

# THE PIE

## THE PIE LEADERSHIP DIGEST

50 VOICES OF 2024

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NORTH AMERICA EDITION

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# FOREWORD

The PIE's mission is to connect the professionals, institutions, and businesses that support the millions of people who choose to study abroad each year.

We are committed to building a stronger sector through knowledge exchange and connections – and this can be as simple as joining the dots across politics, technology, and academia.

Ahead of The PIE Live North America conference in Boston, our editorial team has picked out 50 new 'voices' from the region, including the leaders helping to influence change or radical thinking around delivery.

Canada and the US face some significant challenges at this moment, and more than ever, we need champions to advocate for the merits and value of the industry we all work in.

This list is designed to signpost our readership to a range of commentators we think offer value and different perspectives and is by no means definitive.

It is deliberately diverse and builds on our 2023 list rather than repeating the same names.

We hope it sparks new conversations and connections, and we look forward to your feedback.

Amy Baker  
CEO and Co-Founder  
The PIE





# Taking You Further

Supporting and insuring the international education industry for over **25 years!**

**GuardMe** International Insurance specializes in providing health and wellness solutions to international students, staff, and faculty around the world. Our dedicated team understands the unique challenges faced by international students and how unexpected medical or mental health issues can disrupt their educational journey.

We enable students, staff, and faculty to travel the world safely, while they enrich their lives through international study. Our genuine concern is reflected in the multiple solutions we developed to ensure their well-being, whatever the circumstances.

**GuardMe** is more than just an insurance company. We are your partners in promoting meaningful change within the international education community, and are dedicated to providing solutions that make a difference in people's lives.



**Nicoletta Pinto**  
Global Partnerships Strategist



*We take immense pride in actively listening to our clients and prioritizing their invaluable feedback. This commitment allows us to continuously meet and surpass the ever-evolving needs and expectations of our valued customers.*



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# 50 voices in #Intled

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Here are the 50 voices from the North American international education sector that we believe you should follow. Experienced leaders, rising stars, disrupters, and policy-makers – we think these individuals offer valuable commentary on our ecosystem.

The list includes former PIONEER Awards judges, winners, and thought leaders from the Intled conference circuit. It has been designed to signpost you to key influencers but is by no means definitive.

How did we do? Who would you have on your list for 2024?



## LaNitra Berger, NAFSA | George Mason University

LaNitra Berger serves as NAFSA president and chair of the Board of Directors. A senior international education professional committed to equity and access for underrepresented students, LaNitra is an associate professor of history and art history and director of the African and African American Studies Program at George Mason University. She helps secure grants and awards for students and the institution in this role. As an art historian, LaNitra's research focus is on the art of the African diaspora, and she is the author of the book, "Irma Stern and the Racial Paradox of South African Modern Art: Audacities of Color."

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## Alex Usher, Higher Education Strategy Associates

Alex Usher is the president of Higher Education Strategy Associates and author of the intelligence feed 'One Thought to Start Your Day,' which has over 15,000 subscribers. He served as the director of the Educational Policy Institute Canada and, prior to that, was the director of research and program development at the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation. As the Canadian government waged war on the international education sector in 2024, we have been glued to Alex's social media feeds for insights, updates, and unfiltered opinions!

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## Luis von Ahn Duolingo

Luis von Ahn is a tech entrepreneur who, by his early twenties, had sold two companies to Google, including the CAPTCHA security software he co-created. Passionate about improving access to education worldwide, he co-founded the language company Duolingo. His plenary talk at NAFSA in 2023 revealed that users of the app include a broad cross-section of society, from Bill Gates to refugees—with more US citizens learning languages with Duolingo than in the entire public school system. Check out his TED talk for more.



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## Anna Esaki-Smith Education Rethink

Anna Esaki-Smith is a successful author, journalist and entrepreneur, with her latest book "Make College Your Superpower: It's Not Where You Go, It's What You Know" published in 2024. She co-founded Education Rethink, a research consultancy specialising in market analysis and recruitment strategies. Anna also writes for Forbes.com and Newsweek on global education trends and higher education in Asia. She is a key advisor for the British Council and the former communications director for EF Education First.



