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NAFSA Research Symposium Series

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Editorial
By: Shanna Saubert, PhD, NAFSA: Association of International Educators

Welcome to the third volume of the *NAFSA Research Symposium Series*, a peer-reviewed publication produced by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. This publication is designed to showcase research presented at NAFSA Research Symposium events, held biannually in April and during International Education Week in November. The 2018 Symposia brought together a diverse group of dedicated individuals (i.e., faculty, graduate students, researchers, and practitioners from universities, private and nonprofit organizations, and various government sectors) to discuss research in international education. Important questions were asked, resulting in both engaging discussions and promising avenues for scholarly advocacy for international educators who are also scholars, practitioners, or somewhere along the scholar-practitioner continuum.

The field of international education is dynamic—continuously evolving and responding to changes in academia and the wider society, with connections to different theories and practices from multiple disciplines. This volume of the series includes nine articles that examine an array of topics: standards for measuring higher education internationalization; the reentry experiences of students of color returning from studying abroad; the relationship between international undergraduate student enrollment numbers and tuition revenue; international alumni affairs for U.S. colleges and universities; the intercultural competence of international enrollment professionals; a case study on diversifying global education through cocurricular global experiences; study abroad to the Middle East and North Africa; a scale for measuring students’ self-efficacy beliefs in study abroad programs; and a model to examine international students’ experiences and engagement. As with earlier volumes of the series, the articles in this volume have both theoretical and practical implications, as they reflect a range of professional experiences and areas of interest that are aligned with NAFSA Knowledge Communities (i.e., Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; Education Abroad; International Education Leadership, International Enrollment Management; and International Student and Scholar Services).

Considering the breadth of topics presented here, this volume also serves as an invitation for researchers and scholars in international education and related disciplines to submit research for consideration for future NAFSA Research Symposium events.

Finally, the editorial team would like to thank all those who have helped make possible this volume (and all NAFSA Research Symposium events)—from the authors to the peer reviewers, as well as the teams and individual staff members at NAFSA. Special thanks to both Kevin Kinser, EdD, and Anne D’Angelo, PhD, for their opening remarks at 2018 Research Symposium events, encouraging and empowering international educators to consider different perspectives and further actively engage with each other and the field at large. And, above all, the team would like to thank the devoted professionals (current, future, and past) who work each and every day to make the world a better place through international education.
Standards for Measuring Higher Education Internationalization
By: Nancy Bjorklund* (Western Michigan University)

Institutions of higher education are embarking on comprehensive internationalization in an effort to prepare students to work in an increasingly globalized world. A review of the literature presents a need for higher education to establish standards in the field for measuring internationalization. This study uses a case study approach to explore the primary assets that led a public institution to achieve comprehensive internationalization. Interviews, surveys, and an examination of documents are used to understand the perceptions of staff regarding the knowledge, motivation, and organizational assets that led to success. Factors identified during the literature review are included throughout the design of this study. Moreover, results from the current study emphasize the significance of peer influences and the use of benchmarks to assess comprehensive internationalization, further supporting the limited research on developing and using standards for measuring comprehensive internationalization. As institutions seek to achieve an advanced level of comprehensive internationalization, this case study presents key assets that other higher education institutions can embrace, which ultimately can lead an institution to a higher level of comprehensive internationalization.

Keywords: internationalization, higher education, benchmarking, comprehensive internationalization, standards

Introduction

Quality assurance processes in higher education internationalization have become increasingly important throughout Australia, Canada, Europe, and the United States (Altbach and Knight 2007). A number of factors contributed to this development and governments and industries now advocate for a well-educated workforce that is competitive in the global knowledge economy. Higher education institutions are increasingly being asked to help support the development of students who will be prepared to meet the challenges of the global century (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U] 2017; American Council on Education [ACE] 2017). Currently, there is an absence of required or widely-accepted externally managed evaluations or standards that help motivate universities to achieve an advanced level of comprehensive internationalization. Also, there are no standards that can help define levels of internationalization for universities. This study examines the promising practices employed by a top research university that received international recognition for having made substantial progress toward comprehensive internationalization.

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Presently, universities in the United States are not required to meet any standards, nor are they accredited or certified for having achieved any level of internationalization. Hundreds of universities throughout the United States have developed internationalization strategies aimed at internationalizing their campus; however, neither standardization nor methodologies of measurement for achieving and maintaining an increased level of internationalization exist. Universities currently do not know what level of internationalization they have achieved, nor are there methods in place to determine how they measure against other universities in their efforts.

The performance need for comprehensive internationalization is to develop a set of standards that create quality assurances to guarantee that institutions have processes for improvement. Such measures are also important to advance the quality of internationalization throughout the world, define standardized preferred practices, and promote institutional accountability through systematic and consistent evaluation. Having a standard set of quality assurances and processes would help raise the quality of higher education programs, services, and institutions, and ultimately contribute to the preparedness of the workforce to meet the challenges of a globalized economy (Schray 2005).

Importance of Addressing the Problem

The problem of a lack of framework, articulated strategies, and assessment for internationalization is important to solve for a number of reasons. First, there is an overall need for well-defined and articulated standard procedures and transparent evaluation and assessment processes that measure the quality of internationalization in higher education institutions (Altbach and Knight 2007). In having well-defined and articulated standard procedures for comprehensive internationalization, the quality and quality assurance of internationalization can be ensured.

Additionally, as the demand for progress in international education grows, universities need to distinguish themselves from competitors. Self-evaluation and self-reporting of an institution’s efforts toward internationalization will no longer be adequate. Objective assessments and improved quality of international education are needed to be competitive in the field of higher education (Van Damme 2000). Metrics must be established to assist institutions claiming or presenting themselves as internationalized, having attained the measurement standards for achieving an increased level of comprehensive internationalization (Friedman 2005). Such standards could ensure that accredited universities would be graduating globally competent students who meet the needs of an increasingly globally-minded workforce.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address the role of standards in promoting and enhancing comprehensive internationalization in higher education institutions. To keep a reasonable scope for the current study, a recipient of NAFSA’s Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization was chosen as the higher education institution for the case study regarding the role and impact of standards. This study identifies the factors that contributed to successful campus internationalization efforts at this public research university and demonstrates how they influenced campus internationalization.
Methodology

Clark and Estes’s (2008) gap analysis is adapted to a promising practice study and implemented as the conceptual framework. Clark and Estes (2008) define gap analysis as an approach that can be used to improve performance and achieve organizational goals, as it provides a way to clarify organizational and individual outcomes, assess them, and identify existing gaps that can prevent the attainment of expected performance levels (Rueda 2011); however, the adaption of this framework allows the researcher to review the characteristics and assets of an organization that led to its success. As a result, this study uses a promising practice/case study framework for question exploration.

Merriam (1998) suggests that case studies work well in educational settings since they are established in existent situations and can successively impact practice. Case study research is used in higher education for exploring practice and adding to the knowledge base in an effort to improve practices and benefit from insights gained on the promising practice. A promising practice framework allows for the development and exploration of various assumed characteristics as it explores the topic by looking at programs and strategies that demonstrated positive and successful outcomes.

This study identifies the strategies employed by Colorado State University (CSU) to internationalize and become a leading institution in higher education. More specifically, the following primary research question is addressed: What assets contributed to CSU having achieved a high level of comprehensive internationalization? The methodological framework used to guide this study is systematic and analytical and helps to explain organizational and performance goals by focusing on the knowledge, motivation, and organizational assets within an organization. The process includes identifying, understanding, and diagnosing performance assets, as well as implementing solutions and proposing methods for further evaluation (Clark and Estes 2008). These assets are then validated through the use of surveys, interviews, and document analysis. A qualitative research approach addresses the purpose of this study and supports interpretive objectives, such as understanding the impact of comprehensive internationalization, identifying the links between internationalization and administration, and assessing the potential for improvements to strengthen a university’s ability to embrace the positive impacts of internationalization while mitigating any potentially negative effects. Assumed knowledge, motivation, and organizational assets are generated based on related literature. These influences are assessed by using surveys, document analysis, interviews, and literature review.¹

Organizational Context and Mission

Patton (2002) notes that with qualitative studies it is important to select candidates that are “information rich”—in other words, people who have knowledge and experience in the area being studied. The individuals selected for this study worked on campus internationalization efforts either directly or indirectly and were selected specifically because of their position and experience. The results are not intended to be generalizable, but helped to determine the factors
that influenced campus internationalization and make the connections between the factors that enabled the development of a comprehensive initiative.

CSU, located in Fort Collins, Colorado, is the flagship university of the Colorado State University System. As part of its internationalization strategy, the Office of International Programs (OIP) at CSU creates and fosters international activities that include education abroad opportunities, faculty initiatives, and partnerships with universities around the world. CSU was chosen for this promising practice study because it is recognized in the field of internationalization of higher education as an institution that has made “significant, well-planned, well-executed, and well-documented progress toward comprehensive internationalization” (NAFSA 2017), having received the NAFSA Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization in 2013.

Population and Stakeholder Group for the Study

While a complete study would involve all stakeholder groups, this study focuses on one stakeholder group, namely, the senior international officer (SIO) and the SIO’s personnel reporting structure within the OIP. More than presidents and chief academic officers, SIOs and their staff are most likely to understand the importance of internationalization for promoting global awareness and the necessity to create inclusive campus environments that promote tolerance and understanding of different cultures. Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were assured confidentiality. Table 1 below illustrates the distribution of all survey participants, as well as descriptive data, such as employment status, gender, and length of employment within the OIP.

Table 1. Participant Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Participants</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Instructor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Employee</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Employed by</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of International Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–4 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the study, all participants were employed at CSU. As exhibited in table 1, all of the respondents are staff or administrators in the OIP (100 percent; \( n = 19 \)). Of the 35 individuals who were sent the survey, 19 responded, reflecting a 54 percent response rate. Seven employees participated in an in-person interview.

Survey participants were well established in their positions. The interview participants held a broad range of positions within the OIP, including vice provost for international affairs, education abroad director, international initiatives director, global cocurricular initiatives assistant director, global academic initiatives assistant director, director for international student and scholar services, and assistant director for international admissions.
Ethics and Limitations of Research

The limitations of this study are time and geography. The researcher was limited to a predetermined amount of time to collect and analyze data. Additionally, the study focuses on a comprehensive, research-oriented, diverse university located in the state of Colorado. Data collection is limited to one institution and individuals who work in internationalization. These factors limit the scope and breadth of the study.

The delimitation of the study is the singular institution being studied. The intention of the study was to create a scale for which internationalization could be measured and validated. Further studies will be needed to create the scale, whereas the creation of the list of internationalization indicators that subsequent institutions can use for successful implementation is the goal of the present study. Other institution types were not studied. The focus of this study, as explicitly stated, does not infer an extensive and unlimited use.

Literature Review

Institutions of higher education in the United States currently face the daunting challenge of remaining intellectually and culturally relevant. As a result, the missions of many higher education institutions include the advent of assurances to produce and graduate globally-minded citizens who are prepared to work in and engage with a global society. Through a multitude of internationalization characteristics, institutions are putting forth efforts to achieve this commitment through comprehensive internationalization efforts. Understanding exactly how an institution goes about internationalizing its campus proves to be a worthwhile pursuit. This literature review focuses on the motivations behind internationalization, including the indicators necessary for an institution to implement a successful internationalization strategy. It also explores analytical frameworks for assessing higher education internationalization, looking closely at what standards currently exist, if any, and providing the foundational baseline from which internationalization can be measured.

Defining Internationalization

To better understand the concept of internationalization and the various ways in which intercultural scholars conceptualize it to date, it is helpful to briefly explore the nature of internationalization as defined by international education administrators, most of whom are experts in the fields of international higher education and administration. The most common definition of internationalization is provided by Knight (2015) as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (pp. 2–3). The process of “internationalization” is not in itself easily grasped and de Wit and Merkx (2012) propose a shift from a more activity- and motivation-based approach to internationalization to a combination of a process- and competence-based approach. In other words, they recommend a more integral process approach to internationalization, focused on achieving an enhanced quality of higher education and improved competencies of faculty, staff, and students.
Importance of and Motivations for Internationalization in Higher Education

A common question that arises within higher education is why college students need to be prepared for global leadership. ACE commissioned two surveys aimed at measuring public expectations regarding international education and the value that the public places on international education. One survey polled adult-aged individuals (Hayward and Siaya 2001) and the second survey focused on college-bound high school seniors (Peter D. Hart Research Associates 2006). The majority of adult respondents (93 percent) report that they believe that international knowledge is important for future generations, career success, and advancement (Hayward and Siaya 2001). The same percentage express that awareness and understanding of other cultures and customs is necessary to function in a global context. Among the respondents, there is overwhelming consensus that higher education coursework addressing international topics should be mandatory for students (Hayward and Siaya 2001). College-bound high school seniors who were also polled strongly support international education and believe that coursework in international education or consisting of international topics is an important factor in the selection of a college or university. In both studies, employers also cite the need for global understanding, as well as knowledge of global issues and human cultures, as critical for success in the global economy (Hayward and Siaya 2001; Peter D. Hart Research Associates 2006).

The transformation and improvement of global economic and trade systems, research networks, and cross-border communications are highlighted as macro-level motivations by Hudzik (2011) as motivations and purposes driving comprehensive internationalization. Human capital development, strategic partnerships, commercial trade, constructing national identity, and social and cultural development are the important motivations that drive internationalization at the national level (Knight 2004). The amplified pressures to recruit and retain the smartest and most educated international students and scholars, as well as the increasing need to further the international dimensions of research and teaching have led to the human capital motivations. The increasing attention to enhancing intercultural understanding and skills for citizenship development are an additional motivation for internationalization (Knight 2004).

Issues, Challenges, and Constraints in Higher Education Internationalization

Institutional barriers center mostly on policy, mission, and strategies and, therefore, on leadership due to the role leaders play in shaping these aspects of an institution (Raby 2008). Because of the traditionally local focus placed on universities and colleges, mainly public and state universities that have missions mandated and funding allocated by state and local government, institutional leaders often place minimal value and investment on international education. This subsequent low prioritization leads to little effort by institutions to implement policies and strategies that support international education (Green and Burris 2008; ACE 2017). In addition, universities must also avoid focusing on the misconceptions that study abroad will solely further internationalization and that internationalization is the equivalent to academic mobility.
Quality Assurance and Measuring Internationalization

As institutions of higher education strive toward comprehensive internationalization, the issue arises whether there are standard measurements in internationalization related to quality assurance and the national and international recognition of providers, programs, credits, and qualifications related to internationalization activities. Clearly, all enterprises, including universities, need to have a system of checks and balances to ensure that the materials they use, the products they make, or the services they provide reach a minimum level of standards. However, there is a lack of literature in the area of higher education that discusses the agencies or programs that are registered, licensed, or recognized by higher education that have the regulatory systems in place to register or evaluate comprehensive internationalization. While frameworks do exist for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education, such as the accrediting organizations recognized by the Council for Higher Education or the U.S. Department of Education, they typically do not apply outside the national education system nor do they involve aspects of comprehensive internationalization (Craft 1992).

Implications of the Literature to this Study

De Wit (2002) states that the key role of internationalization and its contribution to higher education is gaining more recognition around the world, in both developed and developing countries. As internationalization matures, both as a concept and as a process, it is important that institutions of higher education address the issues of quality assessment and assurance of their international dimensions and address the specific outcomes of their internationalization efforts and how to best assess those outcomes.

Among the many scholars in the field of international higher education, some will argue that internationalization cannot be measured. Knight (2001) suggests that internationalization should only be seen as a process in which the tracking measures are intended to help in the evaluation of the progress and quality of the process, but should not be used as means to assess the results or impact of internationalization. While the research surrounding internationalization provides information that covers the importance of internationalization and why to internationalize, very little information is provided in the area of measuring internationalization and in providing an analysis of the role of standardization that can contribute to measure and assess an institution’s internationalization efforts.

Findings

The main purpose of this case study is to describe the success factors that influenced comprehensive internationalization at CSU, using findings from the qualitative data collected. This study focuses on the staff of the OIP and their views pertaining to the factors that led to attaining comprehensive internationalization at their institution. The aim is to analyze how CSU became a highly recognized leader in the area of higher education internationalization.

Importance of a Mission and Strategic Plan

Johnston and Edelstein (1993) assert that campus internationalization efforts are long-term, require sustained efforts, and need to be well-supported by an institutional mission and/or
vision. Comprehensive internationalization is linked to the mission and strategic plan of the institution and must be clearly articulated.

When interviewed about the importance of an institutional mission, 100 percent of all participants responded that an institutional mission is “critical,” “essential,” or “vital” to the institution. Although no specific statement on internationalization is found in either CSU’s mission or vision, it is implied in a much broader context through the lens of a global commitment in its strategic plan. When interview participants were asked whether comprehensive internationalization is specifically recognized in CSU’s institutional mission, six out of seven participants (86 percent) expressed that it is not specifically recognized, but the narrative for internationalization is embedded into the mission. This demonstrates a high level of understanding and knowledge by interview participants tasked with implementation, regarding their abilities to extract meaning from a mission statement.

**Defining Comprehensive Internationalization**

A second asset that falls within context of knowledge is the ability for both an institution and those individuals charged with comprehensive internationalization efforts to articulate what comprehensive internationalization entails. As the literature review reveals, the ways that individuals define comprehensive internationalization vary. Analysis of interview transcripts finds that similarities in meanings arose among participants. Further analysis finds that the verb choices selected to represent the “action” of comprehensive internationalization echo the key concepts and terminology used in the field of international higher education, including actions such as *infuse, engage, integrate, pervade, instill, seep,* and *permeate.*

Knight (2003) defines internationalization as a process. She liberally uses the word “integrating” to denote that internationalization is an action that must be embedded into the policies and mission of an institution. When comparing the definitions provided by the participants with prominent scholars and organizations in the field, CSU staff are in consistent alignment with the meaning and concepts in comprehensive internationalization.

**Understanding the Rationale for Comprehensive Internationalization**

A third asset demonstrates the understandings that participants have of CSU’s rationale for comprehensive internationalization. Many factors affect comprehensive internationalization in a higher education setting. These differ in scope and scale depending on the mission and goal of each institution. Participants were asked in the survey to indicate their views on the reasons that lead an institution to undertake comprehensive internationalization. Results from both the survey and interviews indicate that the participants have a clear understanding of the rationale of comprehensive internationalization strategies, supported by the survey’s statistical analysis. Of the reasons identified by the participants, approximately 50 percent are represented in only three areas: (a) increasing international student enrollment, (b) developing/expanding research collaborations, and (c) contributing to the institution’s financial stability.

These findings accurately mirror the research available regarding the rationale for comprehensive internationalization in higher education as identified by NAFSA. This demonstrates the level of knowledge the staff of OIP has related to trends in higher education, as
well as their understanding of the motivations that led to CSU’s comprehensive internationalization efforts.

**Applying Comprehensive Internationalization**

Another finding demonstrates the level of knowledge the participants have in the area of comprehensive internationalization and how it is applied to their related work responsibilities. The level of expertise and longevity in the field of international higher education elevates the participants’ knowledge and understandings of the need, purpose, benefits, and challenges of internationalization. This proficiency is not only reflected in the interviews that were conducted, but is also evidenced in documents published by OIP personnel in their respective areas in support of comprehensive internationalization. All of the data collected indicate that the participants have a solid understanding of how comprehensive internationalization is applied to their field. This clearly demonstrates a high level of participant knowledge around application, as well as an established commitment to CSU’s comprehensive internationalization efforts by individuals.

**Standards and Benchmarking**

Universities may compare their internationalization efforts to peer institutions. This comparison is often referred to as benchmarking. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines benchmarking as “something that serves as a standard by which others may be measured or judged [or] a point of reference from which measurements may be made.” As informed by the research data, CSU’s OIP looks to its peers for inspiration and guidance. By looking at its peers, OIP is setting a standard to which it continuously aspires. Benchmarking can serve as a motivation for change and improvement and a driver for changed behavior, as affirmed in the Benchmarking Handbook (Andersen and Pettersen 1996). Benchmarking also motivates institutions to achieve a higher level of internationalization, thus helping CSU, and other institutions, to identify their desired outcomes for quality.

Using peer institutions (either formally and informally) to gage success, coupled with the notion of award recognition, provided validity to the claim that peer recognition and benchmarking played an important role in the comprehensive internationalization of CSU. By benchmarking, CSU was able to measure if its efforts matched or exceeded those of its competitors, thus ensuring importance and quality to its stakeholders.

**Organizational Culture**

A significant finding from this study is the extent to which organizational culture influenced the advancement of comprehensive internationalization at CSU. Strong institutional mission and institutional narrative had a pronounced influence on almost all international activities within the institution. Findings also reveal that the organizational culture was influenced by several other factors. For example, collaborative leadership was an important asset influencing comprehensive internationalization, and grew from the organizational culture. These data provide strong evidence that CSU has a strong institutional mission and strategic plan that link the culture of the university with the narrative of comprehensive internationalization.
Administrative Structure

The manners in which comprehensive internationalization is structured and implemented look very different across institutions of higher education. Some institutions have a very centralized model, while others have their services scattered throughout an institution. For the effective integration of comprehensive internationalization, ACE (2018) recommends that the administrative structure has a centralized office or offices that are designated for the coordination of campuswide internationalization activities. Furthermore, it is recommended that the individual primarily responsible for internationalization reports directly to the chief academic officer/provost or president of the institution.

The executive structure of CSU supports ACE’s recommendation that the SIO reports to the provost and executive vice president. Positioning the vice provost for international affairs under the provost and executive vice president signified collaboration and enhanced accountability, understanding, and mutual cooperation between academics and the efforts of the OIP. At CSU, institutional level internationalization is carried forth in the work of the vice provost for international affairs.

Administrative Leadership

Analyzing an institution’s comprehensive internationalization effort must include a review of the institutional leadership. ACE (2012) emphasizes the role that institutional leadership plays in the creation and implementation of comprehensive internationalization strategies. Presidents, senior administration, deans, chairs, faculty, and staff are all integral to the successful comprehensive internationalization of an institution. However, in order for institutional change, individuals charged with application also have to demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and motivation to move comprehensive internationalization beyond implementation.

Participants of the study unequivocally identified the vice provost for international affairs (CSU’s SIO) as the individual who originated the internationalization process and provided the initial source of continuous motivation for expanding international education across CSU’s campus. Of the participants surveyed, 100 percent felt that the SIO kept abreast of latest developments and trends in the field and had the knowledge, expertise, and drive necessary to advance CSU’s comprehensive internationalization initiative. This drive is consistent with research conducted by ACE regarding the roles and responsibility areas of a SIO and how the efforts in leadership are typically the impetus for initiating comprehensive internationalization efforts in higher education (Green 2012).

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that led to the successful comprehensive internationalization of an institution of higher education. This study produced findings that may be transferable to other higher education institutions wishing to achieve a high level of comprehensive internationalization. The assets that were found to have significantly influenced CSU’s efforts all reside within three major themes, which contain assets and exemplary practices that can be duplicated or translated into transferable practices for higher
education institutions wishing to achieve a high level of comprehensive internationalization as demonstrated by CSU. The three recommendations for transfer are:

1. Embed comprehensive internationalization into the culture of the university.
2. Empower a leadership team that demonstrates a commitment toward comprehensive internationalization.
3. Create peer associations that serve as benchmarking measures in support of internationalization.

Conclusion

This case study examined the assets of one higher education institution, CSU, which is widely recognized in the field of higher education for having achieved an advanced level of comprehensive internationalization. This case study focused on the experience and perceptions of the staff of the OIP, identified the perceived rationales and motivations for internationalization, and connected the priority CSU placed on this institutionwide effort with its institutional narrative. This study may be used as an example to inform other institutions of the discovered assets for achieving a high level of internationalization, while providing a process for implementation and assessment.

