



## **IRC Meeting 2020**

### **Pre-Conference Seminar I - The Well-Being of International Students**

Seminar held online on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September from 9:00 to 10:30

Seminar held by Clara Barbera, representative of the SMS working group 2 on Identity, Diversity and Inclusiveness

### **Supporting international students abroad - a coordinated approach to mental health post covid-19**

The past academic year has been one of the most challenging years for international students. The covid-19 global pandemic has affected communities worldwide, impacting not only the physical health of millions, but also the emotional and mental health of just as many individuals. Whereas no study yet shows the long-term impact that the current situation will have on college-aged students, we have already seen how circumstances such as illnesses, deaths, loss of employment / economic means; and even the perceived loss of a sense of identity, purpose, independence, and hope have affected the emotional wellbeing of our students during the past few months. Alarming, these additional circumstances - brought about by this unprecedented crisis - pile up on our students' shoulders as they were already experiencing high levels of stress, social anxiety, depression, self-esteem concerns, and general worry about their future, even before this crisis.

For all these reasons, and as we launch the academic year 2020-2021, it will be of utmost importance that our institutions provide a coordinated approach to supporting the mental health of our international students. In this workshop, we hope to review and discuss:

- The role of on site staff as well and the importance of a coordinated approach to student support with home institutions.
- The importance of providing a context to the experience abroad - an approach to pre-departure sessions and on site conversations to prepare students for their experience.
- On site confidential resources.
- External local resources.
- The role of our faculty in identifying needs and offering support.
- Contingency plans