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## Clay Harmon AIRC

The former director of international enrollment and admissions at the University of Colorado Denver, Clay Harmon, is completing his first year as executive director at the helm of the Association of International Enrollment Management (AIRC). You can follow Clay's activity on LinkedIn as he engages with the membership community and prepares for the annual AIRC conference in December 2024. Part of the U.S. for Success coalition, Clay has been taking the temperature of admissions teams across the country as they begin another academic year.



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## Alejandra Vilalta-Perdomo Tecnológico de Monterrey

Alejandra is the director of international academic development and global initiatives at Tecnológico de Monterrey. The private university hosts the annual Institute for the Future of Education (IFE) conference, which The PIE attended in 2024. Alejandra has spoken at NAFSA events, and her expertise lies in internationalization, entrepreneurship, social community development, franchises, human capital, and executive protocol.



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## Larissa Bezo, Canadian Bureau for International Education

Larissa Bezo is the current president and CEO of CBIE, the national bureau committed to advancing Canadian international education. She has had the unenviable task of balancing the needs of member institutions with the sudden, restrictive policies introduced by the Immigration, Refugees and Canadian Citizenship (IRCC) department in 2024 to cap international student numbers. The national dialogue about the parameters of a responsible and sustainable international sector has been intense, and CBIE has been a key mediator in the debate. Follow Larissa (in English and French) to see what happens next.

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## Paulo Zagalo-Melo, AIEA

Paulo Zagalo-Melo is the president-elect of the Association of International Education Administrators, and his term will run from 2024 to February 2027. As the associate provost for global education at Western Michigan University, he led the Haenicke Institute for Global Education and was a popular nominee for the AIEA presidency. Zagalo-Melo currently serves as the senior internationalization strategist for Virginia Commonwealth University. You can follow him on AIEA social channels and the conference circuit as he builds towards chairing the AIEA conference in his final year.

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## Mary Maker, UNHCR

'How do refugees win?' Mary Maker stole the show with her passionate keynote speech at The PIE Live North America 2023, and she continues to do incredible ambassadorial work for the United Nations refugee agency. Displaced as a child from South Sudan, she grew up in a refugee camp in Kenya. Education paved the way for Mary to change her life when she won a scholarship to study in the US. Mary has gone on to establish Elimisha Kakuma, a foundation that provides similar access to higher education opportunities for high school graduates living in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. An inspirational voice to follow!

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mary-maker/>



## Chris Johnson, Arizona State University

Chris Johnson is the ultimate road warrior! Having worked in international education for over 25 years, he is incredibly passionate about the sector and supporting students studying abroad. Now director of graduate and international recruitment, and international partners at Arizona State University, Chris is a regular speaker on the conference circuit. In the last year, he has crossed paths with The PIE as a speaker at the annual BUILA conference in the UK and the Kaplan leadership summit in the United Arab Emirates. Reach out to Chris on LinkedIn about the US sector trends and opportunities with ASU.

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## David Julien OUI-IOHE

David Julien is the executive director of OUI-IOHE, a membership-based association with more than 400 HEIs across 28 countries of the Americas, including Canada and the US. David is building greater collaboration between LATAM institutions and their neighbors in North America and has been promoting a collaborative research grant for projects focused on the SDG agenda. David will be speaking at The PIE Live North America on Canadian policy disruption, and The PIE will attend the upcoming CAIE-2025 conference in Costa Rica.

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## Sara Dart Education in Ireland

Sara is the senior vice president for Education Ireland and an experienced public speaker on the global education circuit. Based in Boston, Massachusetts, she is the lead on engagement and strategy for the vitally important US market for Irish education. Sara has built a large following on LinkedIn through engaging content, including a weekly jobs round-up across the sector. She has contributed to the NAFSA educator's guide and been featured on podcasts such as *Changing Lives Through Education Abroad*.

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## Girish Ballolla Gen Next Education

Girish is a serial entrepreneur, content creator, and a big personality in the North American sector. He is the founder of Gen Next Education, a company providing strategic recruitment and planning services to universities, and College Genie, an AI-powered college and career counselling platform. He is also the co-host of the long-running Destiny Benders podcast along with The PIE's very own Jessica Guiver. Girish has spoken at The PIE Live North America conference on the changing market demographics in India.

