

# SIREUS – Summary after 2 years

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## Background

The project started On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, as a *Platform for increased talent mobility between Sweden and the U.S.* It was named SIRUES (Students, Innovators, Researchers and Entrepreneurs between the US and Sweden) to emphasize its focus areas and core purpose. It started as a three-year-long collaboration project to “establish and manage a structured platform for increased talent mobility and strengthened knowledge exchange between Sweden and the U.S.”

The project is based on The Swedish-American Chambers of Commerce – SACC-USA’s – bilateral network of business and talent and is based on the needs identified with participating Swedish universities.

The purpose of SIREUS has been and is to

- **increase the number of students, trainees and researchers participating in exchange programs between Sweden and the U.S.**
- **increase the knowledge exchange through new and strengthened collaborative projects of research and innovation**
- **strengthen the attractiveness of Sweden as a destination for studies, research, and internships**

Early in the project the project organization was established as a collaboration between all 13 universities, SACC-USA, Swedish Institute, and the Swedish Embassy in Washington DC. Four working groups was established that followed the four specific goals.

- **Strengthen the collaboration between the Swedish universities and the Swedish-American business community**
- **Strengthen the collaboration and mobility between Swedish and American universities**
- **Strengthen the bilateral collaboration concerning research, innovation, and entrepreneurship**
- **Strengthen the attractiveness of Sweden as a destination of studies for American students**

The governance of the project was established with a Steering Committee and a Stakeholders Group. The working group and the steering committee have had meetings regularly every six weeks and the Stakeholders Group have had biannual meetings.

To achieve the overarching goals of the project, the following activities was planned to be offered:

- Find synergies between Swedish universities and regional SACC Chamber networks.

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- Identify and develop Swedish-American exchange programs, business contacts and research collaborations (PhD, post-docs, etc.).
- Increase the attractiveness of the exchange programs by offering internships adjacent to the studies, in both directions.
- Create a portal of information concerning bilateral programs, courses, and internships.
- Create meeting places for researchers, companies, students, and investors.
- Enable Swedish students to carry out their capstone project with an American company.
- Recruit more full-time students to Sweden through marketing efforts of Sweden as a destination for studies (career fairs, events, etc.) combined with concluding internships with Swedish companies.
- Exchange of information and exchange between participating universities about certification to administer American student loans (the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA).
- Develop contacts between Swedish universities and Swedish-American companies for more internships in both directions.
- Make an inventory of existing private and public scholarships in both countries for studies and research.
- Create opportunities for exchange concerning academic leadership.
- Identify, educate, and coordinate Ambassadors of Education.

The overall project plan, the goals and objectives and approval of type of activities were approved by the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders Group, during the beginning of the project.

Since mid-2022, SIREUS has been creating a network on American Affiliated Universities, this to create an American Academic Network as a complement to the SIREUS Member network. Similarly, as of 4th quarter 2023, a soft launch of establishing an Affiliation of Companies is ongoing. This initiative will complement the academic network with a business network genuinely interested in academic collaboration for high end research.

### Status

The website [www.sireus.org](http://www.sireus.org) was established early on with the purpose to be the information portal for both internal stakeholders and for all students, researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs interested in increased collaboration between Sweden and the US. The structure of the website is proven to be flexible, easy to operate and very useful for all interested parties.

The four working groups have had 11 virtual meetings since its inception and all minutes, presentation material and working group documents is archived on the protected area of the website. Most working groups have very engaged participants from all universities and similarly the Steering Committee have had 13 virtual meetings since the inception and the Stakeholders Group have had 4 virtual meeting. Similarly, all minutes and documents can be found in the website archive.

Among other things, the working groups and the steering committee have been instrumental in agreeing on what thematic areas the project should focus on and provided links to the thematic areas on the website. Once the Swedish university members have provided the links, the same request will go to the American affiliated members of providing thematic links. The purpose being that researchers should be able to navigate to his or her specific interests and connect globally. The thematic areas and sub-areas currently are.