Future Research

As internationalization becomes more important to higher education, standards for measuring comprehensive internationalization are needed. Institutions are increasingly being asked to provide evidence of the quality and quantity of its contribution (Green 2012) and despite a growing emphasis on comprehensive internationalization, little emphasis has been given to how comprehensive internationalization is assessed and measured. Peer recognition and peer evaluation are important factors in the CSU case, and will continue to be important for CSU in their pursuit of comprehensive internationalization. Benchmarking is the outcome of peer influence. Therefore, setting benchmarks for institutions, which is synonymous for setting standards for their expected achievements, can help drive comprehensive internationalization. Although this study validated the use of benchmarking in one institution’s comprehensive internationalization efforts, future research regarding standardization models for comprehensive internationalization would be interesting and complementary to this study.

As institutions continue to expand their international reach, the findings from this study offer important recommendations related to the institutional and individual assets that advance an institution’s comprehensive internationalization efforts. Interestingly, the value of analyzing promising practices, the transferability of assets leading to institutional success in internationalization, and the role of benchmarking in the case presented in this study point, concurrently, to the importance standards can have as drivers of internationalization.
References


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1 For a more detailed description of each method, please see the more comprehensive version of this research titled “Standards as Drivers of Internationalization” by Nancy Bjorklund, EdD, University of Southern California.

2 The comprehensive data for this research study can be found in “Standards as Drivers of Education” by Nancy Bjorklund, EdD, University of Southern California.
Navigating Spaces: Exploring the Impact of Study Abroad Reentry for U.S. Students of Color
By: Virginia Downing* (Arizona State University)

This article examines the impact of study abroad for students of color returning to their home campuses. Through qualitative narrative inquiry, this study explores three experiential points surrounding the study abroad experience for five students of color from two predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in the Midwest: the experience at their home institution prior to study abroad; their study abroad experience; and their experience upon return to their home institution. Findings from this study indicate the students interviewed had a strong awareness of campus climate at their home institution prior to their study abroad experience. The findings also show that after returning from study abroad, the students recognized a new way to approach spaces on campus that is more intercultural and allows students to mute the potentially hostile campus climate they could experience on a day-to-day basis. One implication of the key findings is the need to reexamine current models of reentry as they pertain to students of color. Current models assume that students start with a sense of cultural stability at their home institution; however, students of color may find the home campus climate as a place of instability due to a shift away from familiar demographics. This understanding of the reentry experience is pivotal to the future of assessing meaning-making in study abroad programs. As we continue to explore experiences of students of color in study abroad, further research is needed to interrogate how current structures, policies, and practices within study abroad influences this population.

Keywords: study abroad, reentry, students of color, predominantly white institutions

Introduction

Study abroad programs continue to be the leading intervention for U.S. students to immerse themselves in different cultures and develop skills in cultural competency (Norris and Gillespie 2009). While certain impacts of study abroad programs, such as global learning and development, have been shown to last beyond students’ return to their home country (Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill 2009), the discussion of how these experiences abroad influence the perception of the environments students return to is rare, especially as it pertains to students from underrepresented groups in study abroad. According to the 2018 Open Doors report, the majority of students who study abroad remains to be Caucasian students, while the percentages for students of color have remained comparatively stagnant with increases of less than 1 percent within the past few years (Institute of International Education 2018). While much research has surrounded why students of color are not studying abroad as much as their white counterparts (Sweeney 2013; Kasravi 2009; Norton 2008; Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella 2010), less research has explored the experiences of students of color who do participate in study abroad.

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programs and their experiences upon returning to their home campus, especially if their campus is considered a predominantly white institution (PWI). PWIs have a history of providing a campus climate that can negatively impact a student of color’s experience in college. Previous research has explored the implications of student identity for students of color in this space, often dealing with chilly racial climates and microaggressions on campus (Morrison 2010; McCabe 2009; Lewis, Chesler, and Forman 2000). For most students of color attending PWIs, the choice to attend a PWI is primarily based on demographic locations, as well as major disciplines; as such, most students have an idea before entering the campus of the demographic makeup of their institution (Morrison 2010). What they may not fully understand is how this change of environment affects how they navigate their college campus moving forward.

Understanding the impact of study abroad must begin with the environment the student is a part of prior to the overseas experience. With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore the overall impact of study abroad for students of color that attend a PWI with the following research questions:

1. How does study abroad impact a student of color’s experience at their PWI upon returning to their home PWI campuses?
   a. What are the benefits and/or risks of study abroad on the student’s experience returning to their home campuses?
2. How do students of color gain greater awareness of their racial identity from studying abroad?

This article explores the lived experiences of five students of color prior to their study abroad experience, during study abroad, and after their return to their PWIs. A review of prior literature and methodology that helped to build the study is included along with key findings that lead to a discussion of implications of practice and opportunities for future research. This article sheds light on how the study abroad experience can lead to further engagement with students of color on campus and introduces a discussion on reframing how study abroad offices can deepen reentry programming and increase cultural competency and dialogue on campus.

**Literature Review**

**PWIs and Campus Climate for Students of Color**

Students of color often experience college differently than their majority counterparts, which influences their decisions regarding how they interact with the institution and/or their peers (Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella 2010). Research has shown that there are several factors that influence the perceptions of institutional climate for students of color:

- structural diversity (i.e., the proportion of specific groups on campus);
- the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion of racial groups;
- the psychological climate, including perceptions of racial/ethnic tension and discrimination; and
- social interaction among groups on campus (Hurtado et al. 1999).
Students of color who have decided to attend PWIs have shared experiences of isolation, voicelessness, frustration with their white peers, and a lack of support (Morrison 2010; Lewis, Chesler, and Forman 2000; Pewewardy and Frey 2002). These experiences could affect students’ ability to be successful academically and also the development of their personal identities (Morrison 2010). In a study by Lewis, Chesler, and Forman (2000), the authors interviewed 75 students of color who identified as African American, Asian American, Hispanic, or Native American and discussed the students’ experiences within a PWI. The students not only expressed feelings of isolation, but also recognized the lack of networks for support, views from their white peers of being less competent or “affirmative action attendees,” and pressures to assimilate while still being a representative of their racial/ethnic identity (Lewis, Chesler, and Forman 2000). These results have been mirrored elsewhere. Students of color have shared experiences of navigating a new environment and oftentimes experiencing “culture shock” when attending a PWI (Morrison 2010). This culture shock experience can lead to students renegotiating their identities and what it means to be a student of color on campus (Lewis, Chesler, and Forman 2000). Morrison’s (2010) study found students felt like they lived in “two separate worlds” but saw opportunities for growth even from negative experiences; the participants of the study agreed that the experiences shared as students of color were not positive, but the negative experiences could be seen as a “broadening of horizons” and seen in a positive light (Morrison 2010). Although this idea of learning from negative experiences was not a constant theme in the literature surrounding students of color at PWIs, it does allow for further exploration on how negative experiences can impact racial identity, especially as it relates to study abroad.

Current Measures of Study Abroad Learning Outcomes and Reentry Programming

As study abroad has been determined to be a high-impact educational practice for college student development (Kuh 2008), study abroad offices have begun to develop more ways to assess not only what students learn during their time abroad, but also measure how they have grown in their thinking, global citizenship, and intercultural communication. When looking at whether students have gained cultural competency and skills leading to global citizenship, studies tend to analyze these varying outcomes based on the type of study abroad programs, length of the program, the participants’ gender, or other controlled factors such as major choice. A study conducted by Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney (2013) looked at outcomes from study abroad participation based on the multiple ways students can engage in study abroad—whether through a university-offered program, through service learning, or by means of recreation. The study results revealed that more formal programs that are intentional in developing curricula to engage cultural competency provided stronger learning gains for students. Authors of the Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige 2009) also looked at different controlled variables and used tools such as the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer and Bennett 1998) to measure gains in intercultural learning. The authors found learning gains varied by many factors (i.e., gender, duration of program, etc.) but also made mention that students who were lacking in cultural understanding prior to study abroad had the potential to gain the most during a study abroad experience, as well as students who interacted...
more with host nationals versus with U.S. peers (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige 2009). While studies such as the aforementioned continue to grow in study abroad research, the exploration of how racial identity intersects with these factors of intercultural development is a research area that has yet to be tackled.

Beyond assessment, institutions and study abroad offices strive to provide avenues for students to reflect on their experiences from abroad and how students can apply what they have learned from these experiences to their remaining time on their home campus. Examples include workshops and guided reflection opportunities within a study abroad program itself or through further engagement with international students on campus. Overall, the area of reentry programming tends to lack full institutional support and resources due to limited staff able to dedicate time to intentional interventions combined with low turnout at reentry events (Brubaker 2017). Students returning from study abroad encounter reverse culture shock and deal with experiences of readjustment, rebuilding relationships, and understanding cultural differences, primarily alone (Young 2014). In turn, Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010) suggest offering opportunities for students to discuss issues that could occur once students return to campus, such as students not feeling academically motivated upon return from a study abroad program and/or experiencing unpleasant post-study abroad effects. While some research studies have explored the types of experiences students encounter and how they feel adjusting to their return home (Kartoshkina 2015; Haines 2013; Young 2014; Doyle 2008), little research has been conducted to explore further the types of reentry interventions that could assist students during this time period.

**Study Abroad Experience for Students of Color**

Students of color who identify as U.S. citizens have a unique experience while studying abroad that their white counterparts may not experience. Students of color who study abroad recognize quickly that the views on race in another country differ compared to those in the United States (Willis 2012). Carew (1993) observed two study abroad programs within two community colleges that had more students of color participating than most. Carew found that the students, over time, were able to remove the social and political context of the United States, change the way they viewed themselves, and reach beyond other perceptions of their abilities while abroad.

The study abroad experience also brings forth connections in unexpected places for students of color. Oftentimes, U.S. students of color who study abroad find an overwhelming sense of hospitality in other countries compared to how they feel in the United States (Brux and Fry 2010), which makes connecting to a host country potentially easier than expected. Connections could also occur with the group of students in the program, even after returning home to the United States. Carew (1993) found that the students who returned from their program not only connected beyond race or ethnicity with the group they studied abroad with, but the students also found ways to connect with others who studied abroad in other locations. These students were able to feel like they belonged to a dominant group, which lead to a greater connection on campus (Carew 1993).
Students of color who participate in study abroad are said to experience improvements of self-efficacy in their academics in the classroom and feel more confident to participate in discussions about certain topics (Martinez 2011). As more research continues to grow about increasing study abroad participation for students of color, researchers suggest making sure the experiences of the students who do study abroad are heard. As Sweeney said in her research: “It is crucial for institutions to examine the experiences of their own students of color, both on the home campus and abroad to better understand students’ challenges and opportunities and the type of support needed” (2013, 7).

Theoretical Framework

In order to assess the research questions posed, Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) W Curve Model and Helms’s (1995) People of Color Racial Identity Model are used as theoretical frameworks to further explore students’ experiences abroad and their return to a PWI. Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s W Curve Model, which describes one’s experience adjusting to a new environment in a “W” pattern, is used commonly when discussing what students can expect when experiencing culture shock during the study abroad experience, how they adapt, and experiences of reverse culture shock upon returning home. The points of the W Curve Model are defined as: arrival, initial culture shock, recovery, adaptation, the return home, reverse culture shock, recovery, and reintegration as represented in figure 1.

Figure 1. Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) W Curve Model

Recent studies use Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s model to further inform the experiences of reentry for students. Gray and Savicki (2015) use the W model to further investigate reentry intensity in behavior and emotional response. They find that students who identify strongly with the host culture have higher intensities of reverse culture shock upon reentry than students who
are more separated from the host culture (Gray and Savicki 2015). For this study, the W Curve framework is used as an evaluative tool to assess points in the student interviews that can reflect the patterns of adjustment in the pre- and post-study abroad experience.

Helms’s (1995) People of Color Racial Identity Model is used as a tool to cross align moments of racial identity awareness throughout the interviews and how they translated to the W Curve Model. In the People of Color Racial Identity model, Helms (1995) describes how people of color move through identity development in the current societal structure that exist through six status points. The first status, conformity, refers to one’s devaluing of own group and allegiance to white standards. The dissonance status occurs when one is confused on his or her socioracial group commitment and self-definition. When one reaches the immersion/emersion status, he or she has recognized the idealization of their socioracial group and may establish those idealized roles in order to self-define. The internalization status occurs when one has a positive commitment to his or her own socioracial group and begins to reflect and assess his or her identity as it compares to the dominant group. The final status, integrative awareness, occurs when one values his or her own collective identities, as well as supports and empathizes with members of other oppressed groups (Helms 1995). Helms’s theory on racial and ethnic identity is widely represented in research and journal articles surrounding the topic, especially within education research. In a study by Sanchez and Awad (2015), the researchers used Helms’s model to explore the experiences of African American, Black Caribbean, and Latino Caribbean college students as they pertained to mental health and perceived discrimination on campus. They found that students who were placed in the statuses of dissonance and immersion had a stronger relationship with perceived racial discrimination and depression (Sanchez and Awad 2015).

While the two models introduced do not naturally intersect, as the W Curve model does not include discussion of how varying backgrounds are impacted by reentry, this study aims to interrogate widely used frameworks in a lens that incorporates racial identity.

**Methodology**

In order to address the research questions surrounding the impact of study abroad experiences for students of color at a PWI and racial identity development, as well as seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants, a qualitative research design is utilized. The experiences of students of color on a PWI campus involve not just a few moments of recognition of their minority status, but a series of lived experiences that shape a story of one’s personal development. Lived experiences are defined to encompass not only the situational experience, but also explore the choices made within the experience and what one learns through these choices (Given 2008). Similarly, the experiences a student has while studying abroad could not be told of in brief moments of reminiscences but must be told as full reflections; so in order to mirror this, a narrative design is used to allow voices to be heard and experiences to be better understood (Creswell 2013). Through “restorying,” which is the process of transcribing field text and then retelling the story (Ollersenshaw and Creswell 2002), themes that reflected the experiences of all participants were discovered.
Participants were recruited based on a criterion sample approach (Mertens 2010) under the qualifications that the students must: be a current undergraduate student; identify as a student of color, which includes any student from the United States who identifies with a racial or ethnic minority group (i.e., African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Pacific Islander); and have studied abroad for 8 weeks or longer. The study abroad offices from the two Midwestern institutions sampled sent an email to more than 200 eligible students, and received 14 completed responses in total. From the sample of responses, five participants then completed full interviews after the completion of their study abroad program in the previous semester.

Each participant completed an initial interview between November 2014 and January 2015, where participants were able to reflect on their experience at their PWI prior to study abroad, their experience abroad, and their experience upon return to campus. Participants also completed a follow-up interview in February that allowed the participants time to have deeper reflection after the initial interview. During the initial interviews, participants also had the opportunity to bring artifacts that represented their experiences abroad, which allowed participants to reflect on why the chosen artifacts resonate with their lived experiences and potentially assist with the restorying process of a narrative design study. Due to not every participant providing artifacts, no themes emerged that showed the artifacts had a connection to the experiences provided throughout the study. Each participant selected their own pseudonym to protect their anonymity.

Interviews were then transcribed by the researcher and in the margins included research notes about interview observations and artifact descriptions. Transcriptions were then coded by first organizing the stories students shared in order of experience at their institution prior to study abroad, experience during study abroad, and experience returning to institution. In a separate document, key words and reoccurring themes from each interview were written and then sorted into categories of similar experiences, which then developed four saturated themes that emerged and are highlighted in the findings section below.

As an alumnus from a PWI and a two-time participant of study abroad programs during my undergraduate experience, I understand how my personal views on my experience may have influenced how I interpret my participants’ experiences on campus and abroad. Through this study I wanted to understand more about how students of color attending PWIs experience different environments, not just from my personal lens as no one experience can be generalizable.

Findings

Five students from two Midwestern universities participated in this study. Participants are students who identified as a person of color and had studied abroad for more than 8 weeks. Each participant was aware of the lack of diversity on his or her campus and all chose their institution based on their majors of interest. Participants were recruited through the assistance of the study abroad office located on their campus.
**Finding 1: Prestudy Abroad—Awareness of Campus Climate and Lack of Students of Color**

As predicted from previous literature, students were aware of the lack of students of color and the general campus climate at their home institution. The participants shared stories of how it felt once they entered the PWI campus. For example, Alias highlighted the initial discomfort in the first few months after arriving at the campus:

> when I first moved, that bothered me...Cause where I’m from is so diverse. I was like, ‘Oh my god, I’m so different from these people’...I definitely knew that coming in, like I knew if I was going to be here it wasn’t going to be very diverse.

Participants also described moments that showcased the often-chilly environment on their PWI campus. Mya described an uncomfortable experience in a classroom that had led to less participation in future class discussions:

> There were about 30 students in this class, only two were Hispanic and one African American, the rest were Caucasian. And this one Caucasian girl said, ‘I just feel like Mexicans who are here in this country need to speak English because this is an English-speaking country,’ and then I never talked in that class.

Such experiences show the types of experiences students of color encounter on their home campuses and how these experiences can inform students’ decisions to study abroad—or what they may perceive study abroad to be like based on their experiences in their home country.
Finding 2: Study Abroad for Students of Color—The Hidden U.S. Identity

While participants were abroad, they shared how they had frequently felt like a “hidden American” due to the color of their skin not necessarily defining their status as U.S. citizens compared to their white peers. While none of the participants took offense to locals realizing they were U.S. citizens, the participants reflected on this in varying ways. For example, Mya shared her experience of encounters in which students from around the world, as well as fellow U.S. peers, were unsure of her nationality:

Obviously, there were mostly Caucasian [students] and I’m just this Hispanic girl, the only colored I guess there...Some didn’t know I was from the Midwest. They identified who were the Americans, and so when they saw me they just looked at my name and they were just like, ‘Oh, where are you from?'

Adam saw this hidden U.S. identity as a benefit as he noticed the white students in his group would receive negative comments about their U.S. identity while traveling throughout Europe:

I feel like I did get lucky because I’m brown, because I’m Indian. When I was in Europe, it was very neutral. I could approach a group of people and be very neutral and make friends a lot easier. But, my other friends who were ‘white American,’ they did get met with some anti-American behavior.

This particular finding connects to not only the overall experience of the participants abroad, but also how it begins to shed light on the conflict between the U.S. identity and a racial identity. Helms’s status of dissonance and immersion begins to appear in this finding as the participants provided examples of reflection on their commitment to their nationality and racial identity.

Finding 3: Study Abroad for Students of Color—Discussing Race and Diversity

Participants described having had easier conversations about race with peers from other countries compared to similar conversations with peers in the United States. Virgil described this when reflecting on the conversations he had with friends from other countries in Europe, inferring why it felt easier based on his prior experience in the United States:

It's way more open to discuss. People are willing to have conversations about race more than they are here [in the United States] and more willing to be okay with their ignorance. In America, we have a lot more tension between races here, but I feel like there are a lot of barriers to having positive racial discussions. Europe has so many different cultures in a very small space, so they interact more than we have to. In America, you can be isolated from other races, which impacts the way we discuss race.

Alias also mentioned the importance of conversations about race with other students around the world, especially as it pertained to her identity of being African American.

…and I feel like that’s kind of the need of learning about black culture, not just in America but around the world. Yeah, of course they [students] know about racism, but learning that that’s why these group of people like myself are considered different from Africans, I mean because we are. Even though our bloodline is African, it’s not that we don’t recognize that, it’s just culturally we are different.
These findings highlight a unique aspect of the study abroad experience that is more specifically experienced by U.S. students of color. Conversations about race were perceived as not a comfortable occurrence in the context of the participants’ home PWI, and these conversations are less likely to occur between white U.S. students and host country locals while abroad.

**Finding 4: Reentry—Intercultural Integration on Campus**

Upon returning from study abroad, participants reported having intentionally sought spaces to integrate on campus that were defined as more intercultural. Specifically, the participants wanted deeper relationships and conversations about diversity in U.S. society, as they had during their time abroad. All of the participants felt the most immediate space to engage in these conversations on campus was with the international student programs or multicultural affairs offices. Two participants described their experiences as:

I got more engaged with multicultural affairs and international students. Most of my friends are international students here, so that's just my community. (Alias)

I’m more involved. I was involved with the international club before, but now I’m really involved, like, not just being a member, but actually like planning things and donating more of my time. (Virgil)

In connection to the previous finding of conversations surrounding race, it could be inferred that the participants were able to connect those experiences abroad to spaces on their campus that could potentially provide these opportunities for dialogue. Participants may have exercised Helms’s (1995) internalization status and may have begun to seek reflective opportunities to confirm positive identification to their racial identity.

**Finding 5: Reentry—Muting Campus Climate Through Diverse Spaces**

Along with finding spaces to integrate, the participants returned from study abroad with a stronger awareness of the campus climate than before; but because they may have exercised Helms’s (1995) recommendations of integrating further into intercultural spaces on campus, the students felt they could mute the negative effects of the campus climate they navigated daily. Jeremy reflected that while staying blind to the realities of campus climate may not be the best way to engage with all students on campus, he felt that it helped him feel comfortable with navigating campus:

But at the same time, I think because of me noticing it [campus climate], after I got back from studying abroad, I kind of found my own clique and my own part of campus, which I like to associate with. Because even though the campus is predominantly white, I think that the international services and the multicultural services they do have on campus are really starting to grow. And so, I just try to focus on that area. It kind of makes me blind to all the other stuff.

Each finding presented highlights aspects of the experiences of students of color through time points prior to study abroad and their experience at the home campus, their experience abroad, and their return to their home campus. Throughout these shared experiences, the students also
provided examples that reflected on their racial identity and how study abroad influenced further identity development.

Limitations

This study was conducted on a specific population of students who studied abroad from two Midwestern institutions. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it is not intended to be generalizable to the experiences of other students of color who fit similar criteria or who experienced similar events. Future research is suggested to further explore specific experiences of a single racial identity at a larger scale.

Discussion

As the findings suggest, the impact study abroad has on students of color returning to their home campus has the potential to go beyond the point of reentry. The participants engaged in critical dialogue with people of varying cultural backgrounds and brought what they experienced abroad back to their home campus. To gain further insight on how these experiences align with theories of reentry and student development, the following discussion revisits Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) W Curve Model and Helms’s (1995) People of Color Racial Identity Model.

Based on the findings highlighting the participants’ experiences both at their PWI and abroad, and through revisiting Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s (1963) W Curve Model, it can be reasonably inferred that there is a possibility that students of color do not arrive to study abroad at a place of full integration to their prior environment. What is actually witnessed is an additional curve prior to the departure abroad that becomes turbulent as students of color arrive on campus then try to navigate through the PWI climate, as reflected in figure 3.

Figure 3. Theoretical Frameworks (People of Color Racial Identity Model [Helms 1995] overlaid on the W Curve Model [Gullahorn and Gullahorn 1963]) Revisited Based on Study Findings
Based on what they shared of their experiences while abroad, it can be inferred in this study that the participants may have experienced similar patterns of the W Curve Model’s initial culture shock to a new environment and adaptation upon return home, but what makes the participants of this study (i.e., students of color) unique is that upon their return home, instead of experiencing a form of “reintegration to campus,” the participants chose not to reintegrate to a campus climate that they were not fully integrated with from the start, but rather, chose to integrate in selective spaces that would then allow them to feel adapted to their home environment.