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## Jill Welch Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration

Jill is a senior policy advisor to the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, a non-partisan group of over 500 university and college leaders across the US. Jill is the co-founder and senior consultant of the US for Success coalition, which aims to create greater collaboration between associations and agencies to lobby the government and unite the Study in the USA brand. You can read Jill's regular column in The PIE called *Jill on the Hill*, featuring the inside track on education policy discussions and fallout from Washington DC.

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## Sharon Butler, Flywire

Sharon Butler was Flywire's first US employee. Fast forward to nearly nine years, and she has built an empire, servicing cross-border payments between students and US institutions from over 220 countries. As EVP for global education, Sharon spearheads many of the company's valuable insight products and user experience innovations. She announced the acquisition of Studylink on stage at The PIE Live North America in 2023 and launched a new Higher Education Finance playbook in the summer of 2024. She featured at Flywire's own annual partner conference, Flywire Fusion, which took place in Arizona this year.

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## Wei Liu, University of Alberta International

Wei Liu, also known as David, is the program administrator at the University of Alberta's global academic leadership development program. He was the 2011-2012 Horowitz Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, University of Alberta, and has since become a leading research commentator on global student mobility. He has over 22 publications and has become an authority on the Chinese education system and appetite for study abroad. Check out his articles, including *The role of English education in China's shifting national identity* and *International education for the oppressed: A framework for international educators' value-based practice*.

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## Pamela Villaseñor, Malvern International

Based in Mexico City, Pamela has spent over 15 years managing international recruitment and marketing campaigns, most recently for Malvern International, which is celebrating their 25th anniversary. Earlier in 2024, Pamela took the brave step of publishing an open letter to the international education industry calling for a culture of safety and respect for female professionals. She shared personal experiences of being harassed by male colleagues and called in to question the role alcohol plays at industry events. Her willingness to confront these issues has been widely praised, giving confidence to other women who have had similar experiences.

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## Pieter Vermeulen, University of North Texas

Pieter has garnered a reputation as a straight-talking, data-led expert on the US higher education system. More than 25 years of experience in the sector has led him to the role of senior director of international recruitment at the University of North Texas. He is a significant commentator on LinkedIn and has appeared on stage at events for The PIE, Studyporals, and IDP in recent years. Check out his views on the impact of the upcoming US presidential election on international student demand for the US.

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## Amir Reza Babson College

Amir Reza is the President of the Association of International Education Administrators. A former recipient of the NAFSA Region XI Sally M. Heym Award, Amir is dean of Babson Academy for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurial Learning, and Global Education and formerly served as vice provost for international and multicultural education. He has served on leadership boards for AIEA, IFSA, NAFSA, and several institutions abroad and has presented at many national and international conferences on international education, including an upcoming presentation at The PIE Live in Boston.

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## Simona Campbell Leap

Simona is a friend of The PIE, having supported our conferences and editorial coverage from day one. As vice president of university relations for Leap, she is constantly on the road, visiting university partners and furthering her mission to improve access to higher education. Follow her to better understand hybrid degrees, international student finance options, and the increasing use of agents from the US sector. She talks a lot of sense!

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## Andrew Ness Humber College

Andrew Ness is a legend of international education and a friend of The PIE. He is always willing to engage and collaborate with colleagues and puts some serious miles on the conference circuit! A previous speaker at The PIE Live North America and a PIEoneers judge, we've also encountered him educating colleagues at NAFSA, EAIE, BUILA, and Kaplan events in the past year. An authority on agent management in the North American sector, he is a champion for public-private sector partnerships.

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## Sara Custer Inside Higher Ed

A former editor of The PIE, Sara is now the editor-in-chief of Inside Higher Ed, a publication acquired by Times Higher Education in 2022. Reporting from Washington D.C., Sara is well-placed to cover a wide range of policy discussions from Capitol Hill. She will speak at The PIE Live North America conference in November on the media coverage of campus protests and the high-profile resignations that followed.