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

AI  
Big Data  
Industrial Technology  
Cybersecurity  
Quantum Mechanics  
Microelectronics

**GREEN TRANSITION**

Electromobility  
Smart City  
Smart Grid  
Battery  
Renewable Materials  
Forestry

**LIFE SCIENCE**

Cancer  
Precision Health  
Precision Medicine  
Antimicrobial Resistance  
Art as a tool

**SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

Democracy & Humanities  
Art as a tool for change  
Equality & Equity

**SPACE TECHNOLOGY**

Small Satellites  
Earth Observations

As mentioned above, since mid-2022, SIREUS has been creating a network on American Affiliated Universities, this to create an American Academic Network as a complement to the SIREUS Member network. Main benefit is to open up and make it easier for a true collaboration for students and researchers from Sweden and the US. Currently 11 American universities have agreed to be part of the American Affiliated University network.

- Signed MOU: Michigan Technology University, Dakota State University, University of Texas at San Antonio, Gustavus Adolphus College, Chapman University, Tufts University, Washington State University, Purdue University, Virginia Tech, Penn State University and University of Colorado Boulder.
- MOU proposed: Kennesaw State, Rutgers University, George Washington University and George Mason University.
- Ongoing conversations: Georgia Tech, University of Washington, Penn State, Georgetown University, University of Hawaii, North Park University, American University and Catholic University.

As per above, during the 4th quarter 2023, a soft launch of establishing an Affiliation of Companies is ongoing. Currently there are 5 companies that have provided feedback on the program and are willing to explore the benefits of joining the program. The group of companies that is part of the initial “soft launch” is Ericsson, AstraZeneca, SAAB, Volvo and Einride.

## Activities and Events

Below is a summary of activities and events that SIREUS has organized after consultation with the working groups. (Also, events in the final planning can be found below).

### 2022

- **SIREUS Study-in-Sweden event**, at House of Sweden, Washington, DC on November 1<sup>st</sup>. 11 Universities were present and more than 100 participants. The event included a student fair, a keynote address and an alumnus panel.

### 2023

- **SIREUS ENTREPRENEURS forum** in Denver, CO during February 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>. 8 startups from UU, LU, SU and LiU participated and the feedback from the participants were very positive.
- **SIREUS CHANCELLORS forum** in Washington, DC from February 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. 11 Swedish universities with a total of 20 delegates and 14 American universities with a total of 28 delegates participated in the forum. The forum had very strong support from the Swedish Embassy in Washington DC and also included representatives from the White House (Science and Technology), the US State Department, NSF, Vinnova and EU.
- **SIREUS MEMBERS forum** in Washington DC @ House of Sweden was held on May 31<sup>st</sup>. The event was a “mingle event” in conjunction with the NAFSA conference. More than 200 participants attended the event from 12 SIREUS Members and 6 Affiliated Universities, they were from 15 countries and 22 different US States. The event was very appreciated, and it provided an excellent opportunity for the SIREUS members to discuss with existing partners and gain new contacts for potential new partners.
- **The Study in Sweden Road Show** was held at **SACC NY**, (New York City, NY) on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, **Washington State University**, (Pullman, WA) on November 4<sup>th</sup> and **Chapman University**, (Orange, CA), on November 6<sup>th</sup>. The participants all thought it was well organized and gave insight on different regions and cities when it comes to student recruitment.
- **SIREUS RESEARCH forum**, our first of a series of virtual events was held on December 11<sup>th</sup> @. More than 50 participants were part of the virtual forum, and the plan is to hold the SIREUS RESEARCH forum monthly with different topics.

### 2024

#### *Currently planned events.*

- An **Innovation (scouting) Tour to Texas** is planned for February 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The plan is to visit the universities in San Antonio, Austin, College Station, and Houston. Currently UU, LU, SU, LTU, MDU and MIUN are planning to participate on the trip. Maybe LIU and Chalmers will also be joining.
- The **SIREUS ENTREPRENEURS forum** is being planned for the week of March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in Colorado. A planning group including Nicole Forsberg from CU Boulder & SACC CO is working on the focus and the agenda for the forum. Currently UU, LU, SU, LTU, and LIU is planning to participate at the forum and currently there are 10-12 companies that have shown interest to participate.
- A **potential SIREUS MEMBERS forum** in New Orleans, LO is being evaluated for the end of May and in conjunction with NAFSA 2024.

