



Keynote Speaker

Rajika Bhandari, Ph.D.

International Education Expert & Author

Book Rajika for your virtual or in-person event

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About Rajika

Dr. Rajika Bhandari is an international higher education expert, a scholar-practitioner of international student trends, and a passionate advocate for international students. She is also the author of the new memoir, *America Calling: A Foreign Student in a Country of Possibility*, which draws on her professional insights and personal journey. During her 14-year tenure at the Institute of International Education (IIE), Rajika led the well-known *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, a trusted and comprehensive 100-year data resource on international students in the U.S.

She now brings her experience in student mobility research and data-driven insights to a range of clients in the nonprofit, private and higher education sectors through her firm, Rajika Bhandari Advisors. A widely regarded thought leader, Rajika was one of 100 people worldwide to be awarded the IIE Centennial Medal in 2019. She has also served on the U.S. National Commission to UNESCO and as an Adjunct Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University.

A sought-after speaker on international student issues; educational and cultural diplomacy; global talent; and access and equity in education, Rajika's talks combine the power of storytelling with the precision of data and evidence. Rajika brings to her talks her intersecting identity of originally being from the Global South (India); being an Asian American immigrant; and a woman of color. She has presented to large and intimate audiences at 100+ events globally, including at the WISE Summit in Doha, the UNESCO Global Higher Education Conference in Paris, and the annual conferences and events of international education and higher education associations such as ACE, NAFSA, AIEA, the College Board, International ACAC, among others. Rajika is also a skilled facilitator of high-level dialogues and conversations, moderating sessions with university presidents and public intellectuals like Noam Chomsky. View a full list of Rajika's events [here](#).

As a former international student herself, an adjunct professor, and a mentor in international education, Rajika values engaging with students and has guest lectured at NYU, Columbia University, George Washington University, North Carolina State University, among others.

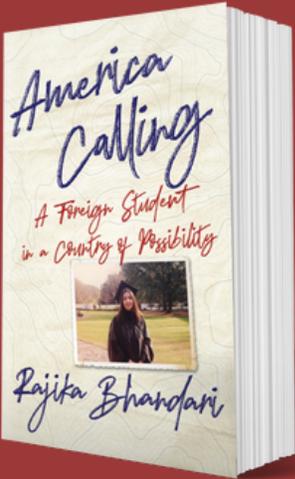
A prolific writer, Rajika is the author of five academic books and two nonfiction books, including her recent memoir, *America Calling: A Foreign Student in a Country of Possibility*. Quoted frequently in the global press, Rajika's writing has appeared in *Ms. Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *HuffPost*, *University World News*, *Times Higher Education*, *National Geographic Traveler* and *The Diplomatic Courier*, among others. She hosts the [EdUp World Wise podcast](#) featuring conversations about education, culture and migration.

As seen in...



America Calling: A Foreign Student in a Country of Possibility

(She Writes Press, Sep. 2021)



"A valuable study in an extremely important area of soft diplomacy"

--*Kirkus Reviews*

"Rajika Bhandari captures the confusion and wonder of the international student experience of the sort she, I, and many others have shared"

--*Shashi Tharoor, former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and bestselling author*

"...an essential read for all students, faculty, and administrators on campuses"

--*President Jorge Gonzalez, Kalamazoo College*

"It is books like this that make America a kinder and wiser nation. Highly recommended for high schools and colleges."

—*Firoozeh Dumas, NYT best-selling author of Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America*

"A universal narrative that transcends culture and national origin"

--*President Andrew Hamilton, NYU*

"The U.S. is better off with the rich diversity, mingling of ideas, and expertise brought by international students to American campuses and society. A touching and insightful must-read."

—*Lenora Chu, journalist and award-winning author of Little Soldiers: An American Boy, a Chinese School and the Global Race to Achieve*

Signature Talk I: Serving the Whole International Student

Audience: U.S. university administrators and faculty; international education nonprofit sector and associations

As the U.S. and other key destination countries continue to recover from recent declines in international student enrollment, key questions and challenges remain around not just attracting and recruiting international students, but in ensuring their integration and success. These issues have become even more critical due to a growing awareness of DEI and social justice issues as they pertain to international students. In this action-oriented talk aimed at university leaders; those who work directly with international students; or whose work impacts international students, Rajika identifies key challenges that international students typically face and approaches and strategies for addressing these gaps. She proposes a shift away from an arrive-and-survive approach to international students, to one that is aimed at supporting international students in their journey from arriving to thriving. She also highlights the value that international students bring to campuses, local communities, and national economies. For this talk, Rajika draws upon her own experience as well as her substantial years of research on and engagement with international students from different countries, with a special focus on Indian students from India.

