

## Warwick Integration Summit 2013 Opening Speech by Professor Ann Caesar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education (Quality and Standards), University of Warwick

In March 2012, The University of Warwick and Warwick Students' Union organised a two-day Integration Summit with the aim of bringing universities and their students' unions together to collaborate around a common theme.

That theme was how best to encourage integration between international and domestic students and how to measure the internationalised student experience.

Many of you in the room today attended that first Summit, which took an innovative research-led approach to integration by focusing on the "collaborative triangle" of Students' Unions, Academic Departments and Administrative Services.

The value of bringing together students, researchers and practitioners to address this issue is that it can help to ensure internationalisation activities are research-informed and evaluated for impact.

A number of learning points came out of last year's Summit:

1. Whilst the motivation to engage in intercultural contact has to come from within the individual student, universities and students' unions do have a role to play in creating the social conditions to facilitate that intercultural contact
2. All of the universities and students' unions who attended were actively seeking to put those conditions in place, but it was clear that different institutions had reached different points along that journey
3. The key point though was that activities that encourage mixing are not enough in themselves unless they are embedded in an institutional culture that genuinely values cultural diversity. By that I mean integration is a process of mutual accommodation where the students and staff from the host culture have to be as open to change as the international students at that institution. Therefore, targeting our own UK students when promoting meaningful and sustained dialogue between all students must be a priority for us all if we wish to enhance integration on our campuses
4. And so, just as creating activities to promote interaction and social mixing between nationalities isn't enough in itself, measuring success simply by counting the number of participants from different backgrounds fails to recognise that in order to promote meaningful dialogue on campus, the quality of these interactions is more important than the quantity. The question of how we measure the quality of those interactions is one we will explore further today.

At Warwick, the research being carried out by our Centre for Applied Linguistics into intercultural communicative competence has been fundamental in informing how we evaluate and develop the "bottom up" internationalisation activities run by our International Office and our Students' Union. We have then tried to embed these within our top level University strategy under the strategic objective of "Every student an international student". The idea here is that if all of our students are prepared to change and become more interculturally competent and the institution is seen to fully endorse this transformation, we will be much better placed to promote meaningful and sustained dialogue between nationalities on our campuses.

Whether you attended last year's Summit or not, on behalf of the University of Warwick I'm delighted to welcome you all here today to the Warwick Integration Summit 2013.

This year's Summit has been organised jointly with the **UK Council for International Student Affairs** and the **National Union of Students** out of a continued desire to increase collaboration between universities and their students' unions.

The main themes of the 2013 Summit will be promoting dialogue between international and domestic students and taking a holistic approach to integration.

So, what do we hope you will get out of today?

Today's event is intended to be neither a mere re-stating of the obstacles to integration nor simply a series of best practice examples of how to overcome those obstacles. We would hope that today's bringing together of students, researchers and practitioners will help move the integration debate beyond endlessly rehearsing what the problems are.

We would also hope that by recognising each institution's context is different, we avoid falling into the trap of trying to provide ready-made solutions that simply may not be relevant to your institutional context.

The day has been carefully structured to provide you with some of the latest academic thinking on the topic of integration from both the UK and Australia as well a diverse range of examples of promising practice from different types of institutions and students' unions.

Thus, we begin with two research-informed talks on taking a holistic approach to integration and promoting dialogue between domestic and international students and then move into a series of practical workshops that will illustrate a range of approaches being taken at different types of institution.

Following the workshops, we will challenge you to re-think some of the most common integration activities in order to determine how those might be embedded in an institutional culture that genuinely values cultural diversity and, most importantly, are evaluated for the quality of meaningful intercultural interactions they create and not just measured by the number of nationalities through the door.

Indeed, one of the student panel members for that session will provide an example of how we have transformed our own One World Week to increase opportunities for meaningful dialogue.

Finally, we will give the floor to you, the delegates, in a quick fire round up of best practice examples from across the UK that recognise the need for both domestic as well as international students to change if we are serious about enhancing integration.

So, I'd like to end by thanking you for joining us at this year's Summit and hope you have a stimulating and productive day.