When incorporating and revisiting Helms’s (1995) Racial Identity Model, the participants within this study arrived at the PWI campus and experienced conflict of their racial identity within statuses 1 (conformity) through 3 (dissonance and immersion) prior to their study abroad program. Then, as the participants became more adaptive to the new environment that they were a part of while studying abroad, they began to engage in their racial identity and what it means to be away from the previous conflict. Once the participants returned home, they became motivated to engage in communities of color through the international programs offices or multicultural affairs offices, which resonates the building of statuses 5 (internalization) and 6 (integrative awareness) of Helms’s model, which can also be seen in figure 3.

In connection to previous literature and predicted gains in cultural competency based on students spending more time with host nationals and fully engaging with the culture of the host country (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige 2009), it can be inferred that the participants of the study may have experienced gains in cultural competency, and these gains led to their further engagement in intercultural communication upon return to their home campus.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the experiences of students of color on their home PWI campus and how study abroad influenced how they continued to navigate the PWI campus upon return. Each participant faced a variety of experiences, but all shared themes that provided areas of thought in regard to study abroad, race, and how certain environments can impact students of color. These are not themes that should be generalized to other students or contexts, due to the small sample of participants and recognition of the sociological differences between regionally located institutions. The themes presented here not only describe the study abroad experiences each participant went through, but they also share how those experiences impacted the students’ remaining time at their PWI. With the focus on PWIs, this study aimed to investigate where study abroad offices can further expand research and efforts in reentry programming, as well as examine the positionality of campus offices, such as the ones highlighted in this study (i.e., international scholars center and multicultural center). By revisiting theoretical frameworks used to explain reverse culture shock and racial identity, such as those utilized in this study (i.e., Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s W Curve Model and Helms’s Racial Identity Model), future research can be done to further critique how practitioners put theory into practice when discussing the holistic experience of students participating in study abroad.
As the participants in this study highlighted, the motivation toward engaging in spaces of intercultural dialogue and experiences was something the students of color strived for upon their return to campus after studying abroad. Study abroad administrators can consider deeper partnerships with international programs offices and multicultural centers to assess how these spaces can be more intertwined, not only as an introduction to cultural perspectives conversations but also how we all contribute to greater society through cultural engagement. Along with deeper engagement with these offices, and potentially others, practitioners in study abroad offices should be engaged and have representation across campus when it comes to discussing diversity and inclusion. As the study suggests, students of color who return from study abroad are aware of the campus climate that they are returning to and seek spaces that will provide support in navigating the environment. If staff from offices such as study abroad show up to spaces that may not connect on the surface level to the office’s main responsibilities (like town hall meetings when a racially offensive incident occurs), it would not only show that members of the community care about the students on campus, but also could provide a deeper perspective to furthering students’ abilities to engage in difficult dialogue using cultural competence.

Further, in this particular study, it was not explored whether or not the actions of the participants were a part of facilitated components of the study abroad experience. Future research could explore whether students of color respond to cultural engagement that is facilitated or driven by their own interest. Recognizing the exploratory nature of this study, additional research is encouraged to further examine and begin to interrogate how our current institutional structures, research frameworks, and practices within study abroad impact our students of color and how we can begin to deconstruct and rebuild a deeper way to engage with all students on our campuses.

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Exploring the Relationship Between International Undergraduate Student Enrollment and Net Tuition Revenue at U.S. Colleges and Universities

By: Olga Komissarova* (Seton Hall University)

This quantitative study aims to determine whether a growing undergraduate enrollment of international students contributes to the growth of net tuition revenue among different types of U.S. colleges and universities. A fixed effects panel analysis was performed using data from the Integrated Postsecondary Data System for the period spanning the 2003–04 to 2016–17 academic years. The analysis of a sample of U.S. baccalaureate-granting institutions reveals that a 1 percent increase in the number of first-time international undergraduate students predicted a 0.004 percent increase in net tuition revenue. Further analysis of the subsamples shows the relationship between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue varies by sector and by Carnegie classification. The strongest relationship between variables of interest was at public research universities. The findings suggest that master’s and baccalaureate institutions are unable to generate additional revenue through international student enrollment. These results show a need to further develop international student enrollment strategies.

Keywords: international students, enrollment, tuition revenue, resource dependence

Introduction

Student mobility in higher education is on the rise. According to an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report (2018), approximately 5 million students were enrolled in universities outside their home countries in 2017. This number represents nearly a fourfold increase from 1.3 million students in the 1990s (OECD 2018). It is further projected that there will be 8 million internationally mobile students by 2025 (OECD 2018).

The United States is the most popular destination for international students. In the 2017–18 academic year, there were 1,094,972 international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, representing a 1.5 percent increase from the prior academic year (Institute of International Education [IIE] 2018). The 2017–18 academic year is the twelfth consecutive year with reported increases in the total number of international students in U.S. higher education (IIE 2018). For a third consecutive year, international students have a share of approximately 5 percent of the 20 million students enrolled in U.S. tertiary education (NAFSA 2018), up from around 3.5 percent in earlier years. This increase can be explained by the growing numbers of international students alongside small declines in the number of U.S. students enrolled in U.S. higher education (IIE 2018).

International students not only bring immeasurable academic and cultural value to U.S. campuses and local communities, they also make valuable economic contributions (Zhao, Kuh,
and Carini 2005). During the 2017–18 academic year, international students contributed $39 billion to the U.S. economy through spending on tuition, room and board, and living expenses; they also contributed by supporting more than 455,000 jobs (NAFSA 2018).

U.S. colleges and universities, both public and private, are eager to enroll international students who are seen as attractive sources of revenue. However, international student enrollment at public institutions has grown faster than at private universities. Between 2008 and 2016, while international enrollments at all academic levels at private universities rose 98 percent, public universities experienced a 107 percent increase (Ruiz and Radford 2017). The largest international enrollment increase in the public sector was at the undergraduate level (Ruiz and Radford 2017). Between 2008 and 2016, the number of international students in baccalaureate programs at public institutions grew 151 percent (Ruiz and Radford 2017).

Unlike international undergraduates at private universities who face the same tuition rates as domestic students, international students at public institutions pay tuition that is two to three times higher than tuition for domestic students. In the 2017–18 academic year, the average published tuition and fee price at four-year public institutions for in-state students was $9,970, while the average price for out-of-state students (which includes international students) was $25,620 (College Board 2017). Additionally, public colleges and universities often face tuition caps for in-state students (Armstrong, Carlson, and Laderman 2017). The public higher education system of Virginia is a case in point, as in 2018, Virginia’s state government set an in-state tuition cap at the 2017–18 rate for 4 years (Mattingly 2018).

Many public universities increase their recruitment of nonresident undergraduate students (i.e., domestic out-of-state and international students) in an effort to offset declines in state appropriations (Bound et al. 2016; Jaquette and Curs 2015). According to data from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), between 2012 and 2016, first-time, in-state undergraduate enrollment at four-year and above public universities rose by 4 percent, while nonresident undergraduate enrollment rose by 16 percent (author’s calculations using data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Data System [IPEDS]). In an extreme case with the University of California (UC) system, from 2005 to 2015 in-state enrollment grew by only 10 percent while total out-of-state enrollment (including both international and domestic out-of-state students) increased by 432 percent during that time (Zinshteyn 2016). The rapid increases in nonresident enrollments led to policies in the UC system that limit numbers of undergraduate nonresidents. In 2017, the UC Board of Regents adopted limits on out-of-state and international student enrollments (University of California Office of the President 2017). In a separate but related case, the Board of Regents in Iowa tied state funding to the number of enrolled in-state students (Jordan 2015).

Unlike public universities, private colleges do not rely on state appropriations. They seek to enroll more international students as a means to offset stagnation in the supply of U.S. high school graduates (Anderson 2016). Additionally, in order to increase enrollments, private universities have been offering steep tuition discounts to domestic students (National Association of College and University Business Officers 2018). Thus, it stands to reason that private universities will be interested in enrolling more full-pay international students as appealing tuition revenue sources.
Recent changes to the political climate in the United States, coupled with anti-immigrant rhetoric, have made it more difficult for U.S. universities to recruit international students (Redden 2018). As a result, in 2017 the number of first-time international students at U.S. universities declined 4 percent from the previous year (National Science Board 2018). The Council of Graduate Schools shows similar declines in applications and enrollments for the same period in its annual survey of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States (Okahana and Zhou 2018). These statistics are worrisome as declining international enrollments jeopardize the financial stability of U.S. HEIs (Altbach 2017). Moody’s, the credit rating agency, has recently downgraded its financial outlook for U.S. universities, predicting that soon expenses will be exceeding revenues (Fain 2017). Anticipated future declines in international enrollments is one of the factors contributing to the economic condition of U.S. HEIs, as Moody’s reports that international enrollment declines will have a negative effect on tuition revenue growth (Douglas-Gabriel 2016).

While prior research has shown evidence that some U.S. colleges and universities are cashing in on enrolling international students, the magnitudes of net tuition revenue growth from enrolling students from abroad have not been studied systematically. This study provides a more current and comprehensive understanding of the effect of enrolling additional international students on net tuition revenue. While this is not the first study to look at the relationship between international enrollment and net tuition revenue, it is the first one to look at the magnitude of the effect on a nationally representative sample of four-year public and private colleges and universities. After a system-wide analysis of the effect, this research also compares the effect among groups of institutions from 2003 through 2017. (The start and end points of the analysis are limited by IPEDS data availability.) The study focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the gains in net tuition revenue associated with enrolling additional international undergraduate students?
2. How does the relationship differ in different types of HEIs (using the Carnegie classification and institutions’ sectors as a framework to classify the institutions)?

Looking at the relationship between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue in different types of universities will provide some insights into the impact of internalization on higher education finances at the national level.

This research is particularly timely in view of the current immigration reform agenda. The anti-immigrant rhetoric and consequential declines in new international student enrollment can have an impact on the financial sustainability of U.S. colleges and universities. As such, findings from this study may have implications for governmental and institutional policies that address international enrollment declines.

**Literature Review**

Expenses of HEIs have been growing and will continue to grow while operating revenues cannot keep pace. Baumol’s (1967) cost disease theory explains this phenomenon. The theory posits that
education is a labor-intensive industry where productivity is relatively stagnant. The pressures from high productivity sectors will make higher education more expensive over the years (Archibald and Feldman 2008).

Moody’s Investors Service (2017) analysis of the U.S. higher education sector reveals significant softening of the revenue growth prospects for U.S. universities in 2018. The aggregate projected operating revenue growth for four-year colleges and universities will fall to about 3 percent, while the expense growth is expected to be almost 4 percent. As mentioned previously, this projection prompted Moody’s to change the outlook for higher education sector conditions from stable to negative (Moody’s Investor Service 2017). The budgeting challenges, however, can also motivate universities to develop strategies for increasing their revenue-generating potential. Possible ways for incorporating such diversification include institutional entrepreneurship activities, shifting education cost burden onto students and their families (cost-sharing) through increasing tuition, and philanthropy (Johnstone 2004).

HEIs have become entrepreneurial and seek revenue through market-like competition (Slaughter and Cantwell 2012). This competition encourages universities to actively experiment with revenue management and enrollment strategies (Hossler 2006). For example, “tuition discounting” is a popular revenue generation strategy that helps to entice prospective students to choose an institution over its competitors (Hillman 2012; Lasher and Sullivan 2005). However, higher education experts express concerns over the increased tuition discount rates. A survey study by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO 2018a) analyzed tuition discounting data from 411 private, not-for-profit, four-year colleges and universities and found that for the 2017–18 academic year, the average tuition discount rate reached an estimated 49.9 percent for full-time freshmen. This means that half of the gross tuition revenue that private not-for-profit universities collected from freshmen in 2017–18 went to awarding financial aid. By comparison, 10 years ago (in the 2007–08 academic year), the average tuition discounting rate for full-time freshmen was 39.1 percent (NACUBO 2018b). With overenthusiastic tuition discounting, universities have been reducing their revenues below sustainable levels (Seltzer 2017; Wu 2017).

A safer way to increase tuition revenue and boost institutional balance sheets is to focus on attracting students who are willing to pay full tuition (Jaquette, Curs, and Posselt 2016). For institutions that want to achieve their revenue goals by focusing on enrolling fee-paying students, attracting undergraduate international students is a feasible option (Cantwell 2015; Shen 2017). This holds true for both private and public universities. Shen (2017) finds that private institutions use tuition revenue from international students to support their generous institutional aid practices. Shen’s (2017) analysis reveals that admitting more foreign undergraduate students enables institutions to increase the average amount of institutional grant aid. International undergraduate students at public universities pay tuition that is significantly higher than what local domestic students pay. Domestic out-of-state students also pay higher tuition; however, they are often allowed to claim in-state residency after one year in school (FinAid 2018). This option is not available for international students.
Several studies have looked at the economic effects of enrolling international students (Bound et al. 2016; Cantwell 2015; Shen 2017; Shih 2017). Shih (2017) finds that tuition revenues from international graduate students help U.S. universities (both public and private) to cross-subsidize tuition fees for domestic students. Using data from IIE and IPEDS for the period between 1995 and 2005, Shih (2017) concludes that increases in international student enrollments were related to increases in domestic student enrollment. Further, using the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey, he provides evidence of how net tuition revenue from international students was used to provide institutional aid to domestic students (Shih 2017). This cross-subsidization is most pronounced at public research universities.

Similarly, Cantwell (2015) observes a positive, statistically significant relationship between international student enrollment and net tuition revenue at public research and doctoral universities using IPEDS data from 2000 and 2009. Cantwell used two separate models—one for doctoral institutions and one for baccalaureate and master’s public institutions. Cantwell’s (2015) research deduces that schools from the baccalaureate and masters subsample did not generate additional tuition revenue from enrolling additional new undergraduate students from abroad; in contrast, the public research university sector enjoyed additional net tuition revenue from enrolling additional international students. The analysis shows that a 1 percent increase in newly enrolled foreign undergraduate students at research and doctoral universities predicts 0.04 percent growth in net tuition revenue (Cantwell 2015). These findings are consistent with the aforementioned Moody’s report that states that public research universities have the best chance of achieving the highest net tuition revenue growth due to their capacity to attract more nonresident students, who pay higher tuition (Douglas-Gabriel 2016). Controlling for the number of domestic students enrolled, Cantwell (2015) also finds that public research institutions seek additional revenue not only by growing international enrollment, but also by modifying student composition.

In another study, Bound et al. (2016) show that increases in international undergraduate enrollments help public research universities to generate gains in tuition revenue. The researchers use 18 years of data (1997 to 2014) and find that increases in international enrollments accounted for about 17 percent of the increase in tuition revenues on average. There were also some public institutions where the growth of foreign enrollment resulted in a 40 percent change in tuition revenue. Bound et al. (2016) also propose that the growing pool of prospective students from abroad, combined with declining revenues from state appropriations, drove the growth of international undergraduate enrollment at public research universities. Their analysis further shows that enrolling more international students as a response to state funding cuts was not too notable at nonresearch public universities, suggesting that nonresearch universities have less potential to attract students from abroad.

A number of quantitative studies have addressed the issue of increasing nonresident enrollment at public U.S. institutions (Jaquette and Curs 2015; Jaquette, Curs, and Posselt 2016; Kelchen 2019). In such quantitative studies, international student enrollment is typically included
in a subset of the overall nonresident enrollment. The primary reason for state colleges and universities to attract nonresidents is to compensate for declines in per-student state appropriations. One analysis of the sample of all public research universities reveals that nonresident enrollment growth does not crowd out resident enrollment at public research universities (Jaquette and Curs 2015). However, Jaquette, Curs, and Posselt (2016) find that nonresident enrollment at public research universities does crowd out low-income students and, to a lesser degree, underrepresented minority students. The negative relationship between nonresident enrollment and low-income/minority student enrollment was greater at more prestigious universities and universities located in states with high poverty rates (Jaquette, Curs, and Posselt 2016). Furthermore, contrary to Shih’s (2017) findings on graduate international enrollments, Kelchen (2019) concludes that out-of-state students (including international students) do not cross-subsidize domestic students. He shows that additional tuition revenue received from out-of-state undergraduate students (including international students) does not go toward reducing the sticker and net prices for low-income resident undergraduate students.

Although considerable research has been devoted to understanding how international student enrollment would impact the finances of public HEIs in the United States, less attention has been paid to international student enrollments in the context of private colleges and universities. In one study, Lord (2018) looks at how international enrollment would translate into increases in net tuition revenue at private not-for-profit institutions of different Carnegie classifications. The analysis shows that international student enrollment could be an effective way to raise net tuition revenue at private schools as the association between international enrollment and net tuition revenue was found to be 0.5 percent for the overall model, with 1 percent for private baccalaureate colleges and 0.6 percent for private doctoral institutions (Lord 2018).

Existing research has shown that there is a need for public and private U.S. institutions to generate additional revenue. With the global expansion of international student mobility, international undergraduate enrollment has become a promising revenue source. The economic impact of future international enrollment declines will be felt by many colleges and universities.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by Pfeffer and Salanick’s (1978) Resource Dependence Theory (RDT), which provides guidance on how to manage externally constrained organizations. The RDT suggests that the key to organizational survival is the ability to effectively navigate contingencies in the external environment, and in doing so the external environment affects organizational behavior (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). When dependent on external resources, organizations must adjust their activities to fit the changing environment.

Following the RDT, universities are diversifying their revenue sources to gain some independence from external pressures (i.e., declining state support) and reducing their dependence on a single source (i.e., tuition from domestic students). Diversification of revenuesources has always been a topical issue for private universities. The Delta Cost report shows revenue sources of doctoral universities are more diverse than revenue sources of
universities in other sectors, as the primary sources of revenue in the private sector are auxiliary services and net tuition (American Institutes for Research 2016). In fact, over the last 20 years, revenue diversification has become increasingly important for public HEIs due to state funding cuts (Hearn 2004). The State Higher Education Finance report shows that over the last decade state funding for higher education has been growing, but it has not kept up with growing enrollment and maintenance costs (State Higher Education Executive Officers 2017). As such, over a number of years, there has been a substantial shift in financing, as HEIs must not only rely on state support, but also on tuition revenue that can be generated by enrolling out-of-state and international students. As public institutions rely more heavily on net tuition revenue, following the RDT, it is likely that these institutions become more dependent upon tuition revenue from international undergraduate students. The RDT also suggests that private institutions try to generate revenue from international students to reduce their dependence on revenues from domestic students.

Another important concept to be included in the theoretical framework is the Matthew Effect in higher education finance. The Matthew Effect is said to occur when financial advantages lead to further advantages (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). Existing research demonstrates that student and revenue distributions in higher education happen in ways that lead to cumulating advantages for more resourceful institutions (Cheslock and Gianneschi 2008; Jaquette and Curs 2015; Slaughter and Leslie 1997). Only institutions that have substantial resources to attract more international students can generate significant tuition revenue from international enrollment (Bound et al. 2016; Cantwell 2015).

Methodology

Data

This study uses data from the IPEDS available to the public through NCES. IPEDS is a comprehensive census of data from U.S. HEIs. It is mandatory for HEIs to report this information in even-numbered years, however reporting students’ residence in odd-numbered years is optional. The 2016–17 academic year is the most recent year for which data were available at the time of the data analysis. This study analyzes data from both public and private universities awarding at least bachelor’s degrees, covering the period from 2003 to 2017.

For the systemwide comparison of the magnitudes of returns associated with enrolling international students, institutions are classified by their 2000 Carnegie classification (i.e., doctoral universities compared with master’s and baccalaureate colleges), which is a broad indication of an institution’s mission, and by sector (i.e., private versus public). The Carnegie classification and sector variables were taken from the IPEDS Institutional Characteristics section.

This research assumes that the return on enrolling an additional student is nonlinear. Therefore, enrollment count variables were logged. All financial variables were also logged for the purposes of this analysis. Log-transformation reduces estimator sensitivity caused by differences in institutional size. Therefore, it allows the coefficient of interest to be interpreted as an elasticity (Cameron and Triverdi 2005).
Sample

The population of interest in the analysis is public and private not-for-profit U.S. colleges and universities that award at least bachelor’s degrees and are eligible for Title IV funding. A total of 1,012 institutions make up the sample for this study (66 percent of the population). However, special focus institutions, as well as baccalaureate/associate’s colleges, are excluded from the sample. It should be noted that the sample is smaller than the population due to missing data.

For the purposes of analysis, the sample was broken down into four groups. Figure 1 depicts percentage of the institutions in each group in the sample. The distribution of the institutions within the comparison groups as well as descriptive statistics are displayed in table 1 in the next section. The largest group (512 institutions) focuses on private master’s and baccalaureate (M&B) institutions. The smallest group, private research universities, includes 92 institutions.

Figure 4. The Distribution of Institutions in the Sample

Analysis Method

The research uses a panel regression technique with logged net tuition revenue as the dependent variable and logs international undergraduate student enrollment as the key independent variable of interest. This study focuses on variations within institutions, so fixed effects estimates are used, since they provide control for unobserved institutional characteristics (Zhang 2010). The analysis also includes control variables that can capture institution-level factors that vary over time and affect international student enrollment for a given institution. The fixed effects model (1) of interest is:

\[
(1) \quad \log Y_{it} = \beta_1 \log X_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 W_{it-1} + \alpha_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it}
\]
In this model, \( Y \) is the outcome variable at school \( i \) in year \( t \); the independent variable of interest, \( X \), is the number of full-time, first-time international undergraduate students; \( \beta_1 \) is the coefficient of interest that measures the effect of enrolling an additional international student on net tuition revenue within a particular university; \( W_{it-1} \) is a vector of institution- and time-varying covariates lagged one year relative to net tuition revenue; \( \alpha_i \) represents a vector of institution fixed effects; \( \delta_t \) represents time fixed effects and \( \varepsilon_{it} \) is the error term.

**Control Variables**

The main vector of covariates for this study includes several institution-level characteristics that vary over time and are considered applicable to all types of four-year institutions. The calculations control for the number of full-time, first-time undergraduate domestic students and admission rates. Since institutional grant aid is often used to fulfill enrollment management objectives (Lord 2018), institutional grants are included as a control variable. Institutional aid includes both funded and unfunded institutional grants to students. All financial characteristics were held constant in U.S. dollars.

A separate regression model was also used for different types of institutions that include type-specific controls. For public institutions, state appropriations were added, as they are substantial revenue sources for a majority of public schools. Since out-of-state students pay higher tuition, the data also controlled for the number of in-state and out-of-state domestic undergraduate students. For research universities (both public and private), the total count of graduate students was added as a control variable.

**Limitations**

As designed, the study has two major limitations. The first limitation is that the analysis period was determined by data availability and only covered years when international undergraduate enrollment had increased (2003–17). As such, the study does not account for recent declines in foreign enrollment in the United States. Second, the study only includes public and private not-for-profit, four-year HEIs. Thus, the findings cannot be extended to all U.S. HEIs.

