

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I welcome readers and contributors to the first issue of 2026 for the International Journal of Higher Education, Volume 15, Number 1. This issue marks the beginning of a new scholarly platform dedicated to advancing research, dialogue, and innovation within higher education across global contexts.

The mission of IJHE is to provide an international, peer-reviewed forum for high-quality research that bridges theory, policy, and practice. We seek to publish work that informs institutional leadership, enhances teaching and learning, strengthens governance frameworks, and promotes inclusive and sustainable educational systems. This journal values interdisciplinary inquiry and encourages contributions from scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers whose work addresses contemporary challenges and emerging trends in higher education.

Higher education stands at a pivotal moment in history. Institutions worldwide are navigating rapid technological transformation, evolving student demographics, shifting geopolitical landscapes, and growing demands for equity, sustainability, and accountability. Universities are being called upon not only to generate knowledge but also to model inclusion, ethical leadership, and societal responsibility. In this dynamic environment, rigorous research and thoughtful scholarship are more important than ever.

The eight articles featured in this issue reflect the diversity and complexity of the field. This issue is dominated by articles from Canada and the USA, but we also hear from researchers from Saudi Arabia, Uganda and China. Contributions explore themes including innovative pedagogical practices, digital transformation, student engagement, academic leadership, quality assurance, and internationalisation. Collectively, they demonstrate the vibrancy of scholarship that is shaping the future of tertiary education.

The first article is from Naseem Alotaibi who investigated instructors' perspectives and adoption behaviours of AI adoption in higher education. The current literature tends to examine AI applications broadly without tailoring the focus to a specific group of end users. Against this backdrop, the present study conducted a meta-analysis of 10 empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025 to explain faculty acceptance of generative AI (GenAI) technologies in higher education. The findings provide practical insights for university administrators, policymakers, and AI solution designers. Institutions are encouraged to implement targeted initiatives that increase faculty awareness of AI's practical utility and reduce usability barriers, while considering how social and organizational environments shape adoption decisions. The second article is from Randhawa and colleagues who examined the findings of the Canadian 'Being Raced' study in examining aspects of the Wilfrid Laurier University campus, that made post-secondary environments safer spaces for racialized students, staff, and faculty. Their findings included racialized participants and members of the university community who expressed a need for more formal supports and resources from the university, as well as emphasized the importance of in-group and peer-group social networks and educational opportunities. Their findings also contributes to a critical assessment on the ways to create a safer and more inclusive learning and work environments for racialized students, faculty, and staff members, which ultimately impacts valued university metrics such as student satisfaction. The third article is from Nelson and colleagues that examined how Doctoral degree pathways in Canada are influenced by sociodemographic and disciplinary factors, and how they relate to academic and labour-market outcomes. Their findings highlight disparities in pathway prevalence and outcomes, revealing that the path to and from a PhD is not uniform.

The fourth article is from William Schonberg who discusses the increased presence of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in tertiary settings. As student enrolment in MOOCs increases, universities are facing important decisions regarding MOOCs including whether MOOCs should be allowed to be claimed by students as meeting a university's graduation requirements. His paper discusses and provides insights into several key issues surrounding MOOCs, including sustainability and the eco-friendly delivery aspects of MOOCs. The fifth article is from Aidan Li who explores the associations between social media usage and the college major selection process among U.S.

undergraduate students (N=255). The findings highlight that significant demographic disparities exist in how students perceive and use social media for major exploration, while accessible salary data serves as a powerful intervention for influencing actual choices. The sixth article is from Tushabe and Etomaru who investigated how capital factors influence refugee access to university education in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. Their study findings highlight that structural provisions alone are insufficient as enhancing refugee access requires integrated strategies that combine scholarships, mentorship and culturally responsive educational support. By emphasizing the role of capital, they provide critical insights for policymakers, institutions and communities aiming to foster equitable university education access for refugees in Uganda and similar contexts.

The seventh article in this issue is from Cissy Li who investigates the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) themes within a university-level English as a Second Language (ESL) course, to foster both global citizenship awareness and English proficiency. While no statistically significant changes were observed in global citizenship awareness as measured by the questionnaire, qualitative feedback indicated positive shifts in students' attitudes and behaviours, including increased ethical engagement. These results suggest that embedding GCE themes in ESL instruction fosters multidimensional language development and behavioural engagement, even when measurable gains in global citizenship awareness are modest. The final article in this issue is from Capmourteres and colleagues who investigated how increased participation in the academic experience is accompanied by respect and inclusion. They utilized online survey and focus groups to identify inclusion barriers experienced by biological science graduate students that prevented them from full engagement in their graduate experience and negatively influenced their development. They proposed a range of solutions to address these barriers that included financial aid awareness, mental health and cultural sensitivity training, increased mentorship opportunities, and improved communications with students.

Based on this exciting issue, I continue to invite researchers and educators from around the world to contribute to IJHE and to join us in building a scholarly community grounded in intellectual rigor, integrity, and global perspective. Together, we can advance research that strengthens higher education's role in fostering knowledge, opportunity, and social progress. I hope that this issue has stimulated reflection, inspired innovation, and contributed meaningfully to the ongoing development of higher education worldwide.

With appreciation and anticipation for the work ahead,

With warm regards,

Associate Professor Ingrid Harrington
Editor-in-Chief
International Journal of Higher Education