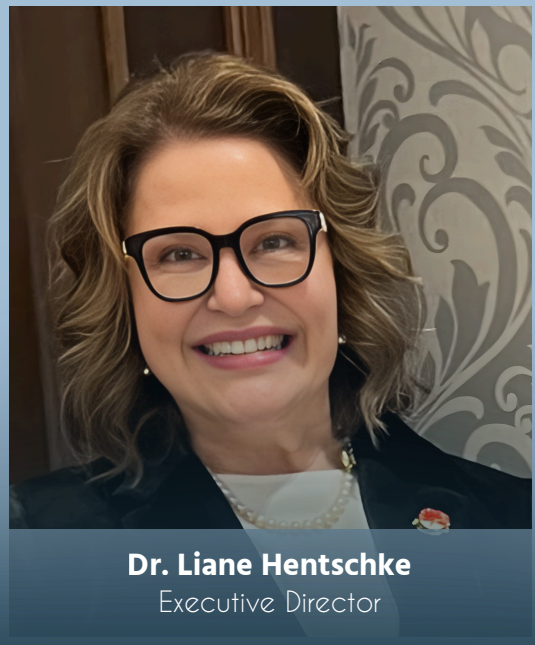




April 2026 Newsletter



Dr. Liane Hentschke
Executive Director

From the Executive Director

Greetings from the Tennessee World Affairs Council,

In March, we launched the season with a panel on South Korea, moderated by Karl Dean. The discussion featured Troy Stangarone, Non-Resident Fellow at Carnegie Mellon Institute for Strategy & Technology; Soojin Kim, Managing Associate at FT Gibbons, and Jason Hale, General Counsel and Corporate Director of General Affairs and HR at Hankook Tire North America.

This event, held in partnership with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce's International Business Council, explored key aspects of the U.S.–South Korea relationship, with particular focus on South Korea's significant investments in the United States, especially in Tennessee.

Last month, we hosted Air Force Major General Corey Martin, who spoke on national security through the lens of the U.S. Air Force's global mobility operations, including insights related to the situation in Iran. We are grateful to our Ambassador Corporate Member, Pinnacle Financial Partners, and to First Bank for hosting these events.

Our most recent webinar featured Khaled Al Yousuf, who provided a thoughtful discussion on Qatar's education system and its ambition to become a global hub for education and research, highlighting Georgetown University's campus in Doha. He also shared reflections on the current security situation in the country. If you missed the event, you can view the recording [here](#).

TNWAC is especially grateful for the support of GEODIS, a leading global transport and logistics provider operating in around 170 countries and ranked among the top companies worldwide in supply chain services.

We are also pleased to welcome [Ashley Wickland](#), our new Senior Assistant to the Executive Director, who will directly support our Distinguished Speakers Series events. Ashley previously worked at USAID and brings valuable international experience to the team.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to our members, attendees, and volunteers for their continued support and important contributions to TNWAC.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liane Hentschke".

Explore International Careers

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

In this role, you will design and evaluate development projects aimed at reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. You will work with international organizations, governments, and local stakeholders to assess needs, manage programs, and measure impact across sectors such as education, infrastructure, and governance. [Learn more...](#)

MIGRATION POLICY SPECIALIST

In this role, you will analyze migration trends and develop policies that promote safe, orderly, and regular migration. You will use data and research to address issues such as refugee protection, labor mobility, and border management, while working with governments and international partners to design and evaluate programs that improve outcomes for migrants and displaced populations. [Learn more...](#)



Staff Spotlight: Ashley Wickland

Senior Assistant to the Executive Director

Ashley is a humanitarian with over 13 years of experience in international emergency and development assistance.

While she started out implementing programs, the majority of her career has been with USAID, serving as a technical advisor and field officer at U.S. Embassies around the world. She has served on emergency responses including Haiti, Gaza, Ethiopia, Mali, the Central African Republic, and Niger. She is currently working toward becoming an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) and hopes to use those skills to improve breastfeeding in emergencies.

Ashley currently resides in Clarksville with her kids and dogs and volunteers with the Tennessee World Affairs Council. She received her MS in Food Policy and Applied Nutrition from Tufts University and a BS in Management from Oral Roberts University. Prior to her humanitarian career, she taught English in South Korea and Japan.

Did You Know?

The Bank for International Settlements, often called the “central bank for central banks,” helps coordinate global financial stability by bringing together monetary authorities from around the world. Founded in 1930, it quietly supports cooperation on issues like banking regulation, financial crises, and economic policy, making it one of the most influential yet least visible institutions in global finance.

Sponsor Highlight:

People are at the heart of GEODIS' business, which is why the Group's priorities include health and safety, respect for human rights, and working conditions. Through strategic partnerships and community-focused programs, the organization prioritizes leadership development, mentorship, and inclusive advancement. Its mission is to equip individuals with the tools, networks, and resources they need to thrive in a dynamic, evolving global environment.



GEODIS

Thank you for your support!