**Results**

Descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in tables 1 and 2, comparing the first (2003–04 academic year) and the final (2016–17) years of the analysis. Table 1 reports the results for two groups of public institutions, and table 2 reports results for the subsamples of private institutions. There were considerable discrepancies between measures of central tendency and dispersion for the subgroups. The discrepancies were expected since the sample included both small schools and large research institutions.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Public Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Research Universities</th>
<th>Master’s and Baccalaureate Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=171</td>
<td>n=237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY 2003–04</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, International Undergraduates</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, In-state Domestic Undergraduates</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>2,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, Out-of-State Domestic Undergraduates</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count of Graduate Students</td>
<td>4,389</td>
<td>3,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Tuition Revenue</td>
<td>$122M</td>
<td>$97M $96M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Grants</td>
<td>$26M</td>
<td>$18M $28M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>$195M</td>
<td>$150M $147M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Rate</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.72 0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY 2016–17</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, International Undergraduates</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, In-state Domestic Undergraduates</td>
<td>2,650</td>
<td>2,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time, Out-of-State Domestic Undergraduates</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count of Graduate Students</td>
<td>5436</td>
<td>4682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Tuition Revenue</td>
<td>$257M</td>
<td>$202M $202M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Grants</td>
<td>$67M</td>
<td>$50M $62M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>$169M</td>
<td>$131M $132M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Rate</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.69 0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results indicate that first-time, international undergraduate student enrollment and net tuition revenue increased for all types of four-year institutions from 2003–04 to 2016–17. Research universities enrolled more first-time undergraduate international students and received larger tuition revenue. Universities of all types have actively pursued students from other states and countries. The share of out-of-state, domestic students in total first-time undergraduate enrollment at public research universities has grown from 12 percent in 2003–04 to 14 percent in 2016–17. The percentage of nonresident domestic students at public master’s and baccalaureate colleges has increased from 7 percent to 9 percent during that period. The share of first-time international undergraduates in the total first-time undergraduate enrollment is smaller than the share of first-time, out-of-state undergraduate students; however, the numbers of first-time, international undergraduate student on campuses of four-year institutions have increased substantially. The highest increase in the median first-time, international undergraduate enrollment during the period spanning the 2003–04 to 2016–17 academic years was at private research universities. The median first-time, international enrollment rate in this subsample increased from 24 to 88 students. Master’s and baccalaureate colleges did not see a significant growth in the median number of first-time, international undergraduate students. The standard deviation results also indicate that there were wide variations in international enrollments within the subsamples. The standard deviation of first-time enrollment figures in 2016–17 was the highest for the public research universities subgroup.

Table 3 shows panel regression results for the sample of public and private not-for-profit baccalaureate U.S. institutions.
Table 3. Panel Regression Results—All Four-Year Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beta Coefficient (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Log Count of First-time, International Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>0.004* (0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Count of Domestic Students</td>
<td>0.002 (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of Institutional Grants</td>
<td>0.013** (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Rate</td>
<td>-0.143** (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>12,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Institutions</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Squared</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses
*p<0.01, **p<0.001

In this analysis, only control variables that are applicable to all types of four-year institutions were used to make comparisons across different types of schools. The analysis provides evidence of a positive association between foreign undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue at U.S. colleges and universities. For all four-year U.S. institutions analyzed, a 1 percent increase in the number of first-time international students aligns with a 0.004 percent increase in net tuition revenue. The results are consistent with the predictions of the RDT. Enrolling more international undergraduate students yielded extra revenue when holding constant the number of domestic students enrolled. Institutional grants and admission rates were also significant predictors of changes in net tuition revenue in the sample. Further analysis reveals whether the relationship between international enrollment and net tuition revenue varies by sector and Carnegie classification. Table 4 shows fixed effects regression results for the subsamples of four-year U.S. institutions.

Table 4. Panel Regression Results—Subsamples of Public and Private Not-for-Profit, Four-Year Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Research Universities</th>
<th>Public M&amp;B Colleges</th>
<th>Private Research Universities</th>
<th>Private M&amp;B Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Log Count of First-time, International Undergraduate Students</td>
<td>0.101** (0.005)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.005)</td>
<td>0.082** (0.006)</td>
<td>0.012 (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Count of Domestic Students</td>
<td>0.766** (0.031)</td>
<td>0.485** (0.036)</td>
<td>0.111** (0.027)</td>
<td>0.007 (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of Institutional Grants</td>
<td>0.077** (0.005)</td>
<td>0.039** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.004* (0.002)</td>
<td>0.061** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Rate</td>
<td>-0.476** (0.049)</td>
<td>-0.115* (0.051)</td>
<td>-0.482** (0.052)</td>
<td>0.074 (0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,151</td>
<td>2,675</td>
<td>1,182</td>
<td>6,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Institutions</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Squared</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Robust standard errors in parentheses
*p<0.05, **p<0.001
The largest magnitude of the relationship between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue was found in the subsample of public research universities, as a 1 percent increase in newly enrolled international students at the sampled public research universities predicted a 0.1 percent increase in net tuition revenue. A lesser (though still positive) magnitude of the relationship between international student enrollments and net tuition revenue was found for the subsample of private not-for-profit research institutions. However, the results indicate that master’s and baccalaureate institutions did not generate additional revenue from enrolling additional international students. These findings are consistent with those of Bound et al. (2016) and Cantwell (2015). Cantwell (2015) offered a good explanation for this; he suggests that only research universities are able to generate revenue from international undergraduate enrollment because larger numbers of international students choose to attend these institutions.

Table 5 reports results of fixed effects regression analyses for the subsamples with the additional type-specific control variables. The results show that adding type-specific control variables (i.e., state appropriations and the number of in-state and out-of-state domestic undergraduate students for public universities; the number of graduate students for research universities) decreases the magnitude of the association between international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue for all subsamples of universities examined. Adding graduate enrollment covariate for the public and private not-for-profit research university subsamples lowered the magnitude of the relationship between international enrollment and net tuition revenue. Total graduate enrollment also appeared to be a much stronger predictor of net tuition revenue than first-time, international undergraduate enrollment.

**Table 5. Panel Regression Results—Subsamples of Public and Private Not-for-Profit, Four-Year Institutions—with Additional Control Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Research Universities</th>
<th>M&amp;B Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Log First-time, International Undergraduates</td>
<td>0.067*** (0.005)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log First-time, Domestic In-state</td>
<td>0.316*** (0.032)</td>
<td>0.372*** (0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log First-time, Domestic Out-of-state</td>
<td>0.193*** (0.013)</td>
<td>0.081*** (0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Graduate Enrollment</td>
<td>0.486*** (0.025)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Institutional Grants</td>
<td>0.075*** (0.005)</td>
<td>0.038*** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log State Appropriations</td>
<td>-0.017*** (0.003)</td>
<td>-0.040*** (0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Rate</td>
<td>-0.305*** (0.045)</td>
<td>-0.108* (0.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Institutions</td>
<td>2,137</td>
<td>2,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Squared</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis also shows that some covariates were significant predictors of changes in net tuition revenue. Declines in state appropriations in the subsamples of public colleges and universities were associated with additional net tuition revenue. Empirical studies have demonstrated that public universities attempt to raise more tuition revenue whenever states have not provided sufficient funding (Jaquette and Curs 2015), and as mentioned earlier, many public institutions have worked on diversifying their revenue sources to become less reliant on uncertain state support (Jaquette and Curs 2015). International enrollment appears to be one of the alternative revenue sources.

This study is the first to demonstrate the effects of increased international undergraduate student enrollment on net tuition revenue for the entire four-year university sector in the United States. Represented in log form with institution and year fixed effects, the panel regression results show a modest, yet statistically significant, link between international student enrollment and tuition revenues for the sample of all four-year public and private not-for-profit institutions. However, the relationship was not significant for the master’s and baccalaureate colleges subgroups. This provides some evidence of the revenue-seeking behavior of institutions predicted by the RDT. It becomes important to remember potential costs associated with the revenue-seeking behavior. By engaging in such behavior, universities risk losing high-quality students who are unable to pay tuition, thus lowering the quality of the student body.

Conclusion

This study examines the association between first-time, international undergraduate enrollment and net tuition revenue at public and private not-for-profit, four-year HEIs. The results indicate that only research institutions generated additional net tuition revenue from enrolling additional international undergraduate students. The sampled master’s and baccalaureate colleges did not accrue net revenue returns from enrolling additional international undergraduate students.

The results of this study provide insights for enrollment managers and international education professionals. As enrolling more international students may not yield a large return for many U.S. HEIs, there is a possibility for many institutions (especially master’s and baccalaureate...
colleges) to incur net losses if the cost of international recruitment is higher than tuition revenue from international students. However, this does not discount the noneconomic contributions that international students provide to U.S. higher education environments as cited earlier in this article.

The study also has two main implications for research. It contributes to the growing empirical literature that focuses on RDT in the context of higher education by demonstrating that four-year U.S. institutions have been pursuing international students to fulfill their financial needs. Additionally, the study adds to a growing body of empirical evidence that shows that university revenue-seeking behaviors are associated with a strong Matthew Effect. Many HEIs are interested in tuition revenue from international students; however, the results of this study show that only research universities are capable of generating substantial revenues from international enrollment.

Future research on the effects of internationalization on higher education finance should continue to explore the effects of international enrollment on finances of HEIs. Given the evidence of the Matthew Effect, it is important to understand how the effects vary by selectivity. A next step to this line of research could be to study how RDT can be applied to other national contexts, as many HEIs in other countries compete for tuition revenue from international students. Thus, further empirical work may be conducted by broadening this research into other contexts and using more enriched data.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Robert Kelchen (dissertation chair) for his guidance in developing this study. The author is also very grateful to Richard Blissett (dissertation committee member) who provided technical support in R statistical software and also gave feedback on the methodology section. Finally, the author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for the comments that helped to strengthen the manuscript.

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International Alumni Affairs and Student Mentorship: 
Surveying the U.S. Public Research University Landscape

By: Lisa Unangst* (Boston College)

This paper analyzes international alumni-student mentorship activity among 50 U.S. public universities highly ranked by U.S. News & World Report in 2018. An emerging typology of this activity has been developed based on document analysis, including affinity-based mentorship, international career-oriented mentorship, and incidental international mentorship. This paper discusses the role of private technology companies in facilitating and guiding alumni-student mentorship across borders; questions how mentors are recruited, trained, and reflect the alumni population as a whole; and addresses the potential for mentorship pipelines to be developed, thereby supporting alum-alum mentorship as well. This study approaches this topic by adapting the organization theory work of Bolman and Deal (2013), specifically their constructs of the political, structural, and human resources frameworks.

Keywords: alumni affairs, student mentorship, affinity groups, career services

Introduction

Alumni affairs represents a professional field that, in the U.S. setting, has been the subject of relatively limited scholarly research as compared with alumni philanthropy (Newman and Petrosko 2011; Weerts and Ronca 2008). The subfield of international alumni affairs, which is gradually emerging at colleges and universities in the United States and other national contexts, is addressed by an even more limited body of literature (Read 2009). However, given the consistent focus on attracting international students to U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs) in parallel with increasingly limited public sector support and the commensurate focus on private sector funding for HEIs, a more robust look at this arena is called for (McDearmon 2013; American Council on Education [ACE] 2012; Dobson and Conroy 2018; Helms and Brajakovic 2017).

As HEIs interact with alumni to, at a minimum, evaluate possible philanthropic prospects, an apparatus of related engagement programs, services, and staff is coconstructed (Holmes 2009). This platform for connecting alumni and the home institution may draw faculty or senior administrators to speak to their former students (in person or virtually, via podcasts or online book clubs) (University of Oregon Alumni Association 2012); celebrate annual athletics events (Weerts and Ronca 2008); establish start up incubators for students and alumni (Bay Area Council Economic Institute 2016); or connect alumni with students through admissions volunteering or related activities (Pottick, Giordano, and Chirico 2015). Alumni-student
mentorship initiatives are also sponsored by career services offices, student-led affinity
groups, alumni associations, and other university units (Gallo 2013). This mentorship may
take myriad forms, including speed or “flash” mentoring, as well as online-only interaction
(Lachowicz Santos, Sanchez García-Abril, and Stamm-Vuijk 2013).

The research presented here represents an exploratory document analysis of international
alumni mentorship activity, or mentorship relationships, between international alumni and
students still enrolled at the home university. Specifically, it evaluates the elite public research
university landscape, utilizing the 2018 U.S. News & World Report rankings (U.S. News &
World Report 2018). It should be underscored that these rankings are used provisionally and
without any endorsement of rankings in general or the U.S. News methodology in particular; I
share the concerns of other colleagues regarding whether these rankings actually measure quality
and whether they reinforce the elite status of already-privileged HEIs, thereby perpetuating
stratification (Hazelkorn and Ryan 2013; Shahjahan, Ramirez, and Andreotti 2017). This study is
simply a starting point to examine the types of existing international alumni mentorship activities
with current students.

Finally, a caveat: this paper discusses publicly available documentation of international
alumni mentorship activities. This analysis is by no means exhaustive, as it focuses on select
institutional cases and on English-language websites. Rather, the study at hand seeks to frame
emerging themes and to point toward future areas of research.

Methodology

The research questions guiding this inquiry are as follows:

1. What forms of mentorship take place within the sphere of international alumni affairs
   (both between two or more alumni and between alumni and current students)?
2. Which group drives mentorship activities?

In answering these questions, this research seeks to produce a typology of mentorship activities
involving international alumni and current students. However, terminology in this area is murky
and, at times, contradictory. For instance, HEIs vary widely in how they define “alumni,” with
some including all former students and others including only degree recipients, as discussed in
the pages that follow (William & Mary Alumni Association 2018; The Ohio State University
Alumni Association 2010; Arnold 2003). This study incorporates the various definitions of the
HEIs surveyed, meaning that the activities of somewhat different alumni populations are
captured. Similarly, the study describes the spectrum of mentorship activities that the HEIs in
question define as mentorship. These activities range from virtual office hours, to in-person
mentorships during student summer internship placements, to two-year commitments.

The first step was to review website documents produced by formalized alumni clubs
representing the U.S. public universities in focus (see appendix 1), but based in other national
contexts. For example, operations were reviewed from University of California-Berkeley’s
international alumni clubs, such as the Berkeley Club of Hong Kong (Berkeley Office of
International Relations 2018a). However, many of the 50 HEIs surveyed do not operate
international alumni clubs and, of those that do, many websites reflect either a university
template with little information specific to the given international alumni community or offer
information focused on social events rather than mentorship. Others are password protected and
thus are not accessible.

The next stage of document analysis, therefore, included reviewing home university web
pages that discuss international alumni-student mentorship programs. This, at present, represents
a much richer source of data. While alumni-student mentorship activities via international alumni
clubs, networks, or associations do exist (Harvard Club of Spain n.d.), among the HEIs that this
paper focuses on, university-operated programs seem to be the norm; thus, home university
websites are the best source of information.

Conceptual Framework

This research is approached through the organizational theory work of Bolman and Deal
(2013), utilizing their constructs of the political, structural, and human resources frameworks. In
short, while universities represent unique contexts (which are also nationally and regionally
specific), a general organizational theory probes, in broad terms, how international alumni
mentorships operate within the HEI as a whole, and specifically what support these initiatives are
given.

Bolman and Deal write that “the proliferation of complex organizations has made most
human activities more formalized than they once were” (2013, 6); it seems likely that they would
argue that alumni affairs represents such an area of formalization. By extension, alumni affairs
may be considered a site of tertiary-level bureaucratization (Birnbaum 2004). This, in turn,
seems to indicate the (increasing) institutional value placed by HEIs on alumni themselves.
Indeed, alumni affairs activities are not valued by the tertiary sphere alone, as organizations
including McKinsey & Company designate a robust alumni network as a “lasting benefit” of a
career with the consulting group (McKinsey & Company 2018).

What purpose might international alumni mentorship of students serve in the political,
structural, and human resources frames? Describing their human resources frame, Bolman and
Deal observe that a key tenet of the approach is that “organizations exist to serve human needs,
rather than the converse” (2013, 117). This seems to indicate, vis à vis the current research
questions, that if student mentorship by alumni is useful or productive—if it fills a need—it is
the HEI’s obligation to provide it. Indeed, New York University (NYU) Shanghai’s mentorship
program was formed in direct response to student feedback:

In a survey on alumni programming, over 35% of NYU Shanghai students surveyed
ranked ‘mentoring from an alumnus/a’ as their No. 1 top priority. Based on this feedback,
the NYU Global Alumni Programs collaborated with the NYU Shanghai Career
Development Center to create this mentorship program which launched in spring 2015.
(NYU Shanghai 2018)

Accordingly, alumni- and student-driven mentorship opportunities may indicate the HEI’s failure
to implement programming, thereby problematizing the provision of alumni and student services.
Bolman and Deal also refer to the human resources frame as emphasizing needs, skills, and relationships, and note that a basic organizational challenge is to align individual and organizational needs (2013, 19). This might refer to the delicate balance of a given HEI’s institutional priorities and alumni and student desires. In the scope of the current inquiry, it might be imagined, for instance, that in-person summer alumni-student mentorships are most likely to take place in the preferred student destination of western Europe (Helms and Brajakovic 2017). This might be juxtaposed with a growing institutional interest in southeast Asia. In this instance, an HEI would, therefore, be compelled to balance current enrollment/alumni base realities (i.e., enrollment and alumni demographics and trends as compared with institutional strategic goals) with strategic goals.

The structural frame, as outlined by Bolman and Deal, posits that “organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures” (2013, 45), emphasizing a logical flow of power and decisionmaking. This might suggest, for example, that university-led mentorship programs are preferable to those initiated by international alumni themselves, allowing for clear quality control. However, the authors also write that “effective structures fit an organization’s current circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce and environment)” (Bolman and Deal 2013, 45), indicating that acknowledging geographical diversity might, instead, mean that distinct or targeted alumni-student mentorship opportunities in different world regions could be appropriate.

The political frame, in turn, views the natural state of organizational affairs as a “roiling arena,” and the manager of any organization as a highly tactical strategist, constantly evaluating shifting allegiances and employing persuasive skills (often behind the scenes) to maneuver favorable outcomes (Bolman and Deal 2013). Conflict, in this frame, is seen as having benefits as well as consequences. In this context, it positions the HEI as responding to decentralized efforts by alumni to initiate student programming, and perhaps responding to university units that conduct competing and/or overlapping work (Dobson 2015).

In short, none of these organizational frames proscribe or dictate international alumni affairs activity in the area of student mentorship. Rather, each frame identifies distinct sets of advantages and disadvantages. However, in the broadest of terms, a HEI hosting alumni-student mentorship in any form should acknowledge and accommodate individual and group needs. Further, that same HEI ought to reflect on its environment and identify clear means of progress toward its goals.

This inquiry seeks to understand current alumni-student mentorship activities in transnational context in terms of these frameworks. Where do existing initiatives fit? How does Bolman and Deal’s work indicate areas of potential growth or challenge?

The International Alumni Affairs Landscape

Importantly, and as noted previously, definitions for “international alumni” vary by HEI, and may or may not include “transnational alumni” who, as defined by Dobson (2017), are individuals who “conduct their personal and professional lives within two or more countries.”
It is clear that the international alumni base varies dramatically among elite public HEIs ranked in the top 50 nationwide by *U.S. News*. This reflects both a range of total enrollments and distinct admissions trends. The smallest enrollment among the HEIs surveyed here is 1,792 at the State University of New York (SUNY) College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and the largest is 53,065 at Texas A&M University (*U.S. News & World Report* 2018). Among SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry graduates from 2016 who responded to a recent institutional survey, 12 are now working internationally and four are studying internationally (in Argentina, Ireland, Israel, and the United Kingdom) (ESF 2016). Texas A&M, in contrast, maintains 28 international alumni clubs indicating robust international alumni activity (The Association of Former Students Texas A&M University 2018).

**Alumni-Student Mentorship**

Mentorship of undergraduate students has been identified across national settings as an effective mechanism for supporting student success, particularly for those individuals who have experienced marginalization (Seelman 2014; Porras 2011; Anderson 2015; Odendaal and Deacon 2009; UNESCO 2018). Indeed, alumni-student mentorships are well established in the U.S. context (among others) at a variety of HEIs and in a range of forms (Miller 2013). Among the deep-rooted programs situated at elite public institutions, the University of California-Los Angeles Alumni Mentor Program describes itself as “now in its 14th year” of fostering “meaningful relationships between UCLA alumni and current UCLA students. The connections made in this program help prepare our students for a successful future and leave a lasting impact on our campus community” (UCLA Alumni 2018).

Many of the mentorship programs surveyed here explicitly reference future professional success as a goal or outcome of the program in question. Frequently, the career advantage for both mentors and mentees is highlighted. While other aims including “giving back” to the home institution are also mentioned, it does seem that the value of international alumni mentorship (from the home institution’s perspective) is closely tied to economic success of its students and soon-to-be-graduates. In fact, it is valuable to consider in this context to what extent “higher education is thus less about preparing socially oriented and civic-minded individuals than about acting as a de facto facilitator of economic participation” (Unangst and Choi 2018).

Presumably, it is not only the mentor and mentee who benefit from productive mentorship activity, but also the home institution itself, representing a possible area for further inquiry. Studies suggest that new graduate job placement rates are also higher due to mentorship programs (University of Hartford 2017). What about donation levels? Are mentorship programs themselves used to drive foundation or corporate giving? At least one women’s mentorship program based at Rutgers University is sponsored by Johnson & Johnson and Wells Fargo, with corporate logos appearing on the program home page (Rutgers Institute for Women’s Leadership 2018). These and other factors influence university rankings including the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, among others. This influence, in turn, benefits the HEI, as well as its students and alumni (albeit more indirectly).
Emerging Typology

Incidental International Mentorship

The largest grouping of HEIs surveyed for this paper offer “incidental” alumni-student mentorship across borders, meaning that relevant programs have a primary focus on connecting domestic alumni with current students. In this case, the participation of international alumni is not intentional, though not excluded.

I include in this category both university-wide mentorship programs, such as the Virginia Mentoring Program at the University of Virginia, as well as school- and department-specific initiatives (Virginia Alumni Mentoring. n.d.). An example of a school-based program is provided by the University of Georgia’s Terry School of Business, which operates TerryConnect, described as:

an online community that connects current Terry students with Terry alumni for long term mentoring and short term (‘flash’) mentoring. By creating an online profile during the active enrollment period (mid-late August) students will be matched with a mentor in their prospective industry for advice on job/internship searches, interview skills, and professional development. (Terry College of Business n.d.)

Department-based initiatives are somewhat rarer, likely due to fewer resources being available to dedicate to mentorship activity. However, this represents a particular area for future research, as closely aligned academic and professional interests may engender a more successful mentoring relationship (Huskins et al. 2011). Further, in one example of a department-facilitated program, the mentor pair is expected to meet for at least 2 years, which is substantially longer than many programs surveyed (The University of Tennessee-Knoxville n.d.).

“Incidental” programs tend to be exclusively online and are generally hosted by external platforms, including Alumni Fire and People Grove, among others. An example of a university-wide initiative in this category is the University of New Hampshire’s (UNH’s) “Wildcat Connections,” which introduces itself by saying:

…no matter where you live or how limited your time and/or experience is, you can still make a meaningful difference for someone or many in your UNH family. Wildcat Connections is also a great way to expand your own professional network and show your Wildcat pride! (University of New Hampshire 2018)

Interestingly, some public universities that operate online alumni-student mentorship programs use language that seems to exclude international alumni, though presumably there would not be additional logistical barriers for international alumni to participate. For example, the University of South Carolina’s Mentor Match Program, situated within the College of Information and Communications, notes that “while the majority of our mentoring relationships are within Columbia, we welcome and encourage alumni living in other parts of the country to participate” (University of South Carolina 2018). This may reflect a small number of international alumni, an assumption that international alumni would not be interested in participating in these ventures, or a lack of internationalization-related attitudes or practices at the university (Jones 2013).
Finally, in at least some cases, there is a tangible benefit to mentors involved in these relationships beyond growing their network. The University of Tennessee’s Law School operates a mentorship program that allows mentors to earn continuing legal education credit (University of Tennessee-Knoxville College of Law n.d.). Whether or not this benefit changes the recruitment process or nature of the mentor relationship is certainly of interest. The extent to which these types of “secondary gains” apply to international alumni should also be further examined in detail.

**Affinity-Based Mentorship**

Affinity-based mentorship between alumni and students takes place among members of shared interest groups or networks, or among individuals with “similar backgrounds and interests” (Zhao, Kuh, and Carini 2005, 225). These organizations and their respective mentorship programs may be driven by the HEI, students, or alumni, and may take place online or in person (Hillel UC-San Diego 2018). In short, alumni and students in affinity-based mentor pairs have mutually defined an important element of their identity that draws them together with other home institution constituents.

