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## Fall 2015, A Conversation with Dr. Luchen Li, Associate Provost for International Programs

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## UNH Global

# A Conversation with Dr. Luchen Li, Associate Provost for International Programs

Monday, November 30, 2015

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**UNH International Educator (IE):** *A very belated UNH International Educator welcome to UNH, Dr. Li! The university, in many ways, has been waiting for your arrival since the 2011 President's Panel made its recommendations. What are your impressions of UNH now that you have had a chance to settle in?*

**Dr. Li:** Thank you. Indeed, it's been an exciting year. I have carefully studied the 2011 Report of the President's Panel on Internationalizing UNH. Most rewarding is the experience working with a dedicated team to respond to the urgent priorities from the recommendations of the President's Panel and lay the action plans to pursue the goals. UNH is a vibrant academic community; I have met many talented students who unwaveringly pursue their dreams by involving themselves in the campus learning community and exploring the outside world. We have world-class faculty who are strong in research, passionate in their teaching, and motivated to bring the world to UNH. Colleagues across our campuses seem to be very open to embracing international



**Dr. Luchen Li, Associate Provost for International Programs at UNH**

cultures; I have learned a great deal about their roles in enriching our campus and local communities. The University leadership has a clear vision for UNH internationalization. I appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and students at such a dynamic place.

**UNH IE:** *You've been pounding the pavement (snowy, steamy or in between) and meeting with the colleges and schools on a regular basis. What is the level of international programming and interest across the university?*

**Dr. Li:** I have held multiple discussions with the leadership teams of UNH colleges, schools, and programs. The purpose of such regular communication is to hear their suggestions on international programming, to learn about their respective needs and potentials. For instance, some schools' priorities are to recruit well-prepared international students whereas others wish to diversify their study abroad sites and program offerings. Collaborating with University Advancement and Law School, we have started an effort to reach out to international alumni. To offer our students in STEM fields more access to study abroad opportunities, this year CEPS joined the Global E3 (Global Engineering Education Exchange) (<http://www.iie.org/programs/globale3>) and started to send UNH students to study at top-tier universities around the world. Our faculty members are actively pursuing international opportunities such as Fulbright scholarships and UNH-funded Faculty International Development grants. With Admissions, we have convened a task force to review international recruiting avenues to build potential pipelines for able and competitive international applicants. As we prepare UNH to be more globally engaged, the registry of all UNH international travelers, travel-related health insurance and safety, export control and compliance, among other issues, are also being addressed by pertinent offices.

**UNH IE:** *Where do you think we are on the internationalization 'road map' and what are some of the priorities you see in the short and medium term?*

**Dr. Li:** With the abundant energy from across campus and the directions of our administration, UNH is well on its way to internationalizing our learning community. We do have strategic priorities to start with, such as increasing the number of students participating in study abroad, increasing our International Affairs Dual Major (IA) enrollment, and better integrating international students into the campus culture. I think we all would agree that to be internationalized, we must build broad connections to the world, through academic and cultural programs with international partners. Most importantly, to ensure success in these areas, faculty and staff involvement is critical. The UNH international team is building partnerships with academic, administrative, and operational units to

create new opportunities and to best serve our students' interests in global learning. One great step forward is the creation of a vital new position, the International Affairs Dual Major Program Chair, and bringing on Professor Jeannie Sowers to lead the IA program.

**UNH IE:** *What are some of the challenges UNH faces in international programs? What are the opportunities?*

**Dr. Li:** Every university has its unique challenges; our challenge, which is not a rare one, is funding resources to seed some of the most urgent priorities, such as building international partnerships for broader student exchanges and establishing sustainable ties for international recruitment. We are seeking innovative models that may financially support students' international experience. I believe the cliché – wherever there are challenges, there are also opportunities. These challenges propel us to think and operate innovatively to find solutions. One worthy solution is to team up across disciplines and offices, to tap into resources, human as well as financial, to accomplish common goals in international programming. Resources such as government support, scholarships, and enticing offerings from international partners and foreign organizations, are often helpful. Internally, we are integrating some international units to maximize efficiency and build synergy.

**UNH IE:** *With the many competing 'opportunities,' how will you and your team prioritize?*

**Dr. Li:** To prioritize the many alluring opportunities, we first have been focusing on consolidating our international energies to create an internal UNH synergy, so that all paddle in the same direction. The international leadership team (comprised of myself and Center for International Education and Office of International Students and Scholars staff) has been meeting with all colleges and schools to identify “local” support units or personnel to streamline UNH international operations and to strategize and coordinate the development of initiatives, partnerships, and academic courses related to international studies. For example, with the lead from COLA, we are giving study abroad a strong push across the university. Potential international partnerships for student exchanges are being developed to allow more students to study abroad with less financial burden. At the same time, we met with Residential Life to find ways to collaborate on campus cultural integration between international students and U.S. students. We are also working with the UNH Foundation to build and engage the support of alumni to contribute to our international enhancement efforts.

To keep the campus community updated of ongoing international efforts and to engage and hear from the broader constituency, a university-wide International Forum was held on April 15, 2015. I look forward to keeping UNH International Educator readers informed as our action plans are implemented.

**UNH IE:** *How will we measure our progress on these important initiatives?*

**Dr. Li:** Both CIE and OISS have maintained great data about our progressive growth in international education. This serves as a baseline. Some of our progress is immediately tangible whereas others, such as a campus cultural climate embracing global diversity and the long-term success of our future alumni, may take some time to be registered. However, we do have mechanisms to measure our progress through surveys and documentation, and to assess our performance with matrices and information analysis.

UNH internationalization is a university-wide endeavor requiring everyone's participation, contribution, and support. Whether it is advising students for study abroad, helping fund a student's travel overseas, welcoming international students and scholars to the UNH community, or bringing alumni back to share their international experience, we all have much to give and to take in the ongoing process of internationalizing our learning and living communities. I am confident we will succeed, and know that we all look forward to a UNH enhanced with exciting international dimensions, offering its constituents broader and vital global opportunities and perspectives.

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