Board Member Highlight: **Riney Green**

This month, we are pleased to spotlight Riney Green. A partner at Bass, Berry & Sims, Riney brings more than 25 years of experience advising companies and private equity sponsors on complex mergers and acquisitions, strategic growth initiatives, and corporate governance matters. His work with businesses across industries has made him a

trusted advisor to executives navigating global and strategic opportunities. With deep ties to Nashville's business community and extensive experience in corporate strategy and investment, Riney adds valuable perspective to TNWAC's mission of connecting Tennesseans with global ideas, leaders, and opportunities. We are excited to have his leadership and insight helping guide the future of the Council.

Guest Columnist

The views and opinions expressed in our guest column are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Tennessee World Affairs Council.

Why Global Engagement in Higher Education Matters for Tennessee's Future

In conversations about higher education in Tennessee, it is not uncommon to hear a simple question: Why global? Why should our colleges and universities invest time, resources, and energy into international partnerships, study abroad programs, and recruiting students from around the world—especially when there are pressing needs here at home?

It is a fair question. But it rests on a false choice.

Global engagement in higher education is not a diversion from serving Tennessee—it is one of the most powerful ways we do serve Tennessee. It strengthens our economy, prepares our workforce, attracts investment, and equips our citizens—especially our young people—with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Far from being abstract or idealistic, global education delivers concrete, measurable benefits to communities across our state.

A Direct Economic Engine for Tennessee

One of the most immediate and tangible benefits of global engagement comes from international students who choose to study in Tennessee. According to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors data, international students contribute hundreds of millions of dollars annually to Tennessee's economy. Recent estimates place that contribution at over \$500 million per year, supporting thousands of jobs statewide.

These students pay tuition, rent apartments, buy groceries, use local services, and often bring visiting family members who also contribute to local economies. Unlike many forms of economic development that require long-term incentives or infrastructure investments, international students represent an immediate infusion of revenue into our communities—from Knoxville to Nashville to Memphis and beyond.

But the impact goes deeper than dollars. International students help sustain academic programs that might otherwise struggle to enroll enough students. They support research initiatives that bring federal and private funding into Tennessee. They contribute to innovation ecosystems—particularly in STEM fields—where talent shortages are a growing concern nationwide.

Guest Columnist Continued

In a state that is actively recruiting global companies and expanding industries like advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and technology, this matters. Employers are not just looking for workers; they are looking for globally competent workers who can collaborate across borders, understand international markets, and operate in diverse environments. International students are not separate from this equation—they are part of the talent pipeline that strengthens it.

Preparing Tennessee's Workforce for a Global Economy

At the same time, global engagement is not only about who comes to Tennessee—it is also about how we prepare Tennesseans to succeed beyond it.

Today's workforce is global, whether we acknowledge it or not. Supply chains stretch across continents.

Companies headquartered in Tennessee do business in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Even small and mid-sized businesses increasingly rely on international partners, customers, and competitors. Yet many students still graduate with limited exposure to perspectives beyond their immediate surroundings. This is where education abroad programs—often called study abroad—play a transformative role. Research consistently shows that students who participate in education abroad programs develop skills that employers value highly: adaptability, problem-solving, cross-cultural communication, and independence. These are not abstract qualities; they translate directly into workplace effectiveness.

Studies have also found that students who study abroad are more likely to:

- Graduate on time or sooner
- Secure employment more quickly after graduation
- Earn higher starting salaries over time

One widely cited analysis suggests that study abroad participants can see higher lifetime earnings compared to their peers who do not have similar experiences. Employers frequently report that candidates with international experience stand out—not just because of where they have been, but because of how those experiences shape the way they think.

For Tennessee, this is not just an individual advantage—it is a statewide one.

When our graduates enter the workforce with global skills, they make Tennessee companies more competitive. They help attract international investment. They strengthen our ability to innovate and adapt in a changing economy.

Strengthening Communities Across the State

Global engagement also has a quieter, but equally important, impact: it enriches the social and cultural fabric of our communities. When international students study in Tennessee, they do not exist in isolation. They live in our neighborhoods, volunteer in our communities, attend local events, and build friendships with Tennesseans. These everyday interactions foster mutual understanding in ways that no textbook or lecture can replicate. At the same time, domestic students who engage globally—whether through study abroad or through interactions on increasingly internationalized campuses—gain a broader perspective on the world and their place within it.

This matters in a state where many students may not have had opportunities to travel internationally before college. For some, a study abroad experience is not just an academic enrichment—it is a first exposure to a different language, culture, or way of life. These experiences do not distance students from Tennessee. In many cases, they deepen their appreciation for it.

Guest Columnist Continued

Students return with new ideas, new skills, and a renewed sense of purpose. They become more engaged citizens, more thoughtful leaders, and more effective problem-solvers—qualities that benefit their communities long after graduation.

Addressing Skepticism: Why This Matters Here at Home

For those who remain skeptical, it is worth addressing a common concern directly: that global engagement distracts from local priorities or diverts resources away from Tennesseans.

In reality, the opposite is true.