An example of an alumni-driven affinity mentorship program is provided by the University of Illinois’s Asian American Alumni network. This self-described informal initiative includes alumni-student pairs as well as alum-alum pairings (University of Illinois Asian American Alumni Network n.d.). The program prompts potential mentors by asking:

Wouldn't it have been nice to have had the counsel of Asian alumni who had “been down that path before you” tell you about how to get a work visa, or where to interview (or where NOT to), where to settle, what kind of job to seek or avoid, how to establish and grow your career, especially as a minority Asian among non-Asians? (University of Illinois Asian American Alumni Network n.d.)

Similarly, the University of North Carolina (UNC)-Chapel Hill’s Latino Mentoring Program “‘has created a special kind of ripple’ where mentees and mentors, alumni and employees support one another in-kind’(University Gazette 2014). This initiative includes participants from the Middle East among other locations, though it seems that more participants are located in the United States.

Finally, the Alumni Mentorship Program of the University of California-Irvine’s (UCI’s) International Student Excellence Programs represents a more formalized, university-driven effort to:

Connect Global Scholars students with motivated UCI alumni who are willing to provide guidance and support; strengthen students’ “soft” skills or personal attributes needed to succeed in the workplace; refine spoken language skills; [and] become familiar with career-related resources. (University of California at Irvine 2018)

This program seeks to fill a need that HEIs with increasing proportions of international students may have—facilitating the success of current students by connecting them with international alumni, who may also be from their country of origin (Arthur 2017; Georgia Tech Mentor Jackets n.d.).
International Career-Oriented Mentorship

International career-oriented mentorship—distinguished from “incidental” international alumni mentorship programs by its explicit focus on connecting students with alumni working internationally for career development purposes—may be driven by the HEI as a whole, individual schools/units, or alumni themselves. However, this study has not included student-led initiatives in this area. Examples include the University of Washington Alumni Association’s International Mentor Program (University of Washington Alumni Association 2018) and Auburn University’s Auburn International Mentoring (AIM) Program (Auburn University 2018). Auburn introduces the AIM program as allowing “the student to explore the opportunities and realities of living and working abroad with expert advice from a member of the Auburn Family” (Auburn University 2018). Also included in this category, the school-specific University of Minnesota’s Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs offers a “global mentor program [that] connects mentors doing international work with second-year Humphrey students who hope to develop international careers themselves. Global mentors can be working anywhere in the world” (Humphrey School of Public Affairs 2018).

These mentor-mentee relationships that focus on preparing students for an international or transnational career represent a key area for further research. How do these mentorships reflect increasingly internationalized public HEIs, or catalyze the internationalization of those same institutions (Miller 2013)? Do they reflect or improve institutional strengths in particular academic or professional fields? To what extent are language proficiencies and university-based language learning involved?

Discussion

This exploratory document analysis and resulting typology offer direction for future inquiry. Indeed, the proposed research agenda is relevant to public and private HEIs alike.

First, existing affinity-based international mentorship programs represent a unique area of support for students—including historically marginalized populations—and should be probed for scope and effectiveness. If indeed these initiatives represent emerging best practices, expanding the use of such programs might well represent a step toward equity at public institutions across the country.

Second, well-constructed software platforms facilitate virtual alumni-student mentorship in the domestic and transnational spheres. This inquiry observes that a number of private companies are being contracted to provide and maintain these platforms, which tend to have a similar “look” and “feel” across HEIs. The extent to which those same companies develop content and other features (proactively or reactively) that might particularly support relationships between international alumni and students also represents an area of concern. For instance, are guidelines being given on “standard” résumé or CV formats in various settings worldwide that mentors may then build on in their conversations with mentees? Might international alumni themselves be invited to contribute “labor market guides” to augment the services offered by the given mentorship platform (Miller 2013)?
A related area of inquiry involves the possibility of international alum-alum mentorships, likely between recent graduates and mid- or senior-career graduates. UC Berkeley’s United Kingdom alumni club offers such opportunities at present (Berkeley Office of International Relations 2018b); however, the extent to which these relationships also produce increased alumni engagement with the home institution should be examined. Further, this represents a possible mentorship pipeline; if former student mentees are able to continue receiving guidance from more senior alumni once they graduate from the home institution, is their level of engagement likely to multiply?

A clear question, given the diversity of mentorship programs surveyed, surrounds who is managing the various programmatic initiatives. Are the myriad department administrators, career services personnel, or alumni affairs officers who staff these programs interculturally competent? Are they aware of the resources available to them at their own HEIs that might facilitate learning in this area? As Fiona Hunter writes of university administrators in the European higher education arena:

weaker processes [of internationalization-related skill building] tend to divide the administrative community into two groups—those who are committed and convinced versus those who feel distant and disengaged from internationalization, may have limited understanding, or resist involvement. (2018, 16)

Finally, it remains unclear how the international alumni participating in this spectrum of mentorship activities are recruited, trained, and retained. Are women, for instance, over- or underrepresented in the pool of possible mentors? How can the engagement of international alumni mentors be sustained and/or multiplied through several cycles of program participation? In what ways may their mentorship become more effective? How is their feedback (and that of the students) incorporated into later program iterations? Mentors may be seen as inhabiting a position of power and influence over not only the students, but also over other potential alumni mentors, and may be concurrently subject to the influence of mentorship program administrators. As such, mentorship as a university-specific power structure merits interrogation (Patel 2015).

**Conclusion**

As Gallo has written, “alumni build relationships and other philanthropic identities with their alma mater—campus ambassador, volunteer, mentor, student recruiter, benefactor—and what emerges is for the direct benefit to the wider university community” (2013, 1151). While mentorship at HEIs is a well-researched area, alumni-student mentorship pairings have been the focus of less robust scholarship. However, given the heightened focus on job placement and other career outcomes in the current U.S. tertiary education landscape, this type of mentorship program seems increasingly vital. This is clearly evidenced by Princeton University’s (2015) alumni affairs office self-study, which identifies as a strategic priority collaborating “with the Office of Career Services to thoroughly revamp the Alumni Careers Network and develop a clear strategy for engaging alumni in providing career guidance and mentoring to students and interested alumni” (Office of Alumni Affairs Metrics 2015, 10).
Additionally, given the emphasis on both public and private HEIs being in some way “global,” if not “internationalized,” international alumni-student mentorship programs that frequently take place in the cost-effective virtual realm seem both timely and important. Indeed, such initiatives may represent tripartite relationships that are beneficial to all involved. Potential outcomes include: benefitting the students in terms of community building, academic success, and career guidance; benefitting alumni in terms of their connections to the contemporary home institution, community building, and nurturing of future entrants to their field; and benefitting the HEIs in terms of student success, alumni engagement, industry connections, graduate job placement, and philanthropic activity.

In considering international alumni-student mentorships with Bolman and Deal’s three frameworks for organizational theory in mind, it seems clear that the existing landscape reflects fragmentation. That is to say, the structural, political, and human resources frames are each most relevant in distinct university cases. “Incidental” international alumni mentorship programs, such as the examples displayed at the Universities of New Hampshire and Virginia, are quite centralized—indicating the structural frame and a “top down” approach to alumni-student pairing. However, this “incidental” activity is rather unlikely to offer timely insight into, for instance, how a Latino student might consider a transnational career, something a grassroots affinity-based program would be better positioned to do.

Similarly, international career-focused mentorships, like those at Auburn University, reflect attention to the structural frame (operating from a central university unit), but appear to pay heed to the human resources frame as well, explicitly calling for targeted mentor pairings based on student interests. It would be compelling to compare student and alumni feedback on these sorts of initiatives to “incidental” mentorship activities.

Finally, affinity-based mentorships, such as the programs noted at the University of Illinois and UNC-Chapel Hill, which represent the most decentralized activity surveyed, may align with the political and human resources frames. The relevant programs attend to student and alumni needs, balance those interests and desires, and also underscore the opportunities and challenges shared by affinity group members at the home institution. In some cases, these programs seem to respond to a “debt of provision” at the university level, and outcomes for participating students are highlighted as an area of future action-based research (Tuck and Yang 2014).

This paper applies Bolman and Deal’s organizational theory work to the U.S. public HEI landscape, probing international alumni-student mentorship opportunities. What is reflected is a spectrum of internationalization, enrollment trends, and alumni initiatives. As Gallo (2013) poses, alumni represent the only permanent members of a university community. The results of this exploratory document analysis call for increased institutional attention to the skills, engagement, and desires of international alumni. Their past student experiences may not only shed light on areas for institutional innovation, but may—through student mentorships—impact the experiences and successes of current students. This, in turn, may benefit all actors involved in the complex web of institutional internationalization, educational equity, and market outcomes.
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### Appendix 1: Top 50 Public Universities listed alphabetically *(U.S. News & World Report 2018)*

<table>
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<td>University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill</td>
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<td>SUNY-Binghamton</td>
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<td>University of California-Santa Barbara</td>
<td>University</td>
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This study is designed to inform the international enrollment management profession of the cultural competency skills of professionals in the field who actively recruit international students to study at institutions of higher education in the United States. Grounded in theory by Bennett’s (1986) Developmental Model for Intercultural Competency (DMIS), this study employs the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) developed by Hammer (2012) to measure the intercultural competence of 75 international enrollment professionals in the United States. The IDI places respondents on a continuum of five progressive worldview orientations ranging from Denial to Adaptation on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC). After completing the IDI, five individuals, representative of each of the worldview orientations, completed a follow-up qualitative interview. The mean developmental score of the study population was within Minimization, indicating the international enrollment professionals in this study tend to apply a universal notion of sameness to cultures and respond to differences in ways that are most familiar within their own cultural context. Most of the sample had overestimated their level of intercultural competence.

Keywords: intercultural competence, Intercultural Development Inventory, international enrollment, international admissions professionals

Introduction

A common assumption, due to the nature of the job skills required, is that international admissions professionals excel in their ability to skillfully engage with culturally distinct populations. International enrollment professionals were selected as the focus of this study as they are an integral part of ambitious internationalization plans that seek to recruit students from other countries. International enrollment professionals are frequently tasked with a multitude of responsibilities, such as representing their institutions at high school visits and college fairs overseas, building alumni networks abroad, and online recruiting strategies involving social media (Dessof 2009). A controversial yet increasingly common form of recruitment is to build relationships with contracted agents in foreign countries (Dessof 2009; Weller 2012). The expectations for cultural competency are high, as international enrollment professionals are responsible for developing culturally sensitive messaging and responding appropriately when engaging with others who are culturally distinct.

Using pre- and post-test measurements as well as qualitative feedback, researchers have
produced an abundance of literature addressing the assessment of intercultural competence gained by individuals in a variety of settings, such as healthcare, the military, education, and business. In addition, multiple tests have been developed and validated over the past 30 years to measure the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes associated with cross-cultural competence (Matsumoto and Hwang 2013). On the other hand, few studies have addressed the cultural competence skills of international enrollment professionals within higher education. As such, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the level of intercultural sensitivity among a sample population of U.S.-based international admissions professionals?
2. What is the group’s perceived orientation (PO) versus their developmental orientation (DO)?
3. What do participants find challenging in recruiting students from different cultures, with respect to intercultural competency and cross-cultural competency?
4. How do respondents perceive their own ability to shift cultural perspectives to respond in ways that are culturally appropriate when engaging with others who are culturally distinct?
5. What steps can be taken by institutions or by individuals to enhance personal intercultural competence?

In brief, this article includes a discussion of the theory that grounds the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and a review of the methodology used to produce the findings. The article concludes with a summary of suggestions and implications for future research.

**Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity**

A familiar and commonly cited theoretical framework depicting a model of continuous progress through a series of cultural competency developmental stages is Milton J. Bennett’s landmark *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*, also known as the DMIS (Bennett 1986; Dong, Day, and Collaco 2008; Lombardi 2010; Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe 2007). According to Bennett (1986), there are six progressive stages of development that indicate how an individual experiences cultural differences, carving a pathway from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. The ethnocentric orientations include Denial, Defense, and Minimization whereas the ethnorelative orientations include Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. Defined as “an attitude that regards one’s own culture as the center of the world,” an ethnocentric orientation does not recognize cultural differences or commonalities in a positive fashion (Zhang 2014, 178). On the other hand, an ethnorelative orientation is cognizant to some degree that the cultures of others influence one’s own culture (Zhang 2014). Guiding individuals from “unconscious incompetence to conscious competence,” the DMIS is a practical model such that interventions can be designed to help facilitate development toward increased sensitivity (Howell 1982, 30).

One of the skill sets associated with intercultural competency is the ability to “manage social interactions and anxiety” (Bennett 2009, 132). Gudykunst (1993) describes the theory of
anxiety/uncertainty management, which states that when individuals from one group meet strangers of another group, their levels of uncertainty and anxiety are high. To achieve higher levels of adaptation, individuals should employ mindfulness strategies to manage their anxiety. Expectations involving the anticipation of something either positive or negative impact anxiety according to Gudykunst’s theory (1993). From an ethnocentric orientation, the expectations individuals have for the behaviors of strangers tends to be negative. Progressing into an ethnorelative orientation, as one develops relationships with culturally distinct others, positive expectations emerge. Expectations for either negative or positive interactions are developed based on factors such as an individual’s attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and prior interactions (Gudykunst 1993). The “diminishment of prejudice” and reduction of “bias” are factors that serve as part of the “requisite skills” needed for adaptation (Bennett 2009, 63). As applied to the current study, these theories on intercultural competence offer guidance in providing a snapshot of the various intercultural competency acquisition stages of a select population of international enrollment management professionals.

**Literature Review**

A review of the literature offers an indication of the leadership characteristics and skills that are desirable for those employed in the international education arena, and within the purview of international enrollments specifically. Lee Olson and Kroeger (2001) surveyed 52 faculty and professional staff at the New Jersey City University to establish a general picture of where individuals placed on the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC). Respondents who placed highest on the ethnorelative end of the scale were more likely to speak a language other than English with advanced proficiency and have a considerable amount of experience living overseas than those at the ethnocentric stages (Lee Olson and Kroeger 2001). The authors stress the importance of providing additional training opportunities to employees and hiring staff with intercultural competency skills as a way of internationalizing the campus (Lee Olson and Kroeger 2001). In another study using qualitative interviews with advisers of English as a Second Language students and international student services advisers, Lee (2012) investigated the role of social support systems in higher education as a means to recruit and retain international students. The interviews indicate that the ability to enhance cultural competency can present a barrier for campus administrators seeking innovative support systems, as misunderstandings often occur when faculty, staff, and students embrace cultural stereotypes (Lee 2012). According to Lee, colleges and universities need to consider implementing “multicultural competence and sensitivity” training workshops as a means of improving the “cultural mismatch and disconnection” that can negatively impact relationships (2012, 91).

The IDI has also been used in research with student advisers, both in education abroad and in international student and scholar services. Kirkwood (2015) employed a customized version of the IDI to a sample of 226 education abroad professionals. Quantitative score reports of the study abroad advisers indicate that the majority of participants inflated their intercultural development scores and also minimized cultural differences; in discussing the findings, Kirkwood (2015) recommends that education abroad professionals seek additional training to
eventually cross over from the transitional stage of Minimization into the ethnoreal orientation of Acceptance. Similarly, international student advisers are hired to offer a multitude of specific services to international students, such as U.S. cultural information, housing information, new student orientation, visa and immigration information, and employment authorization (Davis 2009). After administering the IDI to a sample of 300 U.S.-based international student advisers, Davis reports that 75 percent of the participants were “ethnocentric in their primary orientation toward cultural differences” (2009, 152). This is particularly concerning as international student advisers are expected to execute numerous services related to welcoming and orientating students from around the world to the academic and social culture of the U.S. host campus (Davis 2009). Davis (2009) contends that job postings for international student advisers often indicate preference toward individuals with foreign language fluency and international experience. However, neither second language fluency nor international experience is enough to ensure that a future employee is culturally sensitive or competent (Davis 2009; Kirkwood 2015). Davis concludes that unless the education leaders making hiring decisions comprehend the value of intercultural sensitivity, advisers will “neither be recruited nor screened effectively” (2009, 151).

In another study, Ozturgut (2013) examined 160 U.S. institutions actively involved in the recruitment of large numbers of international students to ascertain the best practices for the recruitment and retention of this select student population. With the intense competition among institutions to recruit international students, the need for culturally competent faculty and staff to connect and communicate effectively has become paramount (Ozturgut 2013). Findings from Ozturgut’s study indicate that international students are more likely to be attracted to educational opportunities in the United States if a “personal approach to recruitment and retention” is employed (2013, 12). Furthermore, Ozturgut (2013) recommended that faculty and staff with cross-cultural competency skills be an integral part of the strategic planning process.

Based on the findings and implications from these studies of education abroad and international student advising professionals, it is important to further explore intercultural competency issues for international enrollment professionals and how such competence affects their daily work.

**Methodology**

The intent of this two-phase sequential mixed methods study is to explore the acquisition of cultural competency skills of international admissions professionals based in the United States. A smaller sample was selected due to the expense of offering the IDI (during the data collection phase, the cost was $15 per participant). A sample size of 67 was expected to be sufficient to provide 90 percent power in detecting a difference based in the normative comparisons of developmental and perceived scores of seven units or more (Northern Kentucky University 2018).

Study participants were recruited from two overlapping populations. The first group involved subscribers to the RAMA network, an electronic forum developed by NAFSA for recruitment, advising, marketing, and admissions professionals. The second group attended the
International enrollment professionals who devoted more than 40 percent of their professional work time to international student recruitment and who agreed to participate in the study were sent a link to complete the 50-item survey. After sending listserv invitations to over 2,500 RAMA network members, 67 conference attendees, and an additional 369 invitations to individuals discovered through online directory searches, feedback from 95 qualified participants was eventually received. Of the qualified respondents, a total of 75 individuals completed the IDI.

Subsequently, five study participants were asked to complete follow-up qualitative interviews, which were recorded, transcribed, and coded. To protect the identities of individuals, each of the participants were assigned an alias (i.e., Beth, Katie, Sherry, Deb, William). The selection of interview candidates was not entirely random, as they were selected for interviews based on the IDI score report indicating their developmental orientation (DO) placement along the IDC. Randomization did occur, however, within each of the five worldview orientations ranging from Denial to Adaptation. In other words, all 75 study participants were eligible for an interview, however the study was strengthened by segmenting the scores into the five different categories first before applying randomization to each subcategory.

After transcribing each of the phone interviews, brackets were used to highlight key passages to identify important concepts that interviewees expressed. After reviewing field notes and bracketed passages, an initial open coding process began in order to capture particular parts that were considered relevant to the research questions. The second phase of coding then involved analytical or axial coding in which particular concepts were combined to develop meanings based on related ideas. The coding showed common themes to “draw lines” between similar concepts to “show interrelationships” (Creswell 2009, 186). After creating profiles of each interviewee, connections were drawn between categories in response to the research questions.

Definitions of IDI Terms

As a psychometric tool, the IDI examines how closely one’s self-perception aligns with reality. The following paragraphs provide additional definitions of terms used in the group profile score reports from the IDI that are analyzed in this research:

**Perceived Orientation Group Score (PO-G):** The PO-G is an indicator of a group’s self-perception. In other words, the score describes the group’s aspiration or desired placement. On an individual score basis, the perceived orientation is referred to as PO-I.

**Developmental Orientation Group Score (DO-G):** The DO-G indicates the group’s current or primary orientation toward cultural differences. The score is an indicator of how others would perceive or experience the respondent. The DO-G should be viewed as a “more accurate reflection of the respondent’s orientation toward cultural differences” (Davis 2009, 116). The DO-G is a critical score because “the orientation toward cultural difference may affect behavior in intercultural settings” and can also impact “the way a group is perceived by other cultures” (Kirkwood 2015, 70).
Limitations

This research has several study limitations to note, particularly the small sample and the methods used for participant recruitment. The smaller sample was selected given the expense of offering the IDI (as previously noted). The 75 participants in this study may not be representative of all international enrollment professionals employed at higher education institutions in the United States, and it cannot be assumed that their scores mirror those of the entire population. In addition, the study sample was recruited based on individuals’ affiliation with NAFSA. As such, results may be biased, as it is possible that the individuals in this study are more motivated to learn about intercultural competence than those who are not affiliated with NAFSA. Furthermore, this study relies on self-reporting and study participants who voluntarily selected to be a part of the study. It is possible that the population investigated may have been more eager to contribute to furthering the research on intercultural competence development than those who were asked but did not respond. Even though the IDI relies on individuals to be honest with themselves, and participants were informed that their responses would be confidential and that individual identities would be protected in this study, it is possible that some participants may have felt pressure to provide responses that would be considered most appropriate (or even idyllic) to employers or to the profession. International enrollment professionals are frequently perceived to be the campus experts when it comes to engaging with others who are culturally distinct.

Time constraints presented another limitation to this research. Professionals in the international enrollment field often have very busy schedules involving both domestic and international travel; the pressure to increase enrollments each year is intense and campus offices are sometimes challenged by limited resources. Many of the questions on the IDI require careful thought and reflection. When asked to participate, however, respondents may have viewed this as another task to be added to an ongoing list of increasing demands and it is possible that some respondents may have rushed through the instrument.

Findings

Basic demographics for the study participants are provided in table 1 below. From the sample of participants in this study (n=75), 60 percent of the participants were administrative staff members ranging in age from 23 to 40 years old. Study participants were employed at higher education institutions across 33 different states, with a fairly even distribution among census regions. Sixty-six percent of the sample has lived in another country for 7 months or longer (either concurrently or as a result of multiple sojourns); approximately one-third of the participants surveyed (35 percent) reported that they lived in another country for 3 or more years, whereas a smaller percentage of participants (15 percent) had never lived in another country. Over 50 percent of the sample holds a master’s or doctoral degree and 77 percent of the participant sample has 3 years or more of international recruitment experience. The percentage of respondents who have been recruiting fewer than 5 years (43 percent) was slightly higher than those who reported having 5 to 10 years of experience (37 percent) and much higher than the percentage of participants with over 11 years of experience recruiting international students (20 percent).
Table 1. Demographic Information for Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Time Spent Living in Another Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22–30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Never lived in another country</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Fewer than 3 months</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3–6 months</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7–11 months</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6–10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary (university)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA degree or equivalent graduate degree</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD degree or equivalent degree</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Representation by Census Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast (8 states)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest (7 states)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (11 states)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West (7 states)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Recruiting Students Internationally</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 6 months</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months–1 year</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–15 years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years or more</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worldview Orientation (IDI Placement)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55–70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarization</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70–85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>85–115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>115–130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>130–145</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows additional demographic information for the interview participants.
Table 2. Demographics for Interview Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Orientation</th>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Polarization</th>
<th>Minimization</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Orientation</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>51–60</td>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>41–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Recruiting Internationally</td>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>11–15 years</td>
<td>11–15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Spent Living in Another Country</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>&lt; 3 months</td>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a reminder, the first two research questions in this study ask:

1. What is the level of intercultural sensitivity among a sample population of U.S.-based international admissions professionals?
2. What is the group’s perceived orientation (PO) versus their developmental orientation (DO)?

Therefore, it is necessary for the purposes of this study to not only explore the group’s actual level of intercultural competence (DO-G), but also to consequently compare this to the group’s perceived orientation (PO-G). The mean DO-G was found to be 104.79 within the early stages of the Minimization range as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1. Developmental Orientation of the Group (DO-G)

In contrast with the group’s DO-G, the mean PO-G score for the sample was 126.92, placing the group’s perceived orientation within the later stages of the Acceptance range as illustrated in figure 2.
With 95 percent confidence, the estimated average PO-G scores for international enrollment professionals who participated in this study is between 17.66 and 26.55 points greater than the average DO-G scores. Estimated proportions indicate that between 80.1 and 95.3 percent of the international enrollment professionals surveyed had a PO that was at least seven points higher than their DO. In sum, this indicates that most of the international enrollment professionals overestimated their intercultural competence.