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## Maria Spies, HolonIQ

Maria Spies is co-founder and co-CEO of HolonIQ, a leading research and analytics group studying the global impact economy. She splits her time between the US and Australia. As authors of the seminal 'Education 2030' report, HolonIQ's data and insights are increasingly powering growth, innovation, and risk intelligence for governments, institutions, organizations, and investors across climate, education, and health sectors. HolonIQ is one of the keynote speakers at The PIE Live North America in Boston from November 19 to 20, 2024.

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## Tony Williams, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology | Alberta Innovates

Tony Williams is the board chair at Alberta Innovates and senior advisor international NAIT at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. A skilled marketing and recruitment consultant working out of Canada, his previous experience includes roles with Navitas, Studyportals, and founding the technology start-up Zept. He has worked with institutions such as the University of Regina, Kings University College, Nipissing University, Charles Sturt University, and Linköping University, and continues to drive transformative change in the industry's digital transformation.

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## Michelle Froah, ETS

A true lifelong learner, Michelle has been identified as a 'CMO to watch' by The PIE. Having worked with big brands such as Samsung, Procter and Gamble, and Kimberly-Clarke - she has turned her attention to evolving the ETS global brand, including the TOEFL and TOEIC language tests. She is passionate about skills for career development and chairs the AI strategy committee for ETS as part of her role as the global chief marketing & innovation officer, and SVP of corporate solutions. Michelle has appeared on many podcasts, including *The CMO Podcast* and the *Campaign US* show.

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## Diego Fanara, Unibuddy

Diego Fanara founded Unibuddy in 2015 after moving to the UK to study at a university and realising the difficulties of adapting to a new country as a student. A pioneer in peer recruitment, the edtech platform raised over \$32m in investment. Diego relocated to the US to support expanding services to North American partners. His latest innovation, called 'Assistant', is an AI-powered helper tool that matches students to the best-fit information they seek. You will often find Diego giving insights at UCAS events, as the organisation has partnered with the British application system.

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## Andrew Chen F1 Hire

There is a growing demand to track and support international graduate employment outcomes and prove the value of our education system. Andrew Chen is the CEO of the edtech company F1 Hire, which provides essential tools for OPT, CPT, and H-1B job seekers. Andrew will be speaking at The PIE Live North America to discuss what the growing pool of data on international outcomes indicates and how we can better support students' engagement with industry. It's essential viewing!

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## Jessica Sandberg Duke Kunshan University

Jessica Sandberg has already been recognised as a key voice in our sector with honors including NAFSA's 2024 award for Outstanding Achievement in International Enrollment Management, a spot on the Chronicle of Higher Education's "Influence List," and Philadelphia Magazine's "Best of Philly" list. Jessica serves on the advisory boards of TOEFL (ETS), Times Higher Education, and IDP and is a previous national chair for NAFSA's International Enrollment Committee and Annual Conference Committee.

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## Geoff Wilmshurst Government of British Columbia

Geoff Wilmshurst is an experienced international educator and former vice president at Camosun College, currently acting as a special advisor on international education to the Government of British Columbia on edu-immigration matters. He has been integral in facilitating communications between colleges in the province and welcoming national delegations from countries like the Philippines. He has written in the ICEF Monitor and The PIE News and is a former board of directors member for CBIE and AFS Canada.

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## Carmen Melgarejo Link Educational & Travel

Carmen is an ICEF and CCEA-certified student counselor who found her voice through social media, creating the Instagram channel @MexicanInToronto to document her life in Canada. She now works at Link Education and Travel as a business development manager alongside an operations role with Casta Latina, a Canadian-based, non-profit digital platform built to educate, empower, and promote Canada's Latin community. She is also part of the Mexicanas Unidas en Canada (United Mexican Women in Canada) project.

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## Clay Hensley

A longtime leader at the College Board, Clay Hensley is now an international education consultant. Clay is a global higher education expert, influencer, and connector focused on international student success. He works with institutions and organizations in the sector to enhance their reach and reputation. Clay is a frequent presenter at conferences and webinars and can often be seen, camera in hand, making connections and capturing critical moments at sector events worldwide.

 <https://www.linkedin.com/in/clayhensley/>



## Rodney Morrison, University of Delaware

Vice president for enrollment management at the University of Delaware, Rodney has previously served as president of the College Board Middle States Regional Council. He has been active in numerous professional organizations, including the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the National Association of College Admissions Counseling, and the Association of Black Admissions and Financial Aid Officers in the Ivy League and Sister Schools.