Global engagement strengthens the very outcomes that matter most to our state:

- Economic growth through international student spending and global business connections
- Workforce development through globally skilled graduates
- Educational quality through diverse perspectives and expanded opportunities
- Community vitality through cultural exchange and engagement

It is not about choosing between local and global. It is about recognizing that in today's world, the two are inseparable.

As Justin Schwartz of the University of Colorado Boulder has argued in his writing on the value of global education, universities serve their states best when they prepare students for the realities of the world they will enter—not the world as it once was. That world is interconnected, dynamic, and deeply influenced by global forces.

Tennessee cannot afford to opt out of that reality.

A Strategic Advantage for Tennessee

There is also a competitive dimension to consider. States across the country are investing heavily in global engagement as part of their economic and educational strategies. They recognize that attracting international students, building global partnerships, and preparing globally competent graduates are key to long-term success.

Tennessee has significant strengths to build on:

- A strong and diverse higher education system
- Growing industries with global reach
- A reputation for affordability and quality
- Communities that offer a welcoming and high-quality of life

By continuing to prioritize global engagement, Tennessee can position itself as a destination of choice—for students, for talent, and for investment.

The Long-Term Impact: A More Resilient State

Ultimately, the value of global engagement in higher education is not just economic or academic—it is strategic. It is about building a state that is resilient in the face of change. A state where businesses can compete globally because their workforce is prepared to do so. A state where communities are enriched by diverse perspectives and experiences.

A state where young people are equipped not only to succeed, but to lead—in Tennessee and beyond. This does not happen by accident. It requires intentional investment, thoughtful leadership, and a willingness to look beyond immediate horizons.

Guest Columnist Continued

A Call to Action

For policymakers, educators, business leaders, and citizens alike, the path forward is clear. We should continue to:

- Support international student recruitment and retention
- Expand access to education abroad for all Tennessee students
- Invest in global partnerships that enhance research and innovation
- Ensure that global engagement is integrated into the core mission of our institutions

And perhaps most importantly, we should tell this story more clearly and more often. Because global engagement is not an abstract ideal. It is a practical, proven, and powerful tool for advancing Tennessee's interests.

Looking Ahead

The question is no longer whether Tennessee is part of a global economy—it already is. The question is whether we will fully prepare our students, our workforce, and our communities to succeed within it. Higher education is one of the most effective ways we can do that. By engaging globally and internationalizing our campuses, we are not turning away from Tennessee—we are investing in its future. And in doing so, we ensure that the Volunteer State remains not only connected to the world, but competitive within it.



Dr. Gretchen Neisler

Vice Provost for International Affairs, University of Tennessee
& TNWAC Board Member

MARCH EVENT RECAP



GLOBAL AFFAIRS KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

1 Four Islamic Countries recently met in Islamabad to discuss future long-term arrangements for governance of the strait of Hormuz. Which Country was NOT participating?

A Egypt

B Saudi Arabia

C Iran

2 Which Republican US Senator was one of the key players influencing Trump's decision to attack Iran?

A Lindsey Graham

B Josh Hawley

C Thom Tillis

3 Which Iranian official is still alive?

A Ali Khamenei

B Ali Larijani

C Mohammed Ghalibaf

4 Which foreign capital was President Trump supposed to visit before delaying due to the war in the Middle East?

A Beijing

B London

C Tokyo

5 Which country is LEAST dependent on Middle East energy imports?

A India

B United States

C China

Find the answers to the quiz on the last page of the newsletter!





TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES



**PASSAGE FROM
DAKAR TO
CASABLANCA**

April 29 - May 8



MALTA & SICILY
May 1 - May 11

REGISTER NOW



Support TNWAC

As a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, our mission is to **promote international awareness, understanding**, and connections to enhance the region's global stature and to prepare Tennesseans to thrive in our increasingly complex and interconnected world.

1 Bring a friend to one of our events and encourage them to join us as a member!

2 Introduce our team to an **expert in your network** to join us as a speaker in 2026!

3 Encourage **businesses you love to join TNWAC** as a corporate member or sponsor!



APR 22

WEBINAR SERIES

“Navigating Geopolitical Risk: How Multinational Corporations Are Adapting to a More Fragmented World”

João A. de Castro Neves, PhD

Senior Director for Global Strategic Risks, ExxonMobil



APR 23

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

“Beyond the Alps – Liechtenstein’s Economic Impact, Global Ties and US Partnerships”

Ambassador Georg Sparber

Ambassador of the Principality of Liechtenstein to the United States



MAY 8

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

“Are Tariffs Making America Great Again? A Q&A with AllianceBernstein CEO Seth Bernstein”

Seth Bernstein

President & CEO AllianceBernstein (AB)

Answers for the Knowledge Quiz

- 5/5 – Your global knowledge is amazing. You’re truly on top of world affairs!
- 4/5 – Impressive! You have strong global awareness.
- 3/5 – Not bad! You’re well-informed, with room to grow.
- 2/5 – A good start! Keep exploring global issues.
- 1/5 – You’re just getting started – stay curious!
- 0/5 – TNWAC brings knowledge and understanding through in-person events, webinars, and our newsletter.

1) C 2) A 3) C 4) A 5) B