**Challenges Encountered by International Enrollment Professionals**

When thinking about intercultural competency and cross-cultural communication, the third research question for this study asks what respondents find challenging when recruiting students from other cultures. In the interviews conducted for this study, five participants (Beth, Katie, Sherry, Deb, and William) were asked about the challenges international enrollment professionals encounter when engaged with culturally distinct others. From these responses, it is clear that interviewees felt they were challenged in different ways when recruiting students from other countries. Several challenges were discussed, including overcoming language barriers and generational differences, understanding student needs and career goals, and comprehending nonverbal cues.

Some of the interviewees felt that individual personalities can present a challenge. Instead of viewing applicants through the lens of a culture, they felt that the challenge was more on a “personal level.” During the interviews, several individuals mentioned that it felt more appropriate to view somebody from another culture as a distinct individual rather than viewing the person as belonging to a particular culture. Interviewees reported that to classify or define a person within a cultural context felt as if an “artificial barrier” was presented. The three respondents who scored within Denial, Polarization, and Minimization ranges agreed that the challenge was not related to cultural competence or intercultural communication as much as it had to do with personal communication style on an individual basis.

Several challenges were expressed when international enrollment professionals attempted to deliver their “elevator speech.” According to the interviewees, recruiters have different levels of comfort and communication strategies when interacting with people of other cultures. Some individuals felt the need to use direct communication and avoid colloquial jargon unique to the United States. Another respondent questioned whether she is able to communicate a unique
message to international students when competitors have similar offerings. It was also noted that some groups prefer oral communication over written communication; however, in some situations, a group leader may disseminate information to a group instead of individuals receiving information through direct communication with an institutional representative. When working with groups of students, the interviewees expressed the challenge to confirm that everybody in the room understands all of the information presented. The two interviewees who scored within Acceptance and Adaptation ranges felt that understanding cultural norms related to group preferences before engaging with those of other cultures is important for effective intercultural communication. William, for example, indicated that to be an effective speaker one has to be well-versed in the other culture. As William stated, “intentionality and awareness” is key to effective intercultural communication. Even with intentional planning, however, misunderstandings do occur. Of the five interviewees, William scored within the most advanced range of the IDC, but he also admitted there is still “work to be done” in his ongoing development to communicate effectively with culturally distinct others, despite his extensive training and experiences with other cultures.

Ability to Shift Cultural Perspectives

The fourth research question asked respondents to self-reflect on their ability to shift cultural perspectives. Three different themes emerged from the interviews: (1) moderate tension; (2) humble progression; and (3) confidence. Moderate tension was most frequently expressed by those scoring within the Denial, Polarization, and Minimization ranges. Sherry, who scored within Minimization, described moderate tension in detail. Previously, when interactions or observations with people of different cultures were not “fitting [her] expectation,” she described the scenario as a “fight at first” or a “rejection.” Now she tries to reframe the situation by reminding herself “…this is the culture I’m in.” With more than 30 years of experience, Sherry attributed some of her challenges in shifting perspectives to being “tired,” “set in [her] way,” and “less enthusiastic.” She also described how she tends to “analyze everything” and how when “something is foreign,” the matter is “more [her] judging it.” According to Sherry, her tendency to judge is conducive to “making your safe little haven because you can feel superior.” Beth, who scored within Denial, described how she has to be “very careful on [her] behaviors” so that she does “not draw attention” to herself when conversing with culturally distinct others. Katie, who scored within Polarization, had to remind herself to relax and realize that when interacting with people from China, they are “physically a lot closer” and this is not “an indication of aggression or forcefulness.”

The second theme of humble progression was expressed by interviewees who had scored within the top ranges of the IDC—Acceptance and Adaptation. Both Deb and William reported having had formal training and experiences across multiple cultures over the decades; they admitted that they are “getting better” or that their ability to shift perspectives is “better than it used to be.” In the cases where humility was expressed, the top scoring interviewees had extensive intercultural development training during their university studies and had completed the IDI previously. Furthermore, Deb and William recognized the need for further training and
“work” to better master the art of shifting cultural perspectives. In contrast to these expressions of humble progression, the greatest amount of confidence was expressed by the interviewees who had scored the lowest on the IDC. The respondents who expressed confidence felt they “have an easy time,” are “pretty good,” or that they “adjust pretty well” and are “not fearful.”

Enhancement of Intercultural Competence Acquisition

The fifth research question asks, “What steps can be taken by the institution or by the individual to enhance personal intercultural competence?” Two primary themes emerged from the personal interviews: (1) awareness and (2) training. Awareness refers to various concepts that potentially bring intercultural competence and international enrollment management issues to the forefront of campus communications. Training refers to programming, both theoretical and experiential, that would encourage faculty and staff to focus on further developing their personal intercultural competence skills.

Two of the interviewees, Katie and William, made specific references to awareness campaigns that they felt may enhance personal intercultural competence development. Katie suggested sending newsletters from the international visa advising office or reminding others that the “campus is international and people are coming from all different destinations.” Katie mentioned that human interest articles showcasing successful international students in campus communications send the message to everyone that “we’ve got fabulous people on this campus” and “here’s one of them and here’s where they’re from.” She felt that people need to be more aware that “everybody is unique” and that “everybody…should just be cognizant and treat [culturally distinct others] as you would want to be treated.” William’s campus has an “intercultural competency committee that does outreach” with campus partners. To exemplify, some of the work that is happening on William’s campus includes implicit bias training, which is required of faculty and staff involved in search committees. Throughout William’s interview, he stressed that the acquisition of intercultural competence skills is related to “intentionality and awareness” or as he summarized, “you can’t fix what you don’t know is a problem.”

Suggestions for training ranged from devoting a whole day to the topic of intercultural competence to planning faculty retreats or a workshop. Beth felt that special sessions such as retreats or workshops should cover what intercultural competence “means” in terms of how faculty teach and “what they see their students doing” after graduation. Deb suggested experiential training that involves campus community members who “become a minority” in a specific situation. For example, if people of Christian faith visit a Hindu temple, Deb suggested that individuals may be encouraged to reflect on the experience of what it “feels like to be a minority” and then describe how people of another culture are “interacting with you.” On a related note, Deb suggested creating a mock situation in which others are speaking another language that the participants in training don’t understand. After the experience, event coordinators can ask participants to record their feelings and describe what frustrated them and what they wish they knew.

William was the only interviewee who mentioned cultural competence training opportunities available at an international level within the International Association for College
of Admission Counseling (IACAC), an affiliate regional organization of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. William felt “encouraged and challenged in really healthy ways by the conversations that are happening specifically within EM [enrollment management] areas” of the IACAC. In particular, he referenced the IACAC board decision to offer “cultural fluency and competency training” to all members at no cost.

**Discussion**

This study seeks to provide information regarding the actual and perceived levels of intercultural competence of international enrollment and admissions professionals. Perceived areas for improvement are also detailed. The following section further expands on the aforementioned findings.

**Anxiety Management**

Interviewees operating within Denial, Polarization, and Minimization expressed anxiety in differing ways. Beth, for example, tends to feel judged when she is engaged with culturally distinct others because she feels she “sticks out” as “a white woman with blonde hair.” Furthermore, Beth tends to be “very watchful” of herself and is “a lot more quiet” when interacting with strangers in another country so that she does not draw attention to herself. Similarly, Katie reminds herself at times to “relax” when physical distance norms vary. When describing previous interactions with different cultures, Sherry had also experienced “shock and rejections” before she was able to “transition into acceptance and feeling more comfortable.” When referencing her ability to shift cultural perspectives, Sherry suggested that perhaps “it has more to do with the anxiety of transitions and change than it has to do with the culture.” In sum, higher levels of anxiety were expressed by the study participants with ethnocentric and transitional worldview orientations. Beth, Katie, and Sherry have worldview orientations that are sometimes expressed through behaviors associated with anxiety. At an unconscious level, those with these worldview orientations (as expressed by IDC scores) tend to utilize coping mechanisms that mask cultural differences. Beth and Katie, in particular, were unaware of their intercultural competence levels and never asked to see their IDI profile report even though they were offered the opportunity.

The majority of the sample of international enrollment professionals surveyed here operate within a developmental orientation of Minimization. Gudykunst (1993) suggests that when individuals perceive strangers to be similar to themselves, the strangers become less threatening, reducing their anxiety. So it is possible that these international enrollment professionals operate within Minimization because it serves as a method for anxiety management; if they operate within familiar cultural norms and treat everyone equally, they are better able to reduce stress and interact by employing familiar cognitive and behavioral patterns. However, growth and development will not occur if individuals continually operate within their own familiar context.

**Humble Progression**

Cultural humility was expressed by both interviewees with developmental orientations of Acceptance and Adaptation, Deb and William. Consistent with ethnoretative
orientations, the `interviews with Deb and William reflected their sense of curiosity and interest in personal growth. They did not make grandiose generalizations about particular cultures. To the contrary, both Deb and William relayed stories about positive interactions that they have had with people of other cultures. Deb’s cultural humility is seen whenever she reminds herself that “not everyone does things like Americans.” She noted that “there are different considerations to be had or different ways of communicating.” Deb also realizes that she has further personal growth to pursue, as she admitted that her ability to navigate cultural differences is not perfect but it is certainly “better than it used to be.” In Deb’s prior academic work, she pursued multiple opportunities that required suspending judgment to consider the viewpoints of others. Deb’s suggestions for ways that others can improve their level of intercultural competence, such as the suggestion of mock situations to help others reflect on what it feels like to be a minority and develop a sense of cultural humility, are indicators of intercultural sensitivity as well. On related note, William stated “with some level of humility” that he hopes his ability to shift cultural perspectives is better than his own self-perception. Although his developmental orientation on the IDC is Adaptation, William admitted that he still has more work to do to improve his cultural competence and that he is not “always successful” when interacting with people of other cultures. Both Deb and William have worldview orientations that are highly desired by the international enrollment management profession and yet both seem humbly cognizant of the fact that their development is ongoing. Cultural humility, therefore, seems to be best cultivated through initiatives that are intentional and bring self-awareness.

Suggestions for Professional Development

There are various considerations that individuals or institutions may want to explore to enhance the professional development of faculty and staff. It should be noted that pursuing any of these development opportunities will not necessarily guarantee that any individual will acquire greater levels of intercultural competence. Individuals will, however, make progress if they are willing to self-reflect and intentionally commit themselves to pursuing targeted learning opportunities that are specifically designed to increase intercultural competence and use assessment tools such as the IDI, which can serve as an initial gateway to gaining greater self-awareness (Kirkwood 2015). The IDI, for example, mandates that trained facilitators review the “targeted personal action plan” (Hammer 2016, 93) provided by the Individualized Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) with any individual who receives a copy of his or her personalized profile report, so that intentional efforts to guide individuals through the developmental process follow the assessment.

Another suggestion is for institutions to focus on the institutionalization of intercultural competence development efforts. Several universities have pioneered innovative programs designed to bring intercultural capacity building to the forefront of campus diversity initiatives. For example, Augsburg University in Minneapolis, Minnesota offers a Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program that is “designed to help faculty and staff continue to grow in their intercultural competence and to build the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to create
more inclusive spaces inside and outside the classroom” (Augsburg n.d.). Purdue University has also initiated their own Growing Intercultural Leaders program, which serves as “a professional development opportunity in intercultural competency for the faculty and staff of Purdue University” (Purdue n.d.). Through this program, trained faculty and staff members serve as intercultural coaches offering individualized peer-to-peer support. When considering a plan to enhance the cultural competence of campus community members, university and departmental leadership may want to enlist the support of external facilitators and trainers to collaborate with a core group of identified faculty and staff members willing to serve as future intercultural educator leaders. True North Intercultural, for example, is one of several organizations specializing in “training and coaching educators in intercultural pedagogy” (True North Intercultural n.d.).

On an individual level, there may be different learning opportunities to consider, located not far from home that may result in movement along the IDC. Individuals who wish to improve their intercultural communication proficiency may look into trainings and workshops provided through NAFSA or the Intercultural Communication Institute or to look into resources provided through IACAC. As suggested by the IDP, guided readings and reflections in intercultural journals may be helpful. Depending on where one lives, it may be beneficial to seek out local classes at a university or community college focused on intercultural communication. Similarly, there may be local theaters or cinemas featuring international productions. Art venues hosting international exhibitions or music venues showcasing international guest artists may offer additional exposure. The intentional pursuit of venues that attract people of other cultures does not necessarily require purchasing an airline ticket. In summary, exposing oneself to “a dissimilar other” can be viewed as a “discovery process of whirlwind adventures, mystery encounters, and surprising-learning moments” (Ting-Toomey and Dorjee 2019, 11).

These suggestions reiterate what Deardorff stresses: intercultural competence acquisition will be more widely accepted by staff and faculty if it is identified as an “outcome” of campus internationalization plans that is “assessed throughout time—not just at one or two points in time” (2006, 259). Intercultural competence has multiple layers; individuals do not necessarily gain competence simply by having knowledge of greetings, different grading systems, traditions, geography, or even an understanding of a second language. Merely being in the vicinity of another culture, completing a course with international learning outcomes, or spending some time in another country is not adequate to sufficiently develop the cultural competency skills that are so highly desired and expressed in the core values of institutions of higher education (Bloom and Miranda 2015). Institutions committed to developing intercultural capacities should invest in professional development opportunities for faculty and staff such that motivated individuals eventually move into training roles. In turn, intercultural capacity building permeates the greater campus culture as ongoing initiatives grow and develop over time.
Conclusion

One’s ability to respond to cultural differences is the focal point of the IDC as measured through the IDI. This study indicates that few international enrollment professionals are considered ethnocentric (12.0 percent) whereas more members of the population are considered ethnorelative (30.7 percent) based on their IDI developmental score. According to the IDI Group Profile, however, the majority of study participants (57.3 percent) had a developmental orientation of Minimization. As such, the population of international enrollment professionals may be driven to accept “universalistic principles, values and practices without a full understanding of how they mean something different in other cultures” (Hammer 2016, 80). Those with ethnorelative orientations displayed a mindset of “positive global competency” in which they exhibited a greater degree of “open-mindedness, resistance to stereotyping, complexity of thinking and perspective consciousness” than those with ethnocentric orientations (Lee Olson and Kroeger 2001, 118).

Utilizing assessment tools such as the IDI, future studies may want to incorporate Gudykunst’s (1993) theory of anxiety/uncertainty management as a way of exploring stress factors that international enrollment professionals may experience when meeting with people of another culture. Conversely, it may be helpful to know what individuals with developmental orientations of Acceptance and Adaptation are doing to alleviate nervousness. Finally, a comparative study of the developmental orientations between international enrollment professionals employed at large institutions versus smaller institutions may be insightful. As Sherry indicated in her interview, many smaller institutions lack the resources that would allow staff or faculty to focus on theoretical topics such as intercultural competence.

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Diversifying Global Education Through Cocurricular Global Experiences
By: Niklaus Steiner, PhD* (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)

As global education continues to expand at U.S. colleges and universities, institutions need to address the barriers that marginalized students face so that they too have access to global opportunities. While much effort has been made to increase diversity in credit-bearing study abroad programs, the field also needs to be mindful of cocurricular global experiences and to explore efforts being made to attract traditionally underserved students to such opportunities. This paper presents a case study of the approach the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill is taking to promote cocurricular global experiences to underserved students. It describes three specific programs launched by the Center for Global Initiatives that address barriers traditionally underserved students face and presents preliminary data from these programs. The goal of the paper is to facilitate a larger conversation about how cocurricular global experiences can best serve a wide range of students.

Keywords: cocurricular, diversity, inclusion, data, programs

Introduction

As global education continues to expand at U.S. colleges and universities, institutions need to address the barriers that marginalized students face so that they too have access to global opportunities. This concern lies at the intersection of two great priorities in U.S. higher education today: global and equity. Commitment to diversity and inclusion in global education is now a common feature among institutions of higher education and much effort has been made to increase diversity in credit-bearing study abroad programs (see Barclay Hamir 2018). Efforts have also been made to diversify cocurricular global experiences, but have such efforts been successful in attracting traditionally underserved students? Colleagues at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) have found little systematic, data-driven research to answer this question and have therefore launched a multiyear project to examine the nature of cocurricular global experiences and their impact on students who have traditionally been at the margins of global education. This paper presents a case study of the approach UNC has taken to address this issue with some preliminary data in hopes of facilitating a larger conversation about how cocurricular global experiences can best serve a wide range of students.

This project defines “traditionally underserved students” broadly to include students who have been at the margins of global education because of their academic discipline, age, disabilities, educational or family background, gender identity, racial or ethnic identity, sexual

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orientation, or socioeconomic status. In defining “cocurricular global experiences,” this paper aligns with the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) 2016 report The World is the New Classroom: Non-Credit Education Abroad (Mahmoud and Farrugia 2016) by considering the full range of experiences, including internships, research, work, volunteering, alternative breaks, and gap years, which can all take place abroad or in the local community. As Mahmoud and Farrugia (2016) note, such options are rapidly becoming prevalent in the global education landscape and universities need to better understand their impact and offer institutional support.

The larger, long-term goal of the research project is to assess the impact cocurricular global experiences have on the academic and career success of students traditionally underserved by global education. If it finds a positive impact, then these results can be used to help universities drive more resources toward such experiences, and thus more students will be able to take advantage of them. Such findings would mean that, designed and implemented robustly, cocurricular experiences can serve as an equalizer in global education (Steiner and Kurzman 2017).

Cocurricular Global Experiences: Importance, Challenges, and Interventions

Importance

Cocurricular global experiences are increasingly common and important. As Landorf, Doscher, and Hardrick write, “The cocurriculum plays an essential role in integrative and global learning, providing students with formal and informal opportunities to connect new and existing knowledge, skills, and experiences and apply them to local, national, or global issues” (2018, 143). Given the increasing prominence of cocurricular global experiences in higher education, the field needs to offer a wide variety of such experiences in order to ensure that we meet the diverse needs, interests, and concerns of our increasingly diverse student body.

At UNC, expanding cocurricular global experiences is crucially important as the university is launching the Global Guarantee, which by 2025 will ensure that all undergraduate students have access to a global experience. This ambitious initiative will require a significant scaling up of for-credit study abroad options, but that effort alone is unlikely to be sufficient given limitations with staffing and other barriers that students themselves face; the university also needs to significantly scale up cocurricular options because they offer innovative ways for students to overcome financial, cultural, and institutional barriers in pursuit of global experiences.

Furthermore, international educators need to ensure that for-credit and cocurricular education work hand-in-hand, complementing and reinforcing each other. Central to this effort is a pipeline UNC’s Center for Global Initiatives (CGI) is constructing that reaches students before they set foot on campus, offers them wrap-around services throughout their time at UNC, and helps them succeed upon graduation. This pipeline especially targets students traditionally underserved by global education, offering them early cocurricular experiences in hopes that they subsequently feel empowered to pursue other global experiences, including study abroad. In other words, the pipeline is designed to move students seamlessly between for-credit and cocurricular experiences throughout their time at UNC. Numerous campus units, including the
study abroad office, are gathering and comparing data on student participation to assess whether this pipeline is working, and the results are forthcoming.

**Challenges**

There are significant challenges for students wishing to pursue cocurricular global experiences, especially for traditionally underserved students. For example, unpaid summer internships pose a significant financial barrier to low-income students, as such students may lack not only the funding to undertake such an experience, but also cannot necessarily afford to forgo working to earn money for themselves and their families. Other students may have the needed funding but not the necessary social capital to secure such experiences (for example, a first-generation college student who has never left his or her home state may lack the networks needed to find an experience in New York, Nairobi, or Santiago). Traditionally underserved and underrepresented students may also face family opposition to pursuing cocurricular global experiences, either because of concerns over safety or over perceptions regarding the academic and career value of such experiences.

Cocurricular global experiences pose different challenges, not only for students but also for universities. While universities can easily track for-credit experiences, they may have a much harder time tracking cocurricular experiences. UNC, for example, lacks a single, centralized way to track when students are having cocurricular experiences. Even if a centralized way were established, administrators would still face the challenge of knowing exactly what to track. What, for example, should count as an internship? And when is an experience academically robust enough or temporally long enough to count? In other words, tracking cocurricular global experiences poses both logistical (how do we know a student has had one?) and methodological challenges (what exactly counts as one?), especially at a large, decentralized university like UNC.

**Interventions**

To help students, especially underserved students, find the needed resources to undertake global experiences, UNC’s Center for Global Initiatives (CGI) has created the *Embark* website (available at embark.unc.edu), which has two components to address both funding challenges and to alleviate students’ uncertainty. To address funding challenges, *Embark* offers the *Funding Finder*, a database that lists all internal, and many external, funding opportunities for supporting both cocurricular and for-credit global experiences. The database is searchable by traits such as GPA requirements, world region, degree status, and experience type (i.e., internship, language study, research, self-designed, etc.). To alleviate some of the uncertainty first-time travelers have, CGI also created the *Global Guide*. This guide is designed for students preparing for a global experience and is particularly useful for first-time travelers and those in the early stages of planning. From getting a first passport to dealing with culture shock, each section of the guide provides students with specific UNC resources and points of contact that can help them plan a global experience. We are currently developing a third resource to add to *Embark*—the *Experience Explorer*, which will be a searchable database of global experiences students have had; the intention is that students will self-report their experiences so that other students can learn from them.
In addition to creating new resources, CGI has also designed new programs to help underserved students with high financial need and little to no travel experience have their first cocurricular global experience. The first, Passport to Go!, provides financial and logistical support for students to obtain their first U.S. passport and connects them with peers, faculty, and staff to explore global opportunities. This program is only available to first-year students (including transfer students), and CGI works with the UNC Admissions Office to promote this program during the summer before students arrive on campus; students then receive their passport halfway through the fall semester. Launched in 2013 as a pilot with 15 participants, Passport to Go! has steadily increased so that in fall 2018 it had 168 participants. In addition to receiving their first passport, the students engage in a series of programmatic activities throughout the year, including the Discovery Dinner, an evening of networking and peer empowerment that brings together current participants and past participants of the program who have gone on to have global experiences.

The second program designed for underserved students to have a first cocurricular global experience is Global Take Off, which offers fully funded, five-day experiences for first-year or new transfer students to go to Puerto Rico. Global Take Off began in fall 2015 with 12 students and a faculty leader going to study Afro-Caribbean identity. The program is now expanding to Trinidad in partnership with UNC’s Housing Department, and CGI is planning future experiences to Canada, India, and Miami (the northern most city of Latin America).

The final program CGI launched to support cocurricular global experiences is the Carolina Global Initiative Award. While still for students with high financial need and limited to no travel experience, this award is generally for students further along in their studies and it supports longer opportunities such as internships and research, either abroad or domestically. Each year, around 85 students apply for this award and about 10 are awarded. Recent examples of award recipients have included a nursing major volunteering with a nonprofit organization in Sri Lanka and a global studies major exploring cultural arts advocacy in Puerto Rico.

While CGI has had success attracting underserved students to these three programs (see data in the next section), it now faces challenges related to expanding the programs. For example, in a summer 2018 survey of all new first-year students conducted by the UNC Admission Office, 658 out of the 3,155 student participants responded that they had never had a U.S. passport and that they were interested in learning more about the Passport to Go! program. While UNC has made global education a top priority in the current capital campaign, it remains to be seen whether it will provide the staffing and funding to grow Passport to Go! to meet this need. And who will fund and staff Global Take Off programs to other destinations? Diversifying and equalizing global education is not cheap!

