



68th ANNUAL

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

CO-CHAIRS Highlight



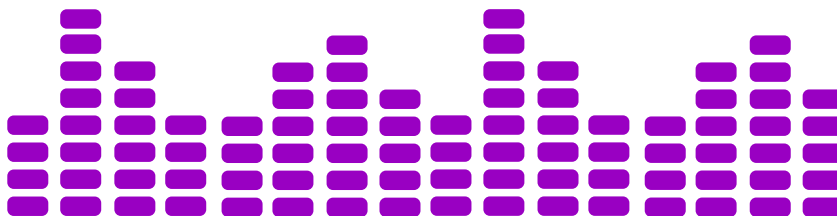
The 68th Annual International Education Conference, held both virtually and in person in Cleveland, Ohio, was a smash hit! Co-Chairs Dan Bucan, SR/WA, and Kristina (Tina) Breeding, SR/WA, worked hard to ensure attendees would enjoy their time at the home of rock 'n' roll. We invited Dan and Tina to share some of their thoughts about how conference went this year.

Congratulations on an excellent conference! How do you feel now that it's over?

K: This conference was a huge part of the last few years for us — since Nashville. The time seemed to go by so fast, but it was really great to see everyone, and we had soooo much fun! I'm exhausted,!

D: Now that conference is finished, “we did as all good Buckeyes do...” we went to celebrate at Cedar Point, the world’s largest amusement park! We were joined by best friends from all over the Region and country!

Conference planning and hosting was an amazing experience! We were so blessed to shadow Georgia Snodgrass, SR/WA, and Matt McGee, SR/WA, last year as they revived conference after the pandemic; we were excited to build on their efforts and success. They were amazing chairs to follow, and they were always encouraging us and reminding us to enjoy the process, which we ultimately did! With the guidance of Past IEC President Pat Petitto, SR/WA, and several of the recent conference co-chairs, we were able to welcome attendees to the home of rock 'n' roll and show them the very best of what Ohio has to offer!





You two both rocked costumes every day of conference! Which was your favorite?

D: The costumes were amazing, and our designer Suz Pisano, of reality T.V. show “Dance Moms” fame, was always there looking for ways to help us not fear fashion! The result? I had more compliments on my attire over five days than I have ever received in my entire life... though less than the comments on my onesies in early childhood! Of course, Tina looked spectacular, as always, and only helped add to the comments received!

K: My favorite was our '50s costume — I loved the twirl. Suz Pisano did such a great job putting our ideas into great costumes for the last few years.

D: I would have to go with the Monday Night Event, where I wore the luxurious, red silk disco shirt and white bell bottom pants — even though I don't usually dance, the outfit helped me get the nerve to have the greatest “dance” of my life with Carol Croft, SR/WA! Being a hippie with Tina was a close second on Monday during the Awards Ceremony and presentation by our new best friend and comedian, Kathy Buckley!

K: I really liked that I got Dan to wear the long-haired wig!



Give us some insight as to how you decided on the rock 'n' roll theme.

K: It was hard not to have a rock and roll theme with the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame right across the street. The great music just added to the costumes and the fun.

D: The rock 'n' roll theme began back when our Chapter first voted during our summer planning session to create an exploratory bid vote during the 2016 conference in Nashville. The theme was brought into fruition when makeup and costume designer Simon, from the TV show “Nashville,” transformed 10 Chapter members with full costume and makeup to meet with attendees and to promote the conference at the birthplace of rock 'n' roll! The phrase was coined in Cleveland by radio DJ and celebrity Alan Freed in the early 1950s.

What were some of the challenges you faced while planning?

K: For me, one of the biggest challenges was time. We started this adventure many years ago, and both of us went through job changes, especially this year.

