

Gretchen Neisler, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for International Affairs

Director, Center for Global Engagement

Gretchen Neisler serves as the senior international officer at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, previously serving as Director for Global Connections in Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources at Michigan State University.

Neisler arrived at UT in 2018 as Vice Provost of International Affairs and Director of the Center for Global Engagement, where she has put a focus on expanding the university's global impact through intentional partnerships, an understanding of global citizenship, and a dedication to upholding the values of a land-grant university.

A significant focus of CGE under Neisler is building international partnerships in a way that best serves all parties. Rather than exponential growth, partnerships are entered intentionally to show tangible benefits.

Establishment of the Global Research, Innovation, and Partnership office within CGE in 2024 further solidifies this commitment.

"I do not think leadership is about position but instead about a responsibility to ensure others get what they need to be successful and to enable and empower them to put those resources to work," Neisler said.

Neisler sees connections that need to be made to allow researchers to excel and is passionate about equipping new and future generations of researchers to focus on solutions to global grand challenges.

She also believes it is vital that CGE supports all people, and especially young leaders, in understanding their global citizenship. To meet this goal, Neisler was instrumental in the formation of the Academy of Global Scholars, a multi-department partnership centered in CGE that offers first-year students the opportunity for global engagement through international learning at home and abroad, with financial aid provided for selected participants.

In total, Neisler oversees \$600,000 per year in financial scholarships for education abroad resources and \$250,000 in catalyst grants to support global research each year.

Global tech work through Collaborative Online International Learning under Neisler has also provided a push institutionally to adapt to the changing landscape and professional needs of students.

"I want students to begin to see themselves as global citizens and never hesitate to walk through the door when an opportunity is opened up to them," she said.

Neisler aims for CGE to be a sought-after hub of global activity for students and faculty at the university, supporting this goal through formation of the UT Global Strategy Commission, establishment of the annual Global Engagement Summit, and commitment to making global engagement a priority for the UT Flagship campus.

In her own international journey, Neisler has lived in Egypt and Pakistan and spent seven years working in Africa. She studied in Australia and New Zealand while working on her master's degree, while her PhD.

Research focused on organizational development and university partnerships with the Federal foreign aid agency - USAID.

"I saw that learning about other cultures is important for me to be a better individual and a better American," she said. "I learned that the core of all people is good and when I provide the space for me to get to know them I can see their goodness and build an impactful connection."

Neisler sits on the Commission on International Initiatives Executive Committee for the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities and will serve as commission chair for FY 2024-26.

She currently resides in Knoxville, Tennessee, with her Husband, Mark, and twin sons, Jakob and Owen.

