

United Planet Highlights Community-Centered Experiential Learning at Global Gathering in Madrid

CEO Jill Tracy explored innovative approaches to career readiness, cross-cultural engagement, and workforce preparation.

BOSTON, MA, UNITED STATES, June 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- United Planet participated in the 2026 International Internship Conference in Madrid, where global educators, employers, program providers, and students gathered to explore how [international internships](#) are evolving in response to shifting workforce demands, equity challenges, and rapid global change. Across sessions and discussions, a clear direction emerged: international internships are increasingly being redefined not simply as placement opportunities, but as structured learning ecosystems designed in partnership with communities, aligned with workforce needs, and grounded in meaningful cross-cultural engagement.



Leaders in global experiential education gather at the International Internship Conference (IIC) in Madrid. From left to right: Justine Trenbicki, Chris Arnold, Carmen Chamorro, Daniel Ponce-Taylor, Antonio Gutierrez, United Planet CEO Jill Tracy, Naveen

At this year's conference, United Planet CEO Jill Tracy led a [featured breakout session](#) titled "Community-Led Global Internships: Preparing Students for the Future of Work." The session drew on more than 25 years of global experience across 40+ countries and focused on how internships can better prepare students for careers, global citizenship, and cross-cultural collaboration. Tracy opened her session by noting, "This model strengthens career readiness, expands access, and builds meaningful global citizenship. At its core, it's a community-led approach, partnering with local organizations and centering work that arises from the community itself. It's about designing internships that truly prepare students for the future of work."

Tracy also shared personal reflections that shaped her perspective on global education and leadership, including early immersive experiences in Brazil and Spain, service in the Peace Corps in Paraguay, and more than two decades in global leadership roles in the private sector. These experiences informed a central theme of the session: meaningful international learning is built through sustained relationships rather than transactional placements.

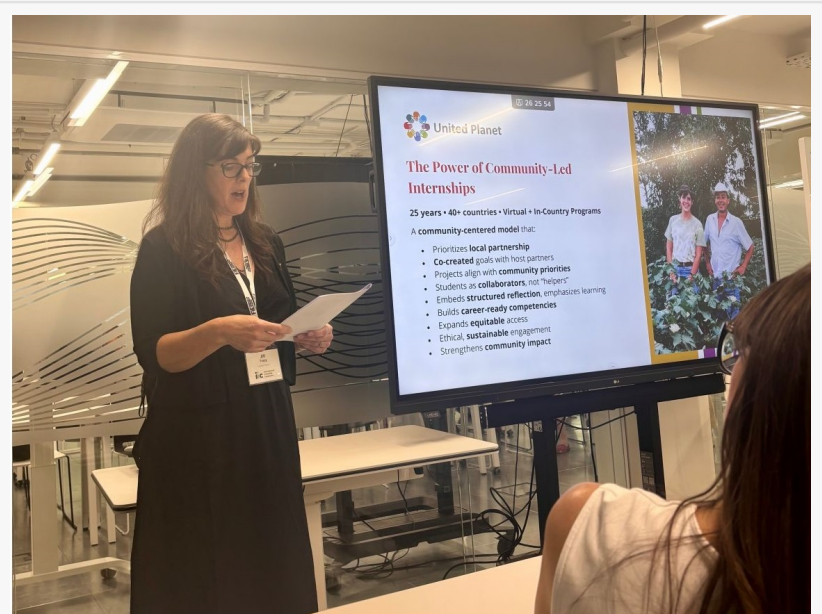
A key message throughout the presentation was the need to move beyond traditional internship models that prioritize logistics over learning outcomes. While placement-based systems can expand access to

opportunities, they often fall short in delivering structured skill development and meaningful community engagement. Community-led design reframes this approach by shifting from placement-driven models to co-created learning experiences developed in collaboration with

host organizations and grounded in local priorities. Tracy noted, "Traditional international internships often focus heavily on logistics, placement, housing, travel, while the deeper learning outcomes get lost. Students may complete tasks without truly building skills, and communities may feel underutilized. We need a model that centers learning, equity, and partnership."

Within this framework, United Planet global internships are designed through collaboration with local partners across more than 40 countries, ensuring that experiences reflect

real community needs while supporting student development. Participants are positioned not as observers or assistants, but as active contributors working alongside host organizations on shared goals across sectors including education, public health, environmental sustainability, gender equity, and peace-building. Structured reflection, mentorship, and intentional learning outcomes are embedded throughout the experience to ensure that professional development is integrated into real-world engagement.



United Planet CEO Jill Tracy shares insights on "Community-Led Global Internships: Preparing Students for the Future of Work" during her presentation at the International Internship Conference in Madrid

“

When students are placed in environments where they must listen, adapt, and collaborate across cultures, learning becomes immediate and deeply personal.”

Jill Tracy, CEO at United Planet

Tracy emphasized the importance of this relational foundation, stating, “When students are placed in environments where they must listen, adapt, and collaborate across cultures, learning becomes immediate and deeply personal. These are the conditions where global competence develops.” She further highlighted that strong international internships depend not only on where students are placed, but on how experiences are designed, supported, and reflected upon over time.

Conference discussions reflected a broader alignment between experiential learning and workforce readiness. Employers continue to emphasize the need for graduates who demonstrate adaptability, communication skills, and cultural intelligence alongside technical expertise. At the same time, students face persistent barriers to accessing international opportunities, including financial constraints and limited institutional access, while universities are increasingly expected to demonstrate measurable impact and equity outcomes. Community-led internship models offer a response to these intersecting challenges by creating programs that are more inclusive, intentional, and outcomes-driven.

The session also highlighted the [Five Pillars of Global Citizenship](#), developed in 2011 by United Planet founder David Santulli, which include Relational Diplomacy, Global Understanding, Global Leadership, Civic Engagement, and Academic & Career Development. These pillars serve as the foundation for program design, learning outcomes, and assessment, with relational diplomacy playing a central role in helping students build empathy, cultural humility, and trust across differences.

Equitable access was another key focus, particularly through the expansion of virtual and hybrid internship models. These formats allow students to participate in international experiences without the requirement of travel, while still developing cross-cultural communication skills and professional competencies aligned with modern global workplaces. When designed with structure and mentorship, these models expand participation while maintaining meaningful learning outcomes.

During the session, practical tools were also shared to support institutions and program designers, including frameworks for evaluating internship models through a community-



Jill Tracy, CEO of United Planet at the International Internship Conference in Madrid, Spain, pictured here with attendees Chris McKenzie and Naveen Shah

centered lens, aligning learning goals with employer and student needs, mapping partner collaboration structures, embedding structured reflection across program stages, and assessing intercultural competence, wellbeing, and community impact.

The conference concluded with a shared recognition that the future of international internships depends on more than expanding access. It requires deeper collaboration, stronger partnerships, and more intentional design. As Tracy stated in closing, "When internships are co-created with local partners, grounded in reciprocity, and intentionally designed around skill-building, students grow in ways that are transformative, for themselves, for their careers, and for the communities they serve."

Mohammad Hijazi
United Planet
+1 617-874-8041
marketing@unitedplanet.org



Matt Byrnes, President of the International Internship Network, Inc. and leader of the IIC Conference in Madrid



Jill Tracy, CEO of United Planet, with Matt Byrnes, President of the International Internship Network, Inc. and leader of the IIC Conference in Madrid

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/920192379>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.