



For Immediate Release
Contact: [Leanne Ricchiuti](#), Headline Media for ICCR, 518-222-8073
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MEDIA ADVISORY

International Center of the Capital Region Board Announces New Executive Director

*Nonprofit's Former Director of Community Engagement Fills Role Vacated by
Jennifer Zhao*

(Troy, N.Y.) – The [International Center of the Capital Region](#) (ICCR)'s Board of Directors is proud to announce that the role of Executive Director will be filled by Holly Planells McKenna, effective this month. The role was previously held by [Jennifer Zhao who is stepping down](#) from the position and moving out of the area. McKenna has been working with ICCR for almost two years, and most recently as the Director of Community Engagement.

McKenna's interest in global affairs began as a child when she was told family stories of immigration from Cuba, Spain's Basque Region, and Ireland. Her career is shaped by journalism, having been an upstate correspondent for Reuters for more than 20 years, and now teaching journalism at the University at Albany for the past 16 years.

"I'm very excited to lead the International Center of the Capital Region," said McKenna. "I'm looking forward to fostering cultural understanding and engaging in foreign affairs to make them less *foreign*. I will continue to look for new ways to develop long-standing mutually beneficial relationships among people from different global regions, and educate and facilitate public dialogue for cultural diversity, economic development, human rights, and peace."

"As director of community engagement, Holly has been an integral part of the reinvention of the International Center of the Capital Region," said Jennifer Zhao, outgoing Executive Director of the ICCR. "Her passion for international connections and community engagement will certainly elevate the organization to new heights. I'm thrilled that the board has selected her as the new Executive Director, and I send my best wishes for her future success."

“We are grateful for Jennifer Zhao’s leadership during COVID and beyond,” said Michael O’Brien, President of the ICCR Board of the Directors. “We look forward to continued growth with Holly McKenna as Executive Director.”

Hudson Valley Community College has been hosting the nonprofit organization on campus since the fall of 2021, and they’re affiliated with the college’s Office of Global Initiatives.

“Hudson Valley Community College is proud to have had the International Center of the Capital Region here on our campus for the past two years and is pleased to welcome new ICCR Executive Director Holly McKenna,” said Hudson Valley Community College President Dr. Roger Ramsammy. “Our partnership with ICCR is a mutually beneficial one, rooted in a shared desire to create new opportunities for our students, our community, and our international partners. We look forward to continuing to work together as we embrace a more global future.”

McKenna served on the board of the Albany Public Library and the Friends and Foundation of APL. She has [authored a book](#) about her oldest son being raised in the country of Jordan without her, after her ex-husband took their son to the country as a young child, violating a U.S. custody court order. Her next book aims to discuss the heritage of her family and their move to America.

McKenna is originally from Long Island, and resides in Albany with her husband, Chris, with whom she has four adult children together.

ICCR is a nonprofit organization founded in 1956 that exists to promote cultural understanding among others by welcoming international leaders and dynamic newcomers to the Capital Region. ICCR connects the Capital Region to the world through citizen diplomacy by hosting programs with foreign visitors and events that help establish relationships across borders and cultures. For more information on the International Center of the Capital Region, visit <https://iccralbany.org/>.

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About International Center of the Capital Region. The International Center of the Capital Region (ICCR), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, has been welcoming and assisting international newcomers throughout New York’s Capital Region since 1956. We enable citizen ambassadors for professional and cultural exchanges through the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the U.S. Department of State’s premier professional exchange program, while promoting the diverse people, rich history, and unique assets of the Capital Region.