Sage Advice:
The Role of International Advisory Councils in World-Class Universities

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Introduction to International Advisory Councils (IACs)

- Advisory bodies that include international members and serve tertiary education institutions (TEI)
- A small but growing phenomena at the intersection between globalization and world class universities
- Not equally distributed across the world
Why IACs are important?

- Example of growing internationalization at TEI worldwide
- IACs bring an uncommon outside perspective to TEIs
- No decision-making capacity, but bring a moral and professional influence
- They serve as a safe platform for in-depth considerations, with impartial advisers
- Case studies on how globalization works
- Internationalization at the governance level
Brief methodological insights

- 23 interviews
- 6 interviews with representatives of TEI hosting IACs pertaining to 5 different TEI
- 17 interviews with IAC members
- Interviewees were affiliated with 23 distinct IACs
Geographic distribution (I)

- More than 23 worldwide
- Largely limited to institutions that see themselves as "global player", but few have regional aspirations
- Located in countries with aspirations to join top ranks
- Lack of IACs in major English speaking countries
- Most located in Western Europe
- Few in Asia, Africa, and Latin America
Who are IAC members

- Almost exclusively male
- Senior university leaders (retired university presidents)
- Significant numbers from US institutions (TEI perceived as successful)
- Significant numbers of representatives from European institutions
- Several experts in Higher Education issues
What drives IAC members to join

- All interviewed members agree to serve out of a sense of broader service to the specific university or to higher education generally.
- Higher education experts and country specialists find serving on IACs insightful for their work.
- Other motivations include the desire to promote specific values, and financial compensation (in few cases).
The varied structure of IACs

- Number of members: 6-14, as low as 4, as high as 30
- Frequency of meetings: 1-2 times a year, up to 4 meetings a year
- Length of meetings: 1.5-2 days, as short as half a day
- Hierarchy: often none, few have appointed chairs
- Terms of appointment: both open and fixed
- Scopes of activity: general and specialized (internationalization, scientific)
Functions and rationales for IACs

- Quality improvement
- Prestige rationale
- Top down rationale
- Mimetic rationale
- Internal legitimacy rationale
- External legitimacy rationale
- The "gap" rationale
- The cost-benefit rationale
- The formality rationale
Effectiveness of IACs

- Varying degrees of effectiveness.
- Examples IACs have had on decision making at the level of the institution include institutional rebranding, hiring policy for staff, digitalization strategy for the institution.
- Effectiveness increases as IACs evolve to meet institutional needs.
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<th>Terms</th>
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<td>Terms</td>
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<td>Composition</td>
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<td>Effectiveness</td>
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Starting an IAC and improving existing ones

- Establish a clear mission, plan how the IAC will be used
- Choose a mission that is pertinent to the institutional needs
- Smaller size is preferable (10 members)
- Diversify members of the IAC based on geography, gender, and expertise
- Prepare meetings ahead of time; inform members of the IAC in advance
- Plan for 1.5-2 days meeting, and make the agenda manageable in length
Starting an IAC and improving existing ones (II)

- Be candid with IAC members about the problems of the institution
- Provide members with contextual information about the institution (tours and access to various stakeholders)
- Fixed appointments are preferable to increase effectiveness
- Consider the cost of establishing an IAC. While most IAC members do not receive remunerations, they attending costs need to be covered
Thank you for your attention!