A final significant challenge is demonstrating the value of cocurricular global experiences to students, families, and the institution, who all want such experiences to advance students’ academic and career interests. We must acknowledge that such experiences can be (or at least can seem to be) mere tourist junkets that are not grounded ethically or sustainably in the local community. To address such justified skepticism, CGI built a pipeline model at UNC and
now must examine whether it indeed works. Do students who have early global experiences in fact go on to have other, longer experiences? Do all these experiences help students succeed academically and secure a job upon graduation? And does this pipeline model at UNC work specifically for traditionally underserved students? It is too early in this research project to shed light on these crucial questions, but some insights may be gleaned from preliminary data.

**Data on Cocurricular Global Experiences**

Central to UNC’s work is gathering data on the cocurricular global experiences that students are having and CGI is using several approaches to gather this data. First, CGI is gathering demographic data on students participating in cocurricular global experiences while at UNC. Second, CGI is surveying alumni about the cocurricular global experiences they had while at UNC and what effects, if any, such experiences had upon their lives after graduation. Third, CGI is conducting surveys and focus group interviews with current students who have participated in cocurricular global experiences and with a control group of similar students who have not. Finally, CGI is assessing whether participation in newly designed cocurricular interventions make students more likely to enroll in globally-oriented for-credit classes either on campus or through study abroad. The rest of this paper lays out the preliminary data CGI has gathered, both from the three interventions and from UNC as a whole.

As mentioned above, CGI designed and launched three specific interventions aimed at attracting students with high financial need and limited to no travel experiences: *Passport to Go!*, *Global Take Off*, and the *Carolina Global Initiative Award*. Below are some demographics of the applicants (table 1) and participants (table 2) in these three interventions.

**Table 1. Applicants to Interventions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Nonbinary</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>n</em></td>
<td>%</td>
<td><em>n</em></td>
<td>%</td>
<td><em>n</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>433</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>1618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Participants in Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>Nonbinary</th>
<th>Prefer not to answer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
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<td>0.3%</td>
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<td>1.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
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<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When comparing the data between applicants and participants, CGI is pleased that they generally mirror each other. CGI would certainly not want to be able to attract a diverse set of applicants, but then fail to offer participation to such a diverse group. CGI is also pleased that the non-White population in both categories (61 percent for applicants and 60 percent for participants) is far higher than UNC’s overall non-White student population (30 percent). However, the proportion of men for both applicants and participants (27 percent and 28 percent, respectively) are below that of UNC’s general student body (40 percent).

The data for each of CGI’s intervention programs can also be looked at individually. Since its launch in 2012, Passport to Go! has had 499 students receive passports and participate in the program; CGI has been fortunate to have sufficient funding to allow all eligible applicants to participate. Of the 499 participants in Passport to Go!:

- 267 are students of color (54 percent)
- 100 are transfer students (20 percent)
- 299 are first-generation college students (60 percent)
- 260 have no one in their immediate family who has traveled internationally (53 percent)

The Passport to Go! intervention also aims for disciplinary diversity, and it has attracted students from 71 different academic disciplines at UNC, ranging from dramatic art and public policy to computer science and biomedical engineering.

Global Take Off: Puerto Rico, launched in 2016, has had five cohorts thus far with a total of 59 students participating. The program is highly competitive and has attracted 728 applicants. Table 3 shows some demographics comparing students who participated and who applied.
Table 3. Comparing Applicants and Participants—*Global Take Off: Puerto Rico*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants (n=728)</th>
<th>Participants (n=59)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>434 (60%) had no travel experience</td>
<td>53 (90%) had no travel experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>433 (59%) have a total family income of less than $40,000</td>
<td>46 (78%) have a total family income of less than $40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330 (45%) have no one in their immediate family with international travel experience</td>
<td>44 (75%) have no one in their immediate family with international travel experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>216 (30%) are transfer students</td>
<td>19 (32%) are transfer students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>492 (68%) are students of color</td>
<td>42 (71%) are students of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>427 (59%) are first-generation college students</td>
<td>39 (66%) first-generation college students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the *Carolina Global Initiative Award*, which began in the spring of 2015, has been awarded to 54 students and has attracted 341 applicants. Table 4 shows the demographics of participants and applicants.

Table 4. *Carolina Global Initiative Award* Demographics—Applicants and Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants (n=341)</th>
<th>Participants (n=54)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>112 (33%) had no travel experience</td>
<td>34 (63%) had no travel experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191 (56%) have a total family income of less than $50,000</td>
<td>41 (76%) have a total family income of less than $50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89 (26%) have no one in their immediate family with international travel experience</td>
<td>26 (48%) have no one in their immediate family with international travel experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 (14%) are transfer students</td>
<td>9 (17%) are transfer students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173 (51%) are students of color</td>
<td>37 (69%) are students of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119 (35%) are first-generation college students</td>
<td>30 (56%) are first-generation college students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistics from these three interventions are encouraging. They show that if properly designed, resourced, and promoted, cocurricular global experiences can attract students who have been traditionally underserved by global education. However, the sample size is relatively small and is drawn from the work of only one center at UNC. So, what does a broader perspective reveal?

To get a wider view of the diversity of UNC students pursuing cocurricular global experiences, CGI partnered with UNC’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to survey all undergraduate students in spring 2018. CGI designed the survey, which asked whether students had participated in cocurricular global experiences; students were asked to describe the experiences if they had one or the reasons for not participating if they had not. The survey also asked one open-ended question about specific barriers students face in participating in such experiences and another open-ended question on how the university can better support them. OIRA administered the survey, which got responses from 1,247 out of 18,109 undergraduate students (7 percent of the target population), and then analyzed the results, which are presented here. Their work is gratefully acknowledged.
To the survey’s first question—“While at UNC-Chapel Hill, have you had any global experiences for which you received no UNC-Chapel Hill credit?”—39 percent of respondents said “yes.” Below is the breakdown of survey respondents by race and gender of students who participated (table 5) and did not participate in cocurricular global experiences (table 6).

### Table 5. Participants by Race and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>355</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 6. Nonparticipants by Race and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>557</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in these two tables show no appreciable gender differences between the OIRA survey responses for UNC students who have and have not participated in cocurricular global experiences. They do show that a somewhat higher percentage of participants were White compared to nonparticipants; conversely, students who identified as Asian, Black/African American, and Hispanic accounted for a larger percentage of nonparticipants compared to participants of cocurricular global experiences.

As emphasized at the beginning of this paper, UNC seeks not only greater student diversity regarding race and ethnicity, but also greater diversity in students’ majors. Table 7 presents the breakdown of academic majors for both cocurricular global experience participants and nonparticipants. Only social science majors show a higher percentage among participants than nonparticipants. Also, the group that did not participate in noncredit global experiences.
contained a higher percentage of students with an undecided/unknown major than did the group of participants. Otherwise, there were no appreciable differences between the two groups in terms of their majors.

Table 7. Participants and Nonparticipants by Grouped Majors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major (Grouped)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Nonparticipants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts/Humanities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Professions</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Math</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided/Unknown</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another finding, perhaps not surprising, is that participants in cocurricular global experiences were more likely to be third-, fourth-, and fifth-year students than those newer in their college careers (i.e., first- and second-year students). The data also show that participants were less likely to be first-generation students, transfer students, or Pell Grant recipients.

Next, the survey asked what types of cocurricular global experiences students had, how valuable they thought such experiences were, and what barriers they faced in pursuit of such experiences. Figure 1 shows the type of experiences respondents reported having had.

Figure 1. Types of Cocurricular Global Experiences
The survey listed 10 different types of cocurricular global experiences, and students were allowed to choose more than one (so the percentage sum exceeds 100 percent). The survey then asked students to rate the value of their experiences on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=not valuable, 5=very valuable). Table 8 shows an impressive amount of value that students attributed to these experiences. In fact, none of the survey respondents rated any experience as “not valuable.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Experience</th>
<th>Slightly Valuable</th>
<th>Moderately Valuable</th>
<th>Valuable</th>
<th>Very Valuable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship, work, or volunteer abroad</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip with a student organization within the U.S.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research abroad</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip with a student organization abroad</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative break in the U.S.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship, work, or volunteer in the U.S.</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in a globally-oriented program on campus</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative break abroad</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active in a globally-oriented student organization</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in the U.S.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22%</strong></td>
<td><strong>69%</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By comparison, students who had not participated in a cocurricular global experience were asked why. The survey offered a list of 11 reasons, which CGI had drawn up based on conversations with students and on the literature. Figure 2 lists students’ survey responses regarding their reasons for not participating in cocurricular global experiences. The survey also included an “other” choice with an open-ended text field that gave students the opportunity to describe their reasons for not participating. Eighty-four students provided other reasons and table 9 provides these additional reasons.
Figure 2. Reasons for Not Participating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t know about opportunities</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not have the funds to participate</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic course requirements</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried I wouldn’t graduate on time</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faced the burden of lost working wages</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support/understanding from family</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t see myself as a student who could travel abroad</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of administrative support</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied for programs but was not accepted</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t see the value of global travel</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of peer support</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Other Reasons for Not Participating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Nonparticipants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too early in college career/still exploring options</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time/opportunities in major</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went abroad for credit</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/health/family reasons</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning a future global experience</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently applying</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic commitments</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to focus on academics/extracurriculars</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling of experiences not convenient</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically ineligible</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, the survey asked all students an open-ended question about what UNC could do to provide them with more cocurricular global experiences. Table 10 lists the top four suggestions, all of which were given by both participants and nonparticipants.

Table 10. Suggestions from Participants and Nonparticipants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Nonparticipants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with financial aspects</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More promotion of opportunities</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it easier to find opportunities/information</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand variety of opportunities</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All other reasons, for both participants and nonparticipants, fell under 10 percent and included suggestions that OIRA grouped into categories such as “more variety in scheduling,” “incorporate into majors/classes,” and “more explanation of benefits.”

**Conclusion**

Preliminary data from the three CGI interventions demonstrate that cocurricular global experiences can attract a diverse range of students if these interventions are carefully designed, promoted, and executed with the specific goal of attracting traditionally underserved students. CGI has worked hard to address the many barriers students face in pursuit of global experiences and therefore it has been able to attract a far higher number of non-White students (60 percent) than for-credit experiences attract nationally (29 percent), according to the most recent Open Doors survey (IIE 2018). The number of non-White students participating in these programs is also far higher than the total number of non-White students at UNC (30 percent). CGI’s programs, however, attract a lower number of men (28 percent) than do UNC’s for-credit education abroad experiences (40 percent), which is on par with UNC’s male population in general (41 percent). CGI’s male numbers are also lower than the national average for for-credit education abroad experiences (33 percent) (IIE 2018; OIRA 2019).

The data also show that students pursue a wide variety of cocurricular global experiences, both abroad and domestically, and that they see a great deal of value in them. However, students also face significant barriers to pursuing such experiences, and institutions need to address these barriers in order to ensure that all students have access to them.

Now that CGI has established that cocurricular global experiences can attract diverse students, the next important step is to explore whether its pipeline model, which is the foundation of UNC’s global diversity effort, is working. As mentioned earlier, we are in the process of working with partners from across campus to gather and assess needed data to answer this question, and we look forward to releasing those results in the future. It is worth noting that the Passport to Go! program shows initial signs that the pipeline is indeed working; 97 percent of students who responded to a 2016 survey agreed that the program positively impacted their decisions to subsequently go abroad.

A further conclusion is that tracking cocurricular global experiences is difficult, but universities need to begin doing it more systematically. Otherwise, they risk underreporting the global education their students are receiving, and fail to learn from their experiences so that they can improve both quality and variety. As Bhandari argues:

While there are real challenges to collecting robust data on non-credit education abroad, this is a phenomenon that should not be ignored. It highlights students’ strong interest in experiential learning outside of the traditional classroom model. As the context of education abroad changes, it is crucial for higher education institutions to actively seek information on what their students are already pursuing overseas so that they can be prepared to provide international experiences that meet the growing demand. (2016, 2)
Not only do universities need a complete picture of what kinds of students are pursuing what kinds of cocurricular global experiences, we also need to know why students are not pursuing these experiences and what barriers they face. Such a full picture would allow universities to adjust programming and marketing to ensure that all students have access to such experiences. A step in this direction is IIE’s *Open Doors* survey, which has started collecting data on cocurricular global experiences to match their effort to collect for-credit data. Only with comprehensive data on all the ways students are experiencing global education can the field begin to approach the goal of offering a global education to all students.

**References**


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1 Students reported 48 “Other” types of cocurricular global experiences, with the top two “Other” categories grouped by OIRA as vacationing/backpacking/living abroad (31 percent) and courses taken abroad for which the student got no UNC credit (27 percent). A smaller percentage of students indicated “Other” experiences such as mission trips (6 percent) or Birthright trips (2 percent).

2 A useful comparison of ethnicity/race between UNC’s for-credit experiences and CGI’s interventions are at this point not possible, as the for-credit data has significant gaps due to collection challenges; in the most recent *Open Doors* survey, the race/ethnicity of UNC students is unknown or is not self-reported in 1,743 of the 2,244 records.
Bringing MENA Out of the Box:
Study Abroad to the Middle East and North Africa
By: Jodi Sanger* (Institute of International Education)

While the post-9/11 era was seen as the “Sputnik moment” for study abroad to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Al-Batal 2007), study abroad numbers going to the region have remained very low, with only a handful of countries hosting the large majority of students. In fact, numbers have not recovered from their 2009 peak, as many popular destinations within the region were affected by the Arab Spring and continue to experience residual security concerns. However, the decline in numbers is not emblematic of need; the U.S. government continues to list Arabic and Middle East area studies as a critical need in which demand exceeds supply. Continued turmoil in the region, various regional responses to extremism and conflict, and increased globalization, displacement, and mobility necessitate a deeper and broader U.S. understanding of the region. They also require the capacity to deal with the political, economic, and humanitarian situations in nimble, smart, and nuanced ways that recognize the myriad realities represented in the region. Increased exposure through study abroad is one way in which international educators can begin to fill this need. This paper collects individual-level student data and analyzes it alongside secondary, country-level data in a multilevel analysis to determine obstacles and opportunities for a diversification of study abroad to the MENA region.

Keywords: Middle East, Arabic, study abroad, diversification, critical need

Introduction

International exchange has long been held as an important tool in connecting people and creating cross-cultural dialogue and understanding (Rundstrom Williams 2005; Burn 1980). Initiatives to increase study abroad participation abound, yet study abroad to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains stagnant, at a mere 2 percent of all U.S. students going abroad to MENA countries (IIE 2018). Given the strong interest and need for the United States to create cross-cultural dialogue and understanding with the MENA region in particular, increasing the number of students who study in this less traditional destination is of significant importance. With this in mind, this research aims to uncover obstacles to U.S. students studying abroad in the MENA region on a country-specific basis. Instead of treating the region as a monolithic whole, a country-level approach will allow for a deeper understanding of the realities, attractions, and obstacles that exist in order to affect progress. The research discussed in this paper focuses on primary source data collected through a survey of U.S. university students. It then employs inferential multilevel analysis incorporating country-level data, focusing on

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variables of significance as determined in prior longitudinal research, the results of which are briefly discussed. By conducting this analysis, this paper has important implications for ways in which study abroad organizations can successfully improve programs and develop new ones, in addition to ways in which universities can make improvements and build partnerships to make the MENA region as a whole accessible to a more diverse student population.

Literature Review

The idea of studying abroad is not new; the impetus behind the creation of the Institute of International Education (IIE) in 1919 and the first official study abroad programs in the United States at the University of Delaware in 1923 remain constant today: “By creating a greater understanding between nations through international exchange…countries could achieve a lasting peace and a strong basis for fostering more effective communication” (Lee 2012). This concept remains as relevant today as it was in the days of the World Wars. Over the past several decades, the world has become exponentially more connected and intertwined, and many people—academics and employers alike—increasingly believe that international awareness and understanding are vital to success in today’s world (Doyle et al. 2010). As such, universities have begun pushing for increased participation in international education programs (Dolby 2007). Since the 1920s, institutions have attempted to push beyond the traditionally elite profile of study abroad students to a more diverse profile of students (Vande Berg 2007). But there remains much work to be done in making study abroad accessible to all students. As pointed out by research conducted by Stroud (2010), 50 percent of U.S. students wish to study abroad, but only 10 percent actually end up following through.

Diversification within the study abroad student profile has become a major focus in recent years, while destination diversity has been less considered. An analysis of the 2012–13 academic year by IIE shows that although Europe is the main destination for U.S. students studying abroad, an additional 4 percent of the U.S. study abroad population goes to Australia or New Zealand, making the number of students that study in similarly “Western” countries approximately two-thirds of the total that year; by comparison, 16 percent of U.S. study abroad students went to South America, 12 percent to Asia, 5 percent to Africa, and only 2 percent to the MENA region (IIE 2014). In addition, it should be noted that of the 2 percent who went to the MENA region in 2012–13, about half of the students studied in one country: Israel. More recent data available from IIE for the 2016–17 academic year reveal that not much has changed since the 2012–13 period. The MENA region still only represents 2 percent of U.S. study abroad and 43 percent of those students went to Israel (IIE 2018). As determined by the Department of Defense’s National Security Education Program, Arabic and Middle Eastern area knowledge remain critically important, meaning the demand for expertise in these areas exceeds supply (Thompson 2013). While overall numbers are increasing in study abroad, there remains a wide gap in destination diversity and a vast opportunity to increase the inclusion of critically important regions like the Middle East when attempting to work toward the goal of increasing intercultural competence among U.S. college students.
Focusing on the MENA Region

Literature focusing on study abroad to the MENA region in particular is sparse, and relatively recent. The post-9/11 era “represents the Sputnik Moment for Arabic” (Al-Batal 2007, 268) and, given the doubling in Arabic language enrollment at the university level each year since 2002, there is a need for the Arabic language profession to consider “the ways in which study-abroad opportunities can be enhanced in order to meet the anticipated demand for such programs” (Allen 2007, 258).

A notable MENA-focused white paper was written by Gutierrez et. al. for IIE in 2009. In addition to describing the study of the Arabic language as a significant factor in U.S. students deciding to study abroad in Arab countries, the report indicates that many U.S. students studying abroad in the Arab world are interested in the humanities. This academic evaluation is in line with Vande Berg’s (2007) report that social sciences and humanities comprise the bulk of the general study abroad population. Ironically for the MENA region, it is specifically the social sciences and humanities that can often become the target of academic restrictions in more tightly controlled and censored Arab countries (Ulrichsen 2013).

A second study that has heavily informed this research is a paper published by Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013) regarding the profile of students who choose to study in the MENA region and the “motivations, attitudes, and aspects of human capital that influence study abroad destination choice” (308). Through their analysis of focus group data from students who studied abroad in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan, Lane-Toomey and Lane discovered that the dominant factor for choosing to study abroad in the MENA region was the desire to improve foreign language skills, followed by a desire for an “out there” experience and the advancement of career goals, with many students expressing interests in government jobs. The students in the study believed that they were different—more focused and serious—than their classmates who chose to study abroad in Europe; the students felt that those studying in Europe were more interested in having fun, which was confirmed in a separate survey analysis as the most dominant factor for students choosing to study abroad in Europe (Lane-Toomey and Lane 2013). However, because only three countries are considered in the study, it is difficult to make generalizations for the entire region, even if these countries do constitute a large share of the study abroad population in the MENA region.

Building on the research and analysis of these MENA-focused studies, the current study reframes the perspective of study abroad in the MENA region by focusing on trends and motivations on a country-level basis, expanding the analysis to all countries in the MENA region and all students who would consider studying abroad in the region. By doing so, this study seeks to explain potential causes for the lack of diversity in the student profile that has traditionally chosen to study in the region, potential causes for the continued small numbers of students who study in the region overall, and potential causes for the lack of diversity in destination choice in the Arab world. Increasing meaningful and personal connections made between U.S. citizens and peoples of the Arab world should be an excellent tool to overcome cultural misunderstandings
and misperceptions on a scale necessary to affect change and promote dialogue over conflict, and it is with these aspirations that this research was conducted.

**Methodology**

Collecting primary data on study abroad preferences and priorities is the centerpiece of this study, conducted as part of the author’s graduate degree work. This data collection involved a survey of U.S. college students at various institutions of higher education across the United States. The collected data is first analyzed using descriptive statistics to paint the picture of general student-reported preferences and priorities, along with multiple regression models to understand if the student population interested in considering studying in the MENA region matches the profile of students who have traditionally studied in the region (as determined by existing country-level data). A subsequent multilevel analysis (using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis) incorporates existing data in order to determine consistency in student-reported preferences and priorities, the most important explanatory factors determining study abroad considerations, and possible opportunity gaps for study in the Arab world. The survey includes various multiple choice questions and open-ended responses to allow those students who are (or were) open to studying in the MENA region to explain what motivates and influences their considerations most, why they have or have not studied in the MENA region already, or why they ultimately did not study abroad or chose a different destination. Similarly, the survey also collects explanatory data on those students uninterested in studying in the MENA region in order to determine differences, obstacles, and opportunities.

The 35-question online survey consists of five main sections: educational data, which regions and countries students would consider for study abroad, preferences and priorities in choosing a study abroad destination, actual study abroad experiences (if applicable), and demographic information. All responses were submitted anonymously and confidentially. Four universities participated in the survey, representing associate’s, master’s, and doctoral-level institutions, as well as Midwestern, Southern, and Western census regions of the United States. Depending on the participating institution, the survey was distributed either to the entire student body, through willing professors teaching general education courses, or to lists of students who had showed interest in or had completed study abroad programs. A total of 246 respondents completed the survey. (Table 1 in the next section shows the demographic representation of survey respondents.)

To conduct a multilevel analysis with the individual-level primary data, a variety of country-level variables were collected from secondary sources. First, it is often noted anecdotally that volatile security situations deter students from studying in the MENA region. In order to test this, personal integrity rights data from the CIRI Human Rights dataset (Cingranelli, Richards, and Clay 2014) are used to represent security risk in the analysis; FreedomHouse data, combined into one score, represent the level of political and civil liberty in a country. Preliminary analysis of this secondary data with institution-level study abroad data showed this logic does not align with the MENA countries that have historically attracted the largest numbers of U.S. students (IIE 2014), though individual-level data on preferences may show otherwise.
Additional factors that could directly affect U.S. students’ decisions in particular, such as the number of U.S. accredited universities and the number of U.S. accredited programs in the country each year, were also considered in the analysis using data gathered from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and cross-referenced with databases of the various corresponding programmatic accrediting organizations (including AACSB, ABET, ACBSP, ACCET, ACEJMC, ACPE, CIDA, CIHE, IACBE, MSCHE, NAACLS, NASAD, and NCATE\(^1\)).

Other independent variables affecting the general relationship between the United States and each country in the dataset were also considered as countries with more significant trade relations (Correlates of War dataset [Barbieri and Keshk 2012]), important histories with U.S. foreign assistance (U.S. Green Book [Committee on Ways and Means 2014]), and greater participation in U.S. higher education among their own populations (Open Doors International Student and Scholar Surveys [IIE 2014]) may influence students’ familiarity with the region (whether on the student level or institutional level) and their willingness to study abroad in different MENA destinations.