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## Haujing Maske, Wayne State University

Haujing Maske has 20 years of experience building partnerships across the globe, working with international students and scholars to support their academic and social success in the U.S. She is considered a leading specialist in the teaching of China-related material in K-12 schools and serves on the committee of the Specialists Panel of International Chinese Language Teaching Materials for Beijing Language and Culture University. She has published extensively in English and Chinese and has been featured at The PIE Live North America.

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## James Rice, IBT College

James Rice is the vice president of IBT College Canada and president of the Clean Energy Safety and Training Council. He played a leading role in developing a virtual healthcare training program that trained over 2000 healthcare workers during the pandemic and has won the Global Innovation Award in Learning at the PIEoneer Awards and the Minister's Award of Excellence from the Minister of Colleges and Universities. In his personal life, he is an inspirational health and wellbeing author and influencer, having been named the National Body Transformation Champion in Canada.

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## Meti Basiri ApplyBoard

Meti Basiri is the youngest of three brothers who founded edtech unicorn ApplyBoard. He now leads the company as CEO and is a key commentator on student application flows worldwide through the ApplyBoard Insights webinars and blog posts. As a young entrepreneur, he documents the challenges and rewards of growing a global business and disrupting the traditional agent supply chain. He has received a wide range of accolades, including being named on Canada's Forbes 30 under 30 list.

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## Amanda Khan Campus Community

Amanda Khan is the head of marketing for Campus Community and she knows a thing or two about social media platforms, having amassed a TikTok and Instagram following of over 250K followers. As the founder and social media strategist for Social Kulaid, Amanda leverages her experiences to educate and empower others to pursue their dreams. She provides English language lessons online on the popular Sua Professora Americana YouTube series.

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## Joe Sallustio Ellucian | EdUp Experience

Vice president for industry engagement at the higher education technology company Ellucian, Joe Sallustio, also hosts the popular EdUp Experience podcast, where he invites marketers and industry peers to discuss digital transformation and next-best actions. He is also the author of the best-selling book Commencement: The Beginning of a New Era in Higher Education. As technology removes borders and boundaries to education, follow Joe to find out how to improve user experience for your global student community.

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## Eduarda Prates Canadore College

Mexico is becoming an increasingly important study abroad source market, and Eduarda Prates is a rising star supporting students in considering their options. Currently working as the LATAM regional manager for Canadore College in Canada, she has also worked with Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology and ApplyBoard in Mexico. Eduarda often supports her agent network by speaking on webinars, livestreams, and recruitment fairs about the benefits of studying and working in Canada.

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## Kate Jennings, CBIE

In addition to her successful consulting business, Kate Jennings is the current curriculum developer and instructor for international education training programs on behalf of the Canadian Bureau for International Education. She is a former chair of the NAFSA international education leadership knowledge community and a recipient of the British Columbia Council for International Education's Distinguished Leadership Award. Follow her on LinkedIn as she engages with the Canadian community to better understand the policy disruption and IRCC changes in practice.

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## Marty Bennett, SMIE Consulting | University of Nevada – Las Vegas

For a free weekly snapshot of what's going on in the world of international education, check out the SMIE Consulting Midweek Roundup on YouTube hosted by Marty Bennett. The show is also supplemented with an email and LinkedIn newsletter subscription. Having worked for many of the biggest brands in our sector, including EducationUSA, The British Council, and IDP Education, alongside five institutions, Marty is vastly experienced in explaining the shifting trends in enrollment management, policy, and social media communications. Marty currently also serves as the director of global recruitment and partnerships at the University of Nevada–Las Vegas.

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## Krista Northup, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

As director of global partnerships, Krista Northup is responsible for growing the University of North Carolina's international engagements worldwide. Most recently, Krista led the North America team at Sannam S4 and was the director of university partnerships at Cambridge Education Group, where she was responsible for several strategic relationships between CEG and North American institutions, building long-term sustainable recruitment and education pathways for international students.

