that provide students with globalized learning opportunities throughout their educational experiences to prepare them to function and thrive in the modern world. She has also worked on projects that have integrated high impact practices across general education and the majors to provide students with consistent, high-quality liberal learning and has been engaged in global learning and global service learning program and course development. At the heart of her work is the concept of inclusive excellence to ensure all students have access to high-quality global learning experiences. She has written articles and presented nationally and internationally on global learning and global service learning, and facilitated grant-funded projects to advance student success through curricular change.

Prior to her work at AAC&U, Whitehead served as the Director of Curriculum Internationalization at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis where she also served as a faculty director and/or an instructor for global service learning programs in East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, taught Global and International Studies courses in the United States, abroad, and through real time videoconferencing, and facilitated the development of international partnerships, internationalized curriculum, and global service learning. Whitehead earned her Ph.D. in Education Policy Studies with a doctoral minor in International and Comparative Education and a concentration in African Studies and her master's degree in International and Comparative Education at Indiana University Bloomington.

Episode Transcript:

Hello and welcome to the [Global Learning Podcast](#). This episode is **Understanding and Operationalizing Global Learning** and is presented in conjunction with the Forum on Global Learning at the 2018 NAFSA Annual Conference & Expo. Today's interview is with Dawn Michele Whitehead, senior director for Global Learning and Curricular Change at the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Washington, DC. At AAC&U, Whitehead's work focuses on advancing practices, strategies, and projects for integrative global learning across the undergraduate curriculum.

In this episode, Dawn will discuss ***the definition of global learning, incorporation of global learning into curricula, and its function in students' lives***. She will also be a featured speaker at the [Forum on Global Learning](#) at the NAFSA 2018 Annual Conference & Expo speaking about ***Theories & Definitions of Global Learning for Global Impact***.

1. Good afternoon Dr. Whitehead. For my first question: Can you discuss the AAC&U working definition of Global Learning?

Sure. For us at AAC&U, the definition of global learning is one that must be applicable to any discipline or any major, so our definition isn't a content-based definition. During our Shared Futures initiative, which was a curricular initiative that spanned over 10 years and involved just over 50 two and four-year colleges and universities, efforts were made to integrate global learning into general education for that project, and out of that came the development of our global learning VALUE rubric and that is how our definition of global learning was created.

So the definition was developed by an interdisciplinary group of faculty, administrators, and other higher education professionals and this is the definition that we created:

Global Learning is a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability.

So, when you hear a definition like that, I think it's clear that it was developed by an interdisciplinary group because each of those people could decide how they wanted to apply it in their discipline. Now as I mentioned, it was developed as a part of our Global Learning VALUE rubric and VALUE, of course, is AAC&U's initiative on assessment. And so VALUE stands for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, and there are fifteen other VALUE rubrics that are being used for program, departmental, and institutional assessment across the US and also other parts of the world.

And the focus of the rubrics is on what students can do, and they were all created by interdisciplinary teams of faculty, administrators and other educationalists from both two- and four-year colleges. And the Global Learning VALUE rubric was created and tested in 2013, and one of the things that I think that you'll notice with our Global Learning rubric is that you will see that there are some differences between global learning, internationalization, and intercultural competence. Now some in our field have argued that internationalization is higher education's response, if you will, to globalization while others have simply focused on the structural emphasis of internationalization. And many folks reference, obviously, Jane Knight's definition that was revised of internationalization in 2015 which is that internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function, or delivery of post-secondary education. And it's clear from this definition that internationalization is about the functions of the university; so you're counting, you're looking at who is moving back and forth, how many students and scholars do you have going from country to country? You're looking at courses, how many courses are offered? You're looking at research, how many faculty are engaged in this type of research? And you're also looking at service. And you also are looking at the integration of global perspectives. Whereas global learning, on the other hand, is focused specifically on the curriculum and what students are actually learning both in and outside the classroom, and what students are actually doing. So global learning is a process of learning, in all of its complexity, and ultimately we see a shift in how students see the world through these multiple perspectives that oftentimes are relational whereas intercultural competence is a skill that can and is certainly taught through a number of examples and experiences of global learning. And it does help students navigate their global communities both locally and internationally. But our emphasis for our definition of global learning sort of pulls out those unique elements.

2. Thank you; I appreciate that. Those rubrics are quite helpful, and I do encourage people to go to the AAC&U's website to see them. They're quite useful. For my second question, so how does faculty incorporate global learning into the curriculum?