D: I still wake up at night thinking we have upcoming events and things to plan for... Jade tells us that it will pass in a few weeks! But there were so many milestones and ideas that, if it weren't for headquarters and the many volunteers, would have been overwhelming. We utilized over 150 plus volunteers, and they were all phenomenal — shout-out to Michelle Agostinelli, RWA, Mark Edgington, Chris Deacon and Chapter 13 President Rick Nichols! Tina and I focused on following Jade's lead, and we did our best to keep up. Conner McDonald, SR/WA, also helped us develop a list of topics and presenters. We are also thankful to the IEC and IGC as we were provided the flexibility to bring back the traditions of our Chapter and Region with the return of the national anthem, invocation, daily devotions and a moment of remembrance for those who are no longer with us.





This year was the 50th anniversary of the last time conference was held in Ohio. How did it feel to bring it back?

K: It was great to have the experience of International Past President and 1972 Conference Co-Chair Bob Art, SR/WA, to help us understand what it was like 50 years ago. He was amazing! I love that we were able to be co-chairs on this special anniversary.

D: The 50th anniversary was a great opportunity, and we were so thankful that the Chapter rallied around the timing! Bob also has the longest held SR/WA designation in our Association and is still an active member participating in our five full-day Chapter seminars each year. He also archived all the actual documents and photos from 1972 conference, including all of our Chapter newsletters going back into the '60s. It was so wonderful to have his insight, wisdom and encouragement through this process.

What do you hope attendees walked away with after attending this year's conference?

K: I hope they felt the midwestern hospitality that we are well known for, and they really felt at home. I also hope they have a hard time choosing what was their favorite part of the conference because it was so good!

D: Though the pandemic created some challenges, we're thankful that we still had such a great attendance — thank you for coming to our home in Ohio! We looked back on our first conferences, and although we are a welcoming group of friendly loving people, it can sometimes be difficult for first-time attendees to settle in and warm up to us. We want them to know they are the future, and we are better with them in the Association.

We hope attendees come to Denver next year and see how the annual conference creates strong bonds and new friendships from around the world!

What was your favorite part of conference?

D: My favorite part of conference is partaking in the sessions and learning from keynote speakers. This year, I missed many of the live sessions but have found another equally exciting purpose serving as International Secretary on the International Executive Committee. I will be spending hours on Whova catching up by the cutoff date. I also enjoyed working with the industry committees as they prepared for conference and observing our international representatives carrying the flags of each member country.

K: I also enjoyed getting to work with so many wonderful people from corporate. It was nice to see behind the scenes and to get to know them all better. Also, I loved getting the microphone and announcing the Naked Karate Girls. Not going to lie, I love being able to use my voice and be a little obnoxious!

What's some advice you have for future conference co-chairs?

K: Best advice is to start early, have a plan and get your team involved to assist... it takes way more than two people to have a successful conference!

D: Have a long list of ideas for members and dream big. Enjoy the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to host and be yourself!

The stage is yours! Any last thoughts you'd like to share?

K: I had a blast and am thankful for my family and Contract Land Staff for supporting me and allowing me the time to fully participate in planning and executing what I feel was one of the best, most fun conferences ever (though I am very biased)! I also want to thank Jade Meador, CMP, and Dan Bucan, SR/WA, for just EVERYTHING! Jade has a relentless job that she does amazingly with no sleep, and Dan... Dan was the better half of our team. He was amazing... aside from the needed choker chains every once in a while, haha! He had so many great ideas, but, maybe not the unlimited time and money. I would totally do it all over again with him as a co-chair!

D: We LIKE you, and you look great in khaki pants! Forgive each other and love as there are not a lot of organizations that can provide the positive experiences we have here at the IRWA! It was great spending time with my best friend and co-chair, Tina! Our time together and working with HQ team has made memories that will last a lifetime and forged unbreakable bonds. I'd also like to give an amazing shout-out to our members, as the convention center and hotel employees commented on numerous occasions that they have never been so respected, welcomed and treated with such kindness by another group, nor have they been tipped so generously! This is a testament to the wonderful members we have in the Association. Thank you for a great conference. ✨

Stay tuned for the September/October issue, which will feature the official recap of the 68th Annual International Education Conference!