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## Zac Macinnes, WorldStrides

Another podcast host makes our 50 voices list, with the inclusion of Zac Macinnes. He is the associate vice president for campus partnerships at WorldStrides, where he presents the company's in-house podcast, Changing Lives Through Education Abroad. Zac is a key champion for empowering LGBTQ+ students to access education abroad and has spoken candidly about his own experiences around safety, identity, and inclusion. Follow Zac on X to feel inspired by the transformational power of studying abroad!

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## John Lucas, ISEP Study Abroad

John Lucas featured as a judge at this year's PIEoneer Awards, drawing upon his 25 years of international education experience to spot the innovators amongst the submissions. He now leads the world's largest exchange and study abroad consortia at ISEP and is the current board chair of the Forum on Education Abroad. John serves on World Learning's Global Advisory Council and is an adjunct lecturer at Georgetown University.

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## Jennifer Wilson Canada Homestay Network

Author of *The Heart of Homestay*, Jennifer Wilson is a leading voice, coach and facilitator on compassionate leadership. She will be speaking at The PIE Live North America on the true cost of caring, as frontline staff and homestay families face increasing pressure to support student well-being. Jennifer is a trusted mentor to the homestay community and is always open to new connections about how best to support students seeking an immersive experience in Canada.

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## Sam Fleischmann Aiglon College

Sam makes our North American list despite the fact he has just moved to Switzerland to take up the role of associate director of university advising at Aiglon College. He still maintains his own consultancy business, 'In the Fleisch, Be You,' and draws on over 20 years of experience across an array of organisations in higher education, edtech and K-12. Sam is an amazing networker, constantly seeking to unlock new opportunities for students and fellow professionals through better connections. So reach out!

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## CJ Tremblay Alethea Global Cooperative

CJ Tremblay is a founding member and current vice president of the board of the Climate Action Network for International Educators – known as CANIE. Through Alethea Global, CJ provides a wide range of professional consultancy services for institutions, associations, and governments designed to meet your organisation's journey toward climate justice. In addition to the growing Travel with CANIE movement, CJ topped off a memorable 2024 by winning the PIEoneer Award for Sustainability International Impact.

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## Magdalena Link, ILAC Education Group

2024 has been a busy year for Magdalena Link, having been promoted to senior vice president of partnership development at ILAC Education Group. Despite the policy disruption, Magda and the entire ILAC team continue to promote Canada as a premier study destination for ESL, pathways, and higher education, opening new premises in Toronto alongside new global partnerships. Magda is also the co-founder of the Global Women in International Education group and a long-time supporter of The PIE.

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## Nathan Mack, University of Sothern California

A true travel enthusiast, Nathan Mack is a road warrior working at the University of Southern California to oversee the international recruitment and selection process. This often includes traveling to meet talented students around the world to explain the US application process. You can follow Nathan's adventures on the USC admissions blog, and he has spoken at several international conferences this year, including the British Universities' International Liaison Association and International ACAC.

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## Kiki Keating, KikiNetwork | KikiNetwork Travel | MakiNetwork

Kiki Keating has cultivated a reputation for expertise in international public relations, business events, and media training. Her MakiNetwork conferences connect journalists with communications staff at many of the world's most prestigious business schools, helping them identify how to pitch a successful story. From New York to Madrid, Kiki has been assisting institutions with brand and reputational strategy in an age of disinformation. Follow her adventures on her travel blog at kikinetwork.com.

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## Chris Connor, University at Buffalo

Another former PIEoneer Awards judge, Chris Connor, has been growing international admissions at the University at Buffalo for over three decades. Chris is a recipient of the IELTS Best Practices Award in International Enrolment Management and the UB SEAS for Justice, Equity, Diversity at Inclusion (JEDI) Award. He has worked as an EAIE Trainer and sits on the IELTS Higher Education Advisory Council and the ETS Research Advisory Board. Chris will be speaking at The PIE Live North America this fall, so be sure to ask him about the award-winning AI initiatives at Buffalo.

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## The PIE Leadership Digest 50 Voices of 2024 North America Edition

This list has been designed to signpost readers to further information.  
It represents a cross-section of the sector domiciled or operating primarily  
in the North American region in no particular order.

All information has been gathered from publicly available sources such as social media, websites,  
and media reporting including The PIE News archives. The PIE does not take any responsibility for  
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