Preface

International higher education in the United States, and indeed worldwide, is at a critical moment. Notably, higher education worldwide has changed dramatically over the last ten years with regards to student enrollment, international mobility of students and scholars, the proliferation of international programs, and the core functions of teaching and learning. These profound challenges and opportunities are due largely to the global trends that are reshaping higher education as a global industry such as, the shift from product-based to knowledge-based economies, improved communication systems linking countries, and the increased economic integration among countries, otherwise known as globalization. While the impacts of globalization have had a profound impact on universities and university stakeholders worldwide, one of the most significant phenomena that are influencing the system of higher education is affordability and accessibility (Altbach, 2016).

More specifically, colleges and universities have provided vastly different quality, facilities, and focus with regards to creating welcoming and inclusive communities for all students. More specifically, different countries today have varying perceptions, policies, and practices of access and accessibility in higher education. Within the context of this book, the term *access* refers to the process of entering a postsecondary institution or an individual's ability to come into the higher education arena. Some of the most common barriers to access includes "high cost, work requirements, family/home demands/ academic ability, individual merit, a lacking support system, and inadequate information about policies, aid, and college life in general" (Myers, Lindburg, & Nied, 2013, p. 6). As campuses continue to grow and develop outward and upward, meeting basic accessibility requirements in the global economy is a crucial step for developers, media specialists, designers, usability professionals, and accessibility experts for ensuring that their IT (websites, multimedia, software, hardware) and digital (web, audio, video, media) infrastructure are accessible and affordable to all universities and university stakeholders.

If postsecondary institutions seek to improve college access and completion rates, then colleges and universities must prioritize the importance of accessibility and affordability, and to understand how it shapes academic and career success. Succeeding in the postsecondary setting, both academically and socially, requires individuals to exercise twenty-first century skills, including self-advocacy, critical thinking, and civic skills. As colleges and universities are expected to train hundreds of thousands of more students for roles in community and social development, we believe that new evidence-based research that raises the awareness of student learning is vastly needed in the field of international higher education.

Statistically speaking, student enrollments constitute more than 200 million worldwide, having increased by more than 60 percent in just over a decade (Bastedo, Altbach, & Gumport, 2016). In many of the Western countries, access to higher education is over half and in some over 80 percent, while developing and transitional economies enrollments are rapidly increasing (Altbach, 2016). As access

has increased the cost of higher education – to society, individuals and families, the number of students pursuing a college degree have also contributed to the upward social and economic mobility for many individuals as well as the number of proportion of skilled-workers worldwide. In fact, the first decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed more students pursuing a college degree than in the previous 10 centuries combined. For instance, China and India are two countries with the highest enrollment growth in higher education, where China enrolls about 31 percent and India around 18 percent (Altbach, 2016). Despite the fact that access has improved the knowledge economy of nations, expanding and increasing the number of students to complete a bachelor's degree has also brought lower quality and increase dropout rates.

For instance, the massification and globalization of higher education has prompted the demand for quality assurance and accreditation globally, but few countries have been able to gain access and/or to set up appropriate quality standards. Such consequence means that there is little transparency or knowledge of what students should know or be able to do at the completion of higher education, leaving some learners and parents to question the accessibility and the value of a college degree. Nonetheless, improving the accessibility and affordability of a college degree will remain an important goal for tomorrow's college students.

For example, existing universities in developing and transitional economies often cannot keep up with the high demand for higher education resulting in overcrowding, inadequate libraries, and the inability to provide students with courses needed to graduate on-time. Furthermore, the ability for higher education institutions to recruit qualified faculty members with a doctoral degree and to teach in non-Western countries will likely remain a huge challenge for institutions seeking to build "world-class" research universities (Yudkevich, Altbach, & Rumbley, 2017). As academic salaries continue to deteriorate around the world, one can outright argue that access has produced a poorer learning environment for students because the academic profession has not grown fast enough to keep up with the massification of higher education (Altbach, Reisberg, Yudkevich, Androushchak, & Pacheco, 2012). Consequently, higher education leaders will likely encounter more difficulty to serve all students effectively as student populations become more diverse globally with a wide variety of backgrounds and communication preferences. All of these issues constitute a deep contradiction and reorientation for the future of accessibility in higher education against the pressure to develop innovative models of internationalization (de Wit, Gacel-Avila, Jones, & Jooste, 2017).

