

# APAIE 2024



PERTH, AUSTRALIA 4-8 MARCH 2024

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*Collaborating for sustainable impact: partnerships across the Asia Pacific*

APAIE Perth 4 - 8 March 2024



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Session 12F: Thurs 7<sup>th</sup> March, 8:30 – 9:15

**The importance of belonging: enhancing international students wellbeing and outcomes**

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MARCH 2024

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING: ENHANCING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' WELLBEING AND OUTCOMES





# About us



Marcela Lapertosa  
Value Learning



Jason D. Patent, PhD  
BridgeLabs



Fran Baxter  
Value Learning

# For today

- Setting the scene
- International students in Australia and USA
- What can YOU do?
- Q&A



**BELONGING**

**INCLUSION**

**DIVERSITY**

**EQUITY**

Share about a time when  
you felt you belonged  
somewhere

What feelings did you  
have?



Share about a time when  
you felt you did not  
belong somewhere

What feelings did you  
have?





# SETTING THE SCENE



Social belonging is a  
fundamental human  
need.

This need is hardwired to  
our DNA.



# BELONGING

- Essential for life satisfaction
- Happiness
- Positive self-esteem
- Long-lasting friendships
- Help-seeking behaviour





# NOT BELONGING

- Absenteeism
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Difficulties with teachers and peers

## MINORITIES

25-30%

Of their time spent worrying about how they fit in

## AT WORK

40%

Of people feel isolated at work

[How LinkedIn's HR Chief is Changing the Diversity Conversation with "Belonging"](#)

\*The-value-of-belonging-at-work, HRB.org

Deloitte: [Diversity, inclusion and leadership](#) | [Deloitte Australia](#) | [Our services and solutions](#) | [Human Capital Services](#)



# International Students in Australia

- Universities Accord final report 50% of students feel they do not belong



Joseph Crawford, Kelly-Ann Allen, Taren Sanders, Roy Baumeister, Philip Parker, Cassandra Saunders & Dianne Tice (2024) Sense of belonging in higher education students: an Australian longitudinal study from 2013 to 2019, *Studies in Higher Education*, 49:3, 395-409, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2023.2238006

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- RMIT- Belonging as a responsive strategy

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?



# What can we do to help everyone feel like they belong on campus?

01

Develop your and your team's intercultural skills

- Self-awareness (biases and stereotypes)
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Suspend Judgement

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Map the diversity and inclusion in your institution

- What does diversity look like for you?
- Who is included? Who is not?

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03

Assess your systems and practices

- Physical environment
- Services
- Documentation
- Consider Impact vs intention

"A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES  
BEGINS WITH A  
SINGLE STEP"

# International Students in the US: Challenges related to belonging

- Language



Source: Lee, J.J. (2021). "Unique challenges and opportunities for supporting mental health and promoting the well-being of international graduate students." Council of Graduate Schools.

# International Students in the US: Challenges related to belonging



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- Learning style differences

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- Cultural differences of all kinds: communication style, monochronic vs. polychronic time, proxemics, emotional expressiveness, religious practices...

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- Shifts in identity (destabilizing)

Source: Lee, J.J. (2021). "Unique challenges and opportunities for supporting mental health and promoting the well-being of international graduate students." Council of Graduate Schools.

“ALL POWER IS IGNORANT AT THE  
CORE.”

# Actions you can take individually / personally



- Recognize the challenges they're facing: their brains aren't at their best
- Be extra helpful and patient and kind
- Learn some words and phrases in a language spoken by some international students

# Actions you can take at scale

## Scaling impact:

- BUDGET: Pre-departure, onsite, and re-entry programming of all sorts.
- BUDGET: Ongoing staff and faculty training on unconscious bias, cultural dimensions, conflict styles, inclusive behaviors...
- Embed counseling and psychological services in multiple offices, including ISSS.
- Embed employability / career services in ISSS (concerns about Optional Practical Training and visa issues in the US)

# Actions you can take at scale

Review the Forum on Education Abroad Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, especially Standard 6: Student Learning and Development

(<https://www.forumea.org/standards-of-good-practice.html>)







What is ONE action you will take  
based on what you learned  
today?

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# Thank you!

Feel free to send in any questions to

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[jason@bridgelabsglobal.com](mailto:jason@bridgelabsglobal.com)



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