So I think faculty have found a number of ways to incorporate global learning into their curriculum. And in many cases, it starts with defining global learning at the institutional level. And that oftentimes is followed by the identification of the learning outcomes. So when an institution, a school, a department, or a division identify what those key learning outcomes are that are global in nature, faculty have the motivation and the opportunity to start incorporating global learning into the curriculum regardless of major. Some would argue that they have a little push that they didn't have before.

And going back to the rubrics, I think as faculty start having the conversations about incorporating global learning into their curriculum, the Global Learning VALUE rubric is a wonderful place to start. When you look at the rubric, there are six dimensions of the global learning. We've got Global Self-Awareness, Perspective Taking, Cultural Diversity, Personal and Social Responsibility, Understanding Global Systems, and Applying Knowledge to Global Contexts.

And at the course, department, school, or institutional level, those discussions happen about what dimension or dimensions of the rubric are most important for students. And that is where student learning comes in. And many institutions may say, okay we want to focus on two or three of these. And then what happens next is that the conversations start happening, and you see faculty looking more closely at these dimensions of global learning and how they can apply those dimensions into their curriculum.

For example, a decision might be made to focus on Perspective Taking or Cultural Diversity So a faculty member would take a look at the rubric and take a look at that description, and then they would say, okay if I'm going to focus on Perspective Taking, I need to make sure that students have multiple opportunities to engage and learn from perspectives and experiences that are different from their own. I also want to make sure students have opportunities to understand how one place in the world both informs and limits their knowledge. So if you want to focus on that dimension, you make sure that in the assignments, and the other work that you have students doing, students have opportunities to consider different people in the community, different cultural backgrounds, different educational levels, different experiences that people might have when they're interacting with them and attempting to learn more about the culture or the setting. And this has indeed deepened learning for a number of students.

Another example is, if an institution wanted to focus on Cultural Diversity. This is one dimension of the Global Learning VALUE rubric. And for me, when I was teaching, this was critical for my students as they engaged with groups that they thought were homogeneous. The groups were different to them, but they didn't see the diversity within the group. And by using this dimension of the rubric, it helped me help my students to look at power structures, to look at hierarchies, to look at inequalities that take place over time. And when I had them start expanding, or excuse me I had them start examining the cultural diversity of other people, particularly when I had students who were involved in an education abroad experience in Ghana, they were forced to look at the community in a very different way. They no longer said, oh everyone here is African. They started noticing that there were different languages being spoken when they were on breaks with some of the people in the community. They started learning that everyone wasn't from that same city, much like where we were, everyone wasn't from our city. And they started to learn more about differentiated educational experiences.

Now going a little bit further, I'd like to give a couple of examples from other institutions that are doing this at a different level. So institutions such as Florida International University and the Community College of Beaver County in Pennsylvania, have created globally focused courses. Now Florida International University's award-winning Global Learning for Global Citizenship is guided by their institutional definition of global learning along with three specific global learning outcomes related to global awareness, global perspectives, and global engagement. And through robust faculty development, over 190 global learning courses have been created by faculty across the disciplines. And they have made an effort to offer this faculty development for all of their faculty and as many that are

able to attend. They are also, those faculty who take them up on this, are also able to offer a global learning designation for courses that meet the criteria. And I think this model of robust faculty development is essential for more comprehensive transformation of courses at an institution. And again, in my own teaching experience, we also relied on faculty development to support this type of curricular change and we partnered with other institutions to offer system-wide faculty development.

Another example is, as I mentioned, the Community College of Beaver County in Pennsylvania, and they partnered with University of Pittsburgh's Center for Russian and East European Studies to integrate global learning into the humanities curriculum. And they drew on the Eastern European heritage of many people in the Pittsburgh area, and they brought this into the classroom to facilitate discussions on cultural identity. Now, as part of this collaboration at CCBC, a new course was developed. They also developed several course modules for different courses at CCBC, and they also offered a great deal of faculty development to get even more faculty involved. So I think you can see, at a very large research institution and at a two year college, faculty development is indeed a key if you want faculty to start incorporating global learning perspectives into their curriculum.

3. Well that's great; I understand how faculty then incorporates global learning. Now can you speak about how global learning prepares students to tackle global challenges?

Absolutely. When you approach learning from a global perspective, and you give students the opportunity to truly engage in global learning, students are able to see the challenges that they have faced in their community. And they start to realize that their community isn't the only community that's facing the challenge. And they start to understand and see that their discipline isn't the only discipline that should be involved in solving the challenge and that many of these challenges are actually global in nature. And they find that they can identify possible solutions by looking beyond the course, beyond the discipline, beyond the lab, beyond their state or region, and even beyond their nation. And the way a number of institutions are doing this is they are having students look at the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a guide for some of their engagement with global challenges. And when students see these global challenges they can see very clearly, that these are indeed global problems. So when they think about lack of clean water, lack of food or shelter, inequitable access to education or healthcare, they realize that these are things that affect all of us. And this type of investigation by students truly requires global learning skills.