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- **SIREUS RESEARCH forum**, a series of virtual events will be held monthly with relevant and interesting topics for researchers and innovators. The virtual session will be recorded and archived on the SIREUS YouTube channel.

### Funding and resources

The original project plan calls for a part time Program Director to ensure that the overall strategy and objectives are being followed and that all stakeholders have insight into the economic planning and reporting which is accounted for as a separate project within SACC-USA. A Project Leader (based in the US) should be responsible for daily operations and interaction with all stakeholders, the trainees for the project, the SACC Network and its Members and other partners in the project. A Project Resource in Sweden should maintain close contact with some stakeholders and work with the business community to create opportunities to establish partnerships for innovation, research, and talent mobility. Other resources from SACC-USA (including resources from the SACC-USA office and the Regional SACC Chambers) would be coordinated by the Program Director.

The project is financed by a contribution from all SIREUS Members of 200KSEK per year, KK-stiftelsen (The Knowledge Foundation) has contributed, the Swedish Institute have covered some of the expenses related to specific events and the Swedish Embassy have contributed with both in-kind sponsoring (venue and catering) and funds for certain events. The Swedish Embassy have also been very generous with their time and instrumental with their support, knowledge, and experience. They have also made introductions to key organizations and individuals for making the events successful and very valuable. However, the original project plan also calls for matching funds from the “Swedish Government”. Despite many official and informal visits and conversations, so far, no major funds have been secured from the Swedish Government and the project is operated within minimal financial resources, resulting in minimal staff supporting the project. No Project Leader in the US, nor Project Resource in Sweden as per above is part of the project since there is a lack of financial resources. Hence, the project organization is not as sustainable as would be desirable.

With limited financial resources, the focus has been on building sustainable networks, productive events, and introductions, rather than building a more sustainable operation. All activities and knowledge in creating events have been captured and stored in the archive on the website, so all SIREUS participants have access to the documentation and results within the SIREUS project.

### Next step in the evaluation process

This document should be seen as a neutral capturing of the situation after 2 years into the SIREUS project. Next step is to evaluate the project, give feedback of the achievements so far and recommend the focus for the remaining year of the project and give recommendation how SIREUS could be operated after the first 3 years.

To evaluate the SIREUS project, advise on revised focus and give recommendations for SIREUS after the initial 3 years period, a “cross members” team was selected representing all working groups and all SIREUS

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members. The selection of the “Evaluation Team”, was made based on their ongoing participation in the working groups, the engagement level and energy in discussions over the last 2 years and the team selection was approved by the Steering Committee during the last meeting. It is also advisable that the 2-3 members of the Steering Committee participate in the Evaluation Team.

The plan is to have 3-4 virtual meetings during January through May and 1 in-person meeting in Stockholm. During the process, each member of the Evaluation Team would preferably be able to give feedback and proposals on behalf of their university and not only from their work in a specific working group.

The evaluation process is created after input from members of the proposed evaluation team and is led by Christer Bergman with support from Margareta Alfredson, LiU. Both Christer and Margareta will be part of the planned meetings.

The overall timeline for the evaluation is.

January 11 <sup>th</sup>	This summary document will be sent out to the Evaluation Team
January 31 <sup>st</sup>	1st virtual meeting (Teams) @ 15.00 CET “Deciding on the key topics.”
February 28 <sup>th</sup>	In-person meeting in Stockholm (@SU) “Deciding on the way forward.”
March 7 <sup>th</sup>	2nd virtual meeting (Teams) @ 15.00 CET “Review of recommendation.”
April 9 <sup>th</sup>	3rd virtual meeting (Teams) @ 15.00 CET “Agree on the recommendation.”
April 16 <sup>th</sup>	Steering Committee should receive the base for decision.
May 8 <sup>th</sup>	4th virtual meeting (Teams) @ 15.00 CET “Feedback after SC meeting.”
May 28 <sup>th</sup>	Steering Committee make the recommendation to the Stakeholders Group
June 4 <sup>t</sup>	Stakeholders Group decision on SIREUS after January 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2025

The Steering Committee will discuss the recommendation during the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting and being ready for a decision by the May28<sup>th</sup> meeting. The final decision needs to be taken during the Stakeholders Group meeting in early June 2024. Then the Program Director will be responsible for implementing the decision in a professional and effective matter.

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