

By Elaina Loveland

Interconnectedness

ONCE UPON A TIME, students had individual tutors or had their first learning experiences in one-room schoolhouses, isolated from the rest of the world. If they were lucky, they continued their education into their young adult years and left home. But they would not venture far—most probably didn't make it out of a 100-mile radius from home.

As Thomas Friedman says, the world is flat. No longer are students isolated in their own corners of the world. Today learning has gone far beyond one-room school houses and nearby institutions of higher learning. Now learning can be done by going overseas or even staying at home while making international connections and learning about other cultures and their best practices through the use of technology.

Many of the articles in this issue leading up to NAFSA's Annual Conference showcase that learning together—across borders—makes use interconnected with the shared goal of mutual understanding and working together to build a better world.

Our cover story, "New Windows on the World," by Christopher Connell shows how technology is changing how international higher education can create more dynamic international experiences for students—even when they stay in classrooms in their home country.

Ben Wildavsky, author of the *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World*, explores how MOOCs have become popular but provides analysis on how some higher education leaders believe MOOCs help democratize higher education and others do not in "Evolving Toward Significance or MOOC Ado About Nothing?"

"Avoiding Pitfalls of Partnerships" by Marian Kisch reveals what lessons have been learned by higher education institutions that have created international partnerships, what went wrong, and how other colleges and universities can avoid mistakes.

And perhaps the most personal and touching narrative in this issue the story of how two international educators met in the 1970s in Iran and formed a tight bond only to be separated for nearly 30 years is told in "An Odyssey of Rediscovery" by Michael Feighner. Two individuals, one American and one Iranian, students at the time, met in Iran and lost touch after the Iranian Revolution. The lessons they learned from each other about their cultural differences as well as their similarities stayed with them beyond their early friendship—they both became international educators because they each saw the difference that learning beyond one's own culture can make in a person's personal life and the good it can do in society. Ultimately, these two friends were reunited at the NAFSA Conference a few years ago. Stories like these show just how significant international connections are and the special role organizations like NAFSA have in supporting and nurturing these connections. By learning together, we have the power to change the world.

Last but not least, you may notice some subtle visual differences in this issue; this is the debut of our design "refresh." Enjoy the new look! **IE**

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