Nonetheless, this book is timely and significant to offer teachers-scholars and student affairs professionals a comprehensive overview of the major issues that shape access and accessibility in international higher education across competing imperatives: improve student learning, increase college access and completion, enhance diversity, develop twenty-first century skills, and cultivate global citizens. Specifically, this book attempts to address the future practices, challenges, and emerging models of higher education accessibility at the national, international, institutional departmental, and local levels from a variety of perspectives and geographical regions including the intersections of law and policy, disability scholarship, diversity, web and technology accessibility, institutional will, and practical reality

A few topics and themes that are explored in this book are: Information Technology Accessibility Policy, College Access and Affordability, Curriculum Accessibility, Universal Design in Higher Education, E-Learning and Disability in Higher Education, Online Accessibility, Accessibility Laws and Legal Issues in Higher Education, Library and Information Management, Web and Video Accessibility in Higher Education, Student Recruitment and Enrollment Management, College Admissions, Student Financial Aid, among others.

Although research and scholarship related to access and accessibility continues to grow, it remains limited. With the increasing need—socially, politically, legally, and economic—to address higher education accessibility in the coming decades, it is our hope that this book will change attitudes and minds among the faculty and staff of creating an inclusive and accessible environment, and to provide a model for additional work across the college, for both online and face-to-face classes. At the same time, it is our hope that this handbook will assist teachers-scholars and advanced practitioners to discuss both *what must be done* and *what can be done* about accessibility on our campuses. As more institutions of higher education plan to develop or enhance their own accessibility and diversity policies, we believe that this book will help teachers-scholars and practitioners better understand the daily barriers people with disabilities face in the international arena and to encourage policymakers to create accessible environments that welcome all people. In addition, we believe that this handbook will create a new dialogue with and between universities and university stakeholders seeking to publish in-depth accounts of accessibility issues facing international higher education and what it means for higher education's future.

This book will have significant scholarly value for student affairs professionals and campus technology administrators from non-English speaking world and non-Western Europe, especially those working as IT and communication managers, media specialists and programmers, course designers, ADA coordinators human resource personnel, persons with disabilities, disability specialists, web designers, project managers, admissions officers, institutional researchers, chief information officers, chief diversity officers, instructional designers, university presidents, among others. In other words, this book sets out to offer an alternative viewpoint that will help institutes of international higher education: 1) to ensure access and accessibility for all students, 2) to increase awareness related to the needs of individuals with disabilities on campus, and 3) to develop coursework for students to study disability.

It is important to note that the chapters selected for publication does not argue against access but rather encourage researchers, policymakers, and practitioners for a more thorough understanding of the implications of college accessibility and affordability, and the steps needed to ameliorate the problems created by the massification and globalization of higher education. We believe that the future of accessibility in higher education is largely an unexplored topic in the field of comparative higher education, yet it is increasingly important to today's practitioners, researchers, and students. With this new handbook, we hope that both policymakers and senior officials can better respond to the most fundamental challenges regarding college access and inclusion, and to raise important questions about how technology, geography, and globalization shape educational equity and opportunity around the world.

In short, we recognize that driving college-wide change for accessibility is a huge task yet remains an important goal – and an inevitable goal – of higher education everywhere. It is our hope that the definition of access and accessibility used by our scholars and practitioners will serve as a *proof of concept* – a frame of reference to help researchers, campus leaders, and policymakers discuss the important role accessibility and affordability plays in shaping postsecondary success.

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