Now the other thing about these skills for students that makes it even more appealing is that employers also value these types of skills, where students are actually trying to solve real life problems. So in 2015, AAC&U partnered with Heart Associates to publish the findings of an employer survey where 400 executives at private sector and nonprofit organizations participated. And we found a lot of information, but I want to highlight a few points that are related specifically to global learning. The first is we found that employers were increasingly globally connected and placing a greater emphasis on hiring candidates with global knowledge and experience. So 70% of those employers surveyed said their

company or organization was globally connected. And they could be globally connected in a number of ways. Some said they had 41% of their operations outside of the country, 49% of suppliers outside of the country, and others said 54% of their clients outside U.S.A. So even if a student doesn't plan to live or work outside of the U.S., they will likely have to engage with colleagues outside the U.S. in their U.S. based job. And a number of employers agree, that their company is placing greater emphasis on hiring candidates who bring this global knowledge and experience more than they did five years ago.

In addition to being globally connected, a majority of employers also want all college students to gain global knowledge and intercultural skills. So 96% of employers strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that regardless of the student's chosen field of study, all students should have experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own. 78% said that they strongly or somewhat agreed that all students should gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies and countries outside the U.S. Now, many institutions are aware what employers want and they are providing students with these real-world experiences where they are working in diverse environments.

I was just at an event with Strada and Gallup where they were looking at what do graduates or people who have attended college say was the best value piece or what was most important. And they focused on what they learned and were able to apply to the working world and to work. And so I think we know that students are also expecting, aside from learning and the love of learning and the possibility of gaining knowledge, students also want to graduate with skills that allow them to get a job, they want that degree to be valuable. And so, students who have participated in a number of programs, I'll just share two, are truly being prepared for this through global learning in addition to the knowledge they're gaining, they're also getting these global skills that are applicable. So Louisiana State University has the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, and it provides students of color with summer research experiences in labs in France. In the labs, they're paired with a faculty mentor at the host institution, and they gain experience in a French lab, which may or may not be very different from their lab experience at LSU. So this again, is a form of global learning, and it's a life changing experience for many students. And again, they are solving those problems that are global in nature. Another institution that I'll reference is WPI, Worcester Polytechnic Institution in Massachusetts. They have students that are engaged in global challenges through their Global Projects program. And their students are engaged in problem-based learning all around the U.S. and in more than 40 countries on 6 continents. So they are tackling unstructured problems in meaningful ways with community partners. And these are the types of experiences that students are getting that is demonstrating the value of global learning.

4. That's a lot of good data set. Thank you for that. Very interesting; so with all that data I'm going to ask you to put on your wizard's hat or your crystal ball: What do you forecast for the future of global learning?

Yeah, I truly believe that global learning is only going to grow and the emphasis is only going to get greater. I truly believe we need to move to a model of global learning for all, and that happens when global learning is integrated into the curriculum. That's when we get greater participation by students.

And as someone with a background in area studies, I know how important area studies are and area studies can contribute to this work but if we limit and only have students that participate in area studies or only students that go abroad have these opportunities for global learning, then I think we will really have fallen short. And we will have really sold our students short. So I think in the push to encourage education abroad, we need to push just as much for having integrated global learning across curriculum. A number of institutions that I've been working with, they've found that when students have a foundation of global learning and then they experience an experience abroad, the experience is even stronger and it's even deeper for the students because they've got that framing. And I believe that as we continue to see how connected we are with other parts of the world, as we continue to see what employers are saying they want, as students continue to have opportunities to connect, with colleagues and people in all corners of the earth, global learning is going to continue to be relevant. And I think right now, we are seeing that it is truly essential for students and their success in life, in citizenship, and in work. So I see global learning as growing, and it's just a matter of implementing it in a way that all students will have access to these opportunities.

Excellent; thank you Dawn, and thank you everyone listening for joining us for this episode of the NAFSA Global Learning Podcast. Again, Dawn Michele Whitehead will be speaking at the Forum on Global Learning on Friday, June 1st in Philadelphia at the NAFSA 2018 Annual Conference & Expo. Register for the forum and receive 25% off your full conference registration. Learn more about this opportunity by visiting www.nafsa.org/ac18forum or by contacting globallearning@nafsa.org. Thank you again Dr. Whitehead; thank you.