



Sarah Mackey Biography

Sarah Mackey helps US institutions achieve their international student recruitment goals as a Senior Partnership Director at IDP Education. Leveraging IDP's marketing, student placement, and data intelligence services, her approach combines data-driven strategy with a nuanced understanding of the challenges facing higher education institutions in an increasingly competitive international landscape.

Before joining IDP, Sarah served as Director of International Enrollment at Northeastern University and Associate Director of International Admissions at the University of Cincinnati. In these roles, she developed and executed recruitment strategies, built partnerships across diverse markets, managed large in-country teams, and fostered campus programs that support international student success. This institutional perspective - spanning marketing, admissions, enrollment management, and strategic planning - enables

her to bridge the gap between service providers and university needs.

Active in NAFSA, AIEA, and AIRC, she regularly presents on international student mobility, recruitment best practices, and intercultural competency. Curious, innovative, and mission-driven, Sarah is committed to ethical recruitment practices, data-informed decision-making, and creating pathways that benefit students, institutions, and the broader global education ecosystem.

Outside of work, she is engaged in volunteer mentorship programs that support local youth refugee populations. An amateur baker, avid walker, wine enthusiast, and Mom to a rambunctious rescue cat named Sheila, when she's not working, she's likely to be planning her next trip abroad.

Statement

AIRC has felt like my professional home for a long time and is an organization I possess a deep personal commitment towards. While I got my start in the industry working in international student services at a small public university, I credit most of my education in international recruitment, admissions, and partnership development to my time spent at the University of Cincinnati as an Associate Director of International Admissions. An innovative, forward-thinking university, UC punched above its weight in the international arena, modeling itself off Australian universities with robust, sophisticated infrastructures to support international recruitment. While there, I learned not only that AIRC was co-founded by UC's Vice Provost for International Affairs at the time, but that UC was one of the first major public research institutions to become an AIRC member. They proudly and publicly supported an ethics-based agency recruitment model at a time when other major professional organizations were advising against these practices. The standards built by AIRC were the foundation of my day-to-day work at UC leading our recruitment team and managing and building our agency partnerships.

The sector and the world have changed significantly since my departure from UC back in 2022, and AIRC with them. However, what I've most appreciated about AIRC is that the core of its mission and ethos as an organization has remained the same: a commitment to quality outcomes for students, educational institutions, and providers; the development of standards and best practices for international enrollment management; and underlying this all - a belief that we are stronger when we work together.

I would be honored if chosen to serve on the AIRC board because I value its contribution to the international education sector and to my own professional development, and I desire to play a role in shaping its future. Combining over a decade of both institutional experience and agency experience at one of the world's largest international education service providers, I offer a unique perspective to bring to the organization - one deeply committed to the international student experience, rooted in institutional knowledge, but global in expertise. A life-long learner and connector of people, my experience as a Senior Partnership Director at IDP has enabled me to build relationships and develop an intimate understanding of the challenges and needs among our 150+ institutional partners, while understanding the complexities and nuances of many of the countries in which they work.

International enrollment managers, many of which are colleagues, partners, or friends, often describe feeling like a "square peg in a round hole". Their concerns, needs, and challenges differ significantly from their domestic enrollment peers, while the business acumen, agility, expertise, and how success itself is defined is markedly different from those in international affairs or student services. In times of increasing uncertainty, AIRC has and will continue to provide a place for support and steadiness for IEM professionals, and I would love to play a part in lighting the path ahead.