Signature Talk II: Arriving and Thriving in the U.S.

Audience: Prospective and current international students; U.S. students

While international students today are "savvy consumers," armed with information about their future programs of study, they continue to face significant challenges and gaps when it comes to adapting academically, socially, and culturally to the U.S. and ultimately in succeeding. Aimed at prospective, new, or continuing international students, this talk breaks down the key barriers that many international students face yet are either unaware of or are reluctant to share, while also providing a roadmap for the mindset and strategies that students will need to succeed. This talk is also relevant for domestic U.S. students who need to develop a better understanding of their international classmates. For this talk, Rajika draws upon her own experience and her first-hand interactions with international students through her work and her new book which includes conversations with current and former international students.

Talks are approximately 45-60 mins in length and include a discussion/Q&A and a book signing (for in-person events)



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Recent and Upcoming Talks and Events

- Keynote, **One To World Annual Conference**, New York University, Oct. 2022
- Speaker, **Fall For the Book festival**, **George Mason University**, Oct. 2022
- Keynote, **Global Engagement Week**, **Kenyon College**, Ohio, Oct. 2022
- Keynote, **StoryCircle Network Annual Conference**, Sep. 17, 2022
- Book talk, in conversation with Elly Fish of Refugee High, **Boswell Book Company**, Milwaukee, June 2022
- Keynote, **Internationalization Summit**, **University of Denver**, May 27, 2022
- Keynote, **Washington International Education Conference**, DC, March 25, 2022
- Keynote and book talk, **South Asian Heritage Month**, **George Washington University**, March 24, 2022
- Plenary Speaker, **Migrants with Mortar Boards: Serving the Whole International Student**, **Eurasia Higher Education (EURIE) Summit**, March 4, 2022
- Guest speaker, **The Size and Shape of International Education in a new Competitive Landscape**, **Holon IQ**, Feb. 24, 2022
- Book talk, in conversation with Megan Holt, Executive Director of One Book One New Orleans, hosted by **Octavia Books**, New Orleans, Feb. 21, 2022
- Keynote, **STAR (Society of Transnational Academic Researchers) Conference**, Dec. 11, 2021
- Keynote, **American International Recruitment Council (AIRC) Conference**, Miami, Florida, Dec. 9, 2021
- Book discussion, in conversation with author Vinod Busjeet, hosted by **Duende District Books and The Word: A Storytelling Sanctuary**, Dec. 7, 2021
- Invited Speaker, **International Education Week**, **Suffolk University**, Boston, MA, Nov. 16, 2021
- Invited speaker, **United States-India Educational Foundation (Fulbright Commission)**, **International Education Week**, Nov. 15, 2021
- Book talk, in conversation with President and CEO Gloria Blackwell, hosted by the **American Association of University Women (AAUW)**, Sep. 30, 2021
- Book talk, **Society for Intercultural Training and Research (SEITAR)**, DC Chapter, Sep. 22, 2021
- Panelist, **How the U.S. Continues to Welcome International Students**. **The College Board**, **IIE**, and the **Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration**, Sep. 15 & 17, 2021
- Book launch hosted by the **Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration**, Sep. 14, 2021
- Book launch, in conversation with bestselling author Reyna Grande, hosted by the **Irvington Public Library** and **The Village Bookstore**, Sep. 13, 2021
- Keynote, **Times Higher Education Student Festival: Study in the USA**, Sep. 9, 2021
- Keynote, **Understanding the "other:" The Power of Education**. **Bronx Book Fair**, July 31, 2021
- Keynote, **International Association for College Admissions Counseling Conference**, July 12, 2021
- Commencement Speaker, **International Education Program**, **George Washington University**, May 15, 2021