Results

Overview of Historical Trends

To first get a general picture of study abroad in the MENA region, figure 1 shows the growth trend of U.S. students in the region between the years of 2000 to 2011. Note that while the longitudinal analysis considers the years 2000 through 2013, several variables were lagged to account for reaction time to any changes. Therefore, the longitudinal range of study abroad data included in the analysis is 2000 (representing the 2000–01 academic year) through 2011 (2011–12 academic year). In looking at the graph, study abroad numbers to the region peaked in 2009, as did the disparate distribution of U.S. students studying in Arab host countries. As such, 2009 is representative of the rapid upward trend of U.S. study abroad in the MENA region and was the last year unaffected by the various Arab Spring events and the 2008 financial crisis (Magnus 2011; Kamrava 2012). Overall U.S. student study abroad totals were also minorly affected by the financial crisis, with a small dip from 2007 (262,416 students) to 2008 (260,327 students), but recovered the next year, with 270,604 U.S. students studying abroad in 2009. In the MENA peak year of 2009, Egypt hosted nearly 2,000 U.S. students, Morocco hosted about 1,300 U.S. students, and Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) came in as the third and fourth most significant Arab host states with about 700 and 600 U.S. students, respectively.
Most of the other countries included in the preliminary analysis did not even come close to hosting 100 U.S. students in 2009. While it is apparent that study abroad numbers to the MENA region were increasing until 2009 (and still remain elevated from 2000–01 numbers, though they have yet to recover to 2009 levels), it is also clear that only a few countries are hosting the lion’s share of U.S. exchange students in the MENA region.

**Study Abroad Preferences and Priorities**

An overview of the sample population surveyed for this research is included in table 1. Initial descriptive statistics of the survey data provide an overview of the preferences, motivations, and obstacles that are (and are not) at play among the sample of U.S. university students surveyed. Of the 246 respondents that reported interest in studying abroad, 123 (50 percent) reported that they would consider MENA as a destination region.
Table 1. Profile of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL</th>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Year</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>Female 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>Male 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East/South Asian</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Medicine</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public &amp; Social Services</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Language Study</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One language</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two languages</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more languages</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Language</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-European Language</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Household Income**

- $<31,000: 34%
- $31,000 - $41,999: 14%
- $42,000 - $83,999: 21%
- $84,000 - $125,999: 19%
- $126,000 - $187,999: 8%
- $>188,000: 4% 

**Setting of Permanent Residence (Population)**

- Rural (< 2,500): 8%
- Suburban (2,500-50,000): 45%
- Urban (> 50,000): 41%
- Moved between types: 6%
In terms of majors, figure 2 shows the breakdown of the sample by major and which students would and would not consider studying in the MENA region; over half of the social science majors surveyed said they would consider study abroad in the region, while interdisciplinary, STEM, and health and science majors said they would consider the MENA region for study abroad at even higher rates than the social science cohort.

**Figure 2.** Responses Based on Students’ Academic Majors

![Responses Based on Students’ Academic Majors](image)

Respondents who answered that they would consider studying in the MENA region were then asked which countries in particular they would consider as a study abroad destination, with no limit to how many countries they could select. As shown in figure 3, Morocco received the most positive responses with 82 percent of the 123 students that would consider studying in the MENA region. Next was Egypt at 77 percent, followed by Jordan with 54 percent, Israel with 53 percent, and the UAE with 50 percent. Iraq was at the bottom of the preference table, with a 12 percent positive response rate. Surprisingly, countries that were currently engaged in active wars (Libya, Syria, and Yemen) each received more positive responses than Bahrain, which received positive responses from 17 percent of the students interested in studying abroad in the MENA region.
Figure 3. Number of Respondents Who Would Consider Study Abroad by Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Top Choice</th>
<th>Total Who Would Consider Study Abroad Here</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to overall positive considerations, students who would consider studying in the MENA region were also asked to choose their top MENA destination choice. From this question, Egypt received 38 of the 123 responses (31 percent), followed by Morocco with 24 percent, Jordan with 8 percent, Israel with 7 percent, the UAE with 6.5 percent, and Lebanon with 5 percent. Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen received between 1 and 4 votes (1 to 4 percent) each; Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, and Libya were not first choices of MENA destinations for any of the respondents.

When all survey respondents interested in study abroad were given a list of seven countries of varying popularity and in varying regions (i.e., China, Colombia, Egypt, Kuwait, Spain, UAE, and United Kingdom), each to which they could respond “true” or “false” according to whether or not they would consider studying in the country, the three Middle Eastern countries received the three lowest percentages of responses. Spain and the United Kingdom received the highest percentage of “true” responses, at 96 and 95 percent respectively, followed by Colombia (66 percent), China (61 percent), Egypt (56 percent), UAE (44 percent), and Kuwait (34 percent). These responses loosely reflect the latest trends in actual study abroad destination choices, with IIE (2017) reporting the following study abroad percentages for the 2015–16 academic year: United Kingdom (12 percent), Spain (9 percent), China (4 percent), Colombia (<1 percent), Egypt (<1 percent), Kuwait (<1 percent), and UAE (<1 percent).

Relevant to this study, even though the three MENA countries ranked at the bottom of the list of seven countries, two-thirds of the respondents had indicated a willingness to consider studying in
at least one of these three countries, resulting in a higher proportion than those who indicated the MENA region as a study abroad consideration. Egypt received the most “true” responses of those who had not selected the MENA region as a study abroad destination consideration, followed by the UAE, and then Kuwait.

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I would only study abroad through a program offered by or in affiliation with my university,” the total sample of survey respondents gave an aggregated neutral response (3.09 on a scale of 1 to 5). However, of the 215 in the sample that had studied abroad already, 71 percent of the students had gone on programs offered directly by their university. So, although students may not have a strong preference, the obstacles to studying through an unaffiliated program may deter students from ultimately making that choice.

**Student Differences in Considering MENA for Study Abroad**

In beginning to analyze the differences in preferences and priorities in the sample, a Pearson’s Correlation table (table 2) is constructed out of an analysis of all independent variables collected from the survey; only significant and strong relationships are displayed.

### Table 2. Pearson’s Correlation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference for developed countries</th>
<th>Importance of related academics</th>
<th>Importance of political stability</th>
<th>History of conflict as deterrence</th>
<th>Consider MENA for study abroad</th>
<th>Instability as deterrence</th>
<th>Importance of living standard</th>
<th>Importance of political, civil freedoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Would consider MENA for study abroad</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>245</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of academic connection in program</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instability as deterrence</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preference for developed countries</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of political stability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
<td>&lt;0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Only showing correlations above 0.4 or below -0.4 at a significance level of at least p=0.05.*

Correlations of strengths above or below 0.4 and -0.4 are observed between several variables that aimed to measure similar preferences. Many of the expected correlations (such as that between *overall preference for development in destination* with *rate of agreement: preference for*
developed countries) are observed. As noted earlier, preliminary analysis of the existing longitudinal data shows the historically more popular MENA destinations are not the freer or more politically stable states in the region. Interestingly, no strong and significant correlations are found between the stability or freedom responses and consideration for MENA as a study abroad destination, as would have been expected given the results of the preliminary analysis. These correlations are taken into consideration in the subsequent regression analysis when searching for the best explanatory model.

Preliminary single independent variable regression analyses were run to determine which variables separately showed significant effects on the dependent variable would consider study in the MENA region. All variables that showed significant effects with coefficients of at least 0.1 or -0.1 were included in the first regression model to test their significance when considered together in one model. Control variables that showed significant (and positive) effects were the binary variable for Arabic language study, political views (coded 1=conservative, 2=moderate, 3=liberal), and residential home setting (coded 1=rural, 2=suburban, 3=urban). Findings from the analyses indicate that respondents whose political views tended toward more liberal views are significantly more likely to consider studying in the MENA region, and similarly, respondents whose residential home setting tend toward more urban settings are also statistically more likely to consider studying in the MENA region.

As far as expressed preferences, when controlling for Arabic language study, political views, and residential home setting of the respondent, analyses indicate that two factors—the overall preference for development in destination and rate of importance: living standard—show statistically significant negative effects on the dependent variable of whether students would consider study in the MENA region. Because of the strong correlations between the similar variables rate of agreement: instability as deterrence, rate of importance: political stability, and rate of agreement: history of conflict as deterrence, a series of regression models were run in order to determine which variable or combination of variables showed the strongest and most significant effect on the dependent variable. After the first regression model estimated with rate of importance: political stability and rate of agreement: history of conflict as deterrence showed no significant effects, the former variable was removed and rate of agreement: instability as deterrence was added to the model. This second regression model resulted in an improved model and rate of agreement: instability as deterrence showed a significant negative effect. In the third model, one of the two variables regarding cultural difference, rate of importance: experience a very different culture, was removed in order to see if the other variable, rate of importance: less traditional destinations preferred, would become statistically significant due to its closeness to being significant in the first two models. This variable did slightly improve in order to become statistically significant. The third model only included one statistically insignificant variable, rate of agreement: history of conflict as deterrence, and because of its correlation with the other stability variables it was removed in the fourth model. In addition, two other variables that represent factors that have been discussed in previous literature about study in the MENA region were added to test their significance: rate of importance: experience a political transition and
rate of importance: fun factor. Neither of these variables showed statistically significant results in the model with the other variables (even when testing each separately). Therefore, they were removed from the final model, which resulted in an adjusted R-Square value of 0.32 and seven statistically significant variables ranging from factors involving Arabic language study ($r=0.39$), political views ($r=0.08$), residential home settings ($r=0.10$), economic development ($r=-0.17$), living standards ($r=-0.08$), instability ($r=-0.08$), and the desire for a different and less traditional study abroad experience ($r=0.06$). Details of the ordinary least squares (OLS) estimations are included in table 3 in the appendix.

Multilevel Analysis

Bringing in secondary, country-level data, the multilevel analysis demonstrates the degree to which students’ preferences align with the countries students selected for consideration of study in the MENA region. When regressions were run with the variable importance of political and civil freedoms, the FreedomHouse variable (binned in quartiles) of the top choice MENA destination did result in significant negative effects ($r=-0.38, N=109, p=0.005$), meaning that as the society becomes more restrictive (resulting in a higher number quartile), there was a negative effect on the reported importance of political and civil freedoms by respondents. When all other variables from model 5 (see table 3 in the appendix) were controlled for in determining the effect on the importance of political and civil freedoms, the FreedomHouse quartile remained significant ($r=-0.29, N=99, p=0.02$). This ended up being the only secondary, country-level variable to show a significant correlation and regression effect on its corresponding survey preference variable. More significant correlations and regression effects would be expected if the profile of students who study in the MENA region was consistent with the general population that would consider studying in the region.

Finally, a closer look at subregional and country differences was taken and further tests were run to determine if there were significant differences observed between the preferences of those who would consider studying in the MENA region and those who would not. T tests assuming unequal variance were run as shown in table 4 (regional and subregional analysis) and table 5 (country-level analysis) in the appendix. Any respondent who reported that they would consider studying in the MENA region was included in the MENA variable, and any respondent who reported that they would not consider studying in the MENA region but would consider other locations was included in the non-MENA variable. In regard to the subregional variables, all respondents who showed a willingness to consider a country, regardless of their top choice MENA destination, were included in each country and corresponding subregional variable. Any respondent who selected at least one country in the Persian Gulf (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen,) was included in the Gulf variable. Similarly, any respondent who selected at least one Levant country (i.e., Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria) was included in the Levant variable, and any respondent who selected at least one North African country (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) was considered in the North Africa variable.
The regional analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the survey responses between the MENA and non-MENA respondents in six of the eight variables. The two variables that did not result in significant differences between the regional subpopulations were *importance of academic or personal familiarity with host country* and *importance of program academic relationship to major*. The other variables did show significant differences, each of them showing less agreement or importance for the MENA population than the non-MENA population. These include:

- *importance of political and civil freedoms*;
- *overall preference for development*;
- *importance of academic or personal familiarity with host country*;
- *importance of standard of living*;
- *agreement that political instability would deter choice of host country*; and
- *agreement for preference of studying in a developed country*.

In regard to subregional differences, each show statistically significant differences in the same variables as the overall regional analysis. However, there is no difference shown between the subregions as may be expected. Particularly in regard to stability and development, it would be logical that the profile of students choosing Gulf countries may have higher expectations in these factors than those choosing locations in the Levant or North Africa, but in fact the two development responses for North Africa (3.99 and 2.99) show slightly higher responses than those shown for the Gulf (3.98 and 2.95). However, these differences are slight and not significant, and are both significantly lower than the non-MENA scores (4.45 and 3.45). The score for the preference of living standard is slightly higher for the Gulf (3.66) than North Africa (3.60) and the Levant (3.50), but again, this difference is only slight and not significant, particularly in comparison to the non-MENA response (4.22).

Table 5 (available in the appendix) lists the MENA countries in order of their reported preference to easily observe differences between the popular and less popular nations. While not many differences are observed between the various countries, the countries at the top of the list tend to have more significant differences from the non-MENA population in two variables— *agreement for preference of studying in a developed economy* and *importance of academic or personal familiarity with host country*. In terms of the first variable regarding developed economies, the differences displayed between countries do not appear to correspond in any systematic way to the economies of the concerned countries. The fact that fewer differences occur toward the bottom of the list may be because respondents who selected these countries are willing to consider studying abroad anywhere, and their general preferences regarding economic development do not differ much from those who would not consider the MENA region at all, but do differ in comparison to those who would consider only specific MENA countries. Alternatively, it could merely be a result of the small sample size for each of these less popular countries.

Additionally, Lebanon and Tunisia were the only two countries that did not show significantly different responses in the *importance of political and civil freedoms* variable, and it
is these two countries where these freedoms are most available in the MENA region. It is also interesting to note that preferences for knowing friends in a study abroad program and connecting the experience to a student’s academic major do not differ significantly between the regions, subregions, or countries except in the case of Tunisia.

Taken together, these findings suggest that, regardless of the destination, students who are interested in study abroad have quite varied preferences, suggested also by the large standard deviations for the preference variables across all countries, subregions, and regions. Tunisia may be the exception here in the case of academic relationships with a student’s major with the recent Arab Spring revolution and political transition, so it may be a strong draw for those students who place higher importance on freedoms (reflected in its closeness with the non-MENA subpopulation score on this variable) and are particularly interested in politics in the region.

Discussion

Analysis of the survey data suggests that the traditional profile of students who study in the MENA region is narrower than the profile of students who would be interested in considering a study abroad program in the MENA region. A simple but clear and important first observation is that a full 50 percent of the sample surveyed expressed interest in considering the MENA region as a study abroad destination, with representation across all academic majors. While existing data and studies suggest students of the social sciences are most attracted to study in the MENA region (Gutierrez et al. 2009; Vande Berg 2007), the survey data presented here show a much wider interest. In fact, in addition to the social sciences, more than half of students in STEM, health and medicine, and interdisciplinary majors reported that they would consider studying in the MENA region, representing fields traditionally underrepresented in MENA study abroad. While Arabic language study certainly had a positive impact on students’ interest in studying in the MENA region (unsurprisingly, all students who had studied Arabic would consider the MENA region for study abroad), not studying Arabic did not appear to be a significant deterrent, as 82 percent of the students surveyed who would consider the region had never studied Arabic.

In estimating a regression model that best explains students’ considerations for study in the MENA region (controlling for Arabic language study), six important factors were determined:

1) This profile of students has a less determined desire to study in economically-developed countries.
2) The living standard in a country is less of a priority.
3) Students are slightly more motivated by the allure of less traditional locations in general.
4) Political instability is less of a deterrent than it is for students who would not consider studying in the region.
5) Students with more liberal or undefined political views are more likely to consider the region than students with more conservative political views.
6) Students from more urban areas are more likely to consider studying in the region than those from more rural areas.
The first four points fall in line with the analysis of existing country-level longitudinal data in that these students are not specifically seeking out economically-developed and stable destinations; they are not specifically seeking out the traditional destinations in Europe, although most would also consider study abroad programs there as well. On the other hand, the “fun factor” difference that was shown by Lane-Toomey and Lane (2013) between the MENA and European destination students did not result in significant effects in this study when analyzing the student body that would consider studying in the MENA region. It appears that the priority of having fun (or lack thereof) is not consistent across all students that would consider a study abroad experience in the MENA region, but perhaps the narrow target and lack of diversity in available programs may explain the difference in the ultimate makeup of students who actually end up studying in the region.

In terms of multilevel analysis and subregional differences, important points to take away are:

1) Students’ priorities and preferences in terms of political and civil freedoms significantly matched with the country-level data of their top choice MENA countries, but students’ priorities and preferences in terms of political stability and economic development did not significantly match with the country-level data of their top choice MENA countries.

2) Students considering the MENA region and MENA subregions all differed significantly and fairly uniformly from the non-MENA-considering students by showing less priority and preference for the importance of political and civil freedoms, economic development, academic or personal familiarity with the country, political stability, and standard of living.

The first factor suggests that there is a disconnect in students’ reported preferences and priorities in terms of political stability and economic development and their reported considerations of specific countries in the MENA region. The analysis compares students’ preferences to the country-level data of their reported top choice destination in the MENA region, so there are certainly limitations in drawing conclusions about the complexity of student choice when they would consider a wide variety of destinations. The near uniformity in reported preferences between the subregions does suggest that there is at least a lack of differentiation between the specific subregions students would consider. This may be because these students are generally less particular and would consider a study abroad experience in a variety of different conditions, and for this, they all differ significantly from the non-MENA group that generally places a higher priority on economic development and political stability.

In terms of country-level differences, the data are less clear, but the disconnect observed in the multilevel analysis suggests that a student’s lack of familiarity may play a role in the general uniformity or nonsystematic differentiation observed between the countries (ref. table 5). One area where coherent differences are observed between countries is in terms of the importance students place on political and civil freedoms. Students who selected Lebanon and Tunisia—the two countries that offer the most political and civil freedoms in the MENA region—report statistically higher preferences for destinations with greater freedoms than present in
other countries, and did not differ significantly from the profile of students who would not consider studying in the MENA region. Like the subregional analysis, the country-level results are similar in that most students who would consider the MENA region for study abroad show significantly different results from their non-MENA peers in terms of being more open to varying levels of development and political stability within a study abroad destination. However, like the subregional results, students interested in the MENA region across all subregions and countries did not differ significantly from the non-MENA students in terms of a preference for knowing friends in the program and the academic relationship of the program to the student’s major. Across the entire sample, students prioritized the connection of study abroad programs with their academic specializations, but did not concentrate on knowing friends or classmates in the program. Since students interested in the MENA region did not differ from their non-MENA peers in terms of these two factors, one important obstacle to a diversified and increased study abroad population in the MENA region may be a lack of diverse academic options available for students to study abroad in a program relevant to their studies.

In order to diversify the student study abroad profile as well as the destinations—particularly to the MENA region—study abroad offices and organizations should look at the ways in which the MENA region is being promoted to their student body and consider how program offerings can be diversified in order to reach out to the full spectrum of students considering studying abroad in this largely untraveled region. This is especially important considering that most students study abroad through programs offered directly at their university, regardless of whether or not they would consider studying abroad otherwise. In addition, educators on U.S. university campuses and in secondary schools should reevaluate the ways in which the MENA region is taught, as a better and more nuanced understanding of the region would likely allow students to more appropriately and easily consider specific study abroad destinations and programs in the region that match their priorities and preferences. As of now, the data suggest many students may lack the ability to differentiate effectively. One way of addressing both of these issues would be to embed virtual exchange programs that expose U.S. students to the MENA region, such as those offered by Soliya, into domestic courses. Virtual exchange provides an economical opportunity for U.S. students to interact with students from the MENA region and learn about their countries in a more personal way, allowing a greater range of students to learn about the region. If embedded in classes offered to first- and second-year undergraduate students, it could also function as a jumping point to study abroad later in the college experience, much like short-term study abroad trips offered to freshmen, giving students the requisite level of knowledge, comfort, and intrigue to more seriously consider studying in the region.

More diverse options for study in the MENA region could attract those who are interested in cross-cultural experiences in these nontraditional locations, but are not necessarily focusing their studies specifically on regional or cultural studies. As the survey results presented here suggest, students of STEM and health and medicine majors are indeed interested in studying in the MENA region, but a lack of options relative to their academic studies may deter many from
doing so. Even the traditional student attracted to the MENA region could benefit from an opening of more diverse opportunities for study in the region. Surely those students who focus their academics on the MENA region could gain just as valuable an experience studying in Bahrain (the least preferred country besides Iraq) as they could studying in Morocco or Egypt (the most preferred countries), perhaps particularly because Bahrain is far less traveled.

Regardless, the traditional student body drawn to the traditionally more popular MENA destinations should absolutely continue to grow and these students should continue to study the topics that peak their interests in the destinations of their choice. However, there is great opportunity to attract a wider range of students to the region that will promote a deeper and broader understanding of the region among U.S. college graduates and meet critical national needs. To make this happen, the narrow traditional MENA student profile should not continue to define the academic box by which the entire region is constrained.

**References**


1Accrediting agencies and corresponding acronyms are: Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB); Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET); Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP); Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET); Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC); Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE); Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA); Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE); International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE); Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE); National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Science (NAACLS); National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD); National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).
## Appendix

**Table 3. Regression Analysis of Preferences for MENA Destination Considerations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language Study: Arabic</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Preference for Development in Destination</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Importance: Living Standard</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
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<td>-0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rate of Importance: Less Traditional Destinations Preferred</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate of Importance: Political Stability</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Agreement: Instability as Deterrence</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rate of Importance: Experience a Very Different Culture</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.05)</td>
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<td>Rate of Agreement: History of Conflict as Deterrence</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Rate of Importance: Experience a Political Transition</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Importance: Fun Factor</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent Demographics: Political Views</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<td>(0.03)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respondent Demographics: Residential Setting (population size)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>0.107</td>
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<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adj R²</td>
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<td>0.32</td>
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Note: Bold text indicates significance at the 0.05 level or lower; results from ordinary least square (OLS) estimation.
Table 4. T-Test for Significance of Observed Subregional and Regional Differences in Considering Destinations in Comparison to the Sample Uninterested in Studying in the MENA Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Importance of host country having:</th>
<th>Importance that I:</th>
<th>Agreement that:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>advanced political levels of comfort</td>
<td>know</td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and civil development standard of</td>
<td>familiar</td>
<td>the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>freedoms</td>
<td>living</td>
<td>program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(rated 1-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.24)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levant</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(1.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.59</td>
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<td>(1.17)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-MENA</td>
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<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bold text indicates significance at the 0.05 level or lower, results from T-Test of unequal variances.
Table 5. T-Test for Significance of Observed Country-Level Differences in Considering Destinations in Comparison to the Sample Uninterested in Studying in MENA Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Importance of host country having: political and civil freedoms (rated 1-4)</th>
<th>comfort level of living</th>
<th>know friends in the program</th>
<th>am familiar with the country</th>
<th>go on program related to my major</th>
<th>Agreement that political instability is a deterrent to study in a developed economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>4.00 (1.17)</td>
<td>3.00 (0.68)</td>
<td>3.70 (1.05)</td>
<td>2.76 (1.66)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.43)</td>
<td>3.37 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>3.99 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.93 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.58 (1.13)</td>
<td>2.72 (1.67)</td>
<td>3.31 (1.40)</td>
<td>3.64 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>3.91 (1.09)</td>
<td>2.87 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.45 (1.24)</td>
<td>2.75 (1.69)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.50)</td>
<td>3.88 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>3.82 (1.38)</td>
<td>2.98 (0.76)</td>
<td>3.63 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.63 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.52)</td>
<td>3.78 (1.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>4.10 (1.10)</td>
<td>2.88 (0.76)</td>
<td>3.70 (1.12)</td>
<td>2.70 (1.72)</td>
<td>3.48 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.91 (1.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>3.73 (1.35)</td>
<td>2.67 (0.80)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.36)</td>
<td>2.41 (1.69)</td>
<td>3.31 (1.70)</td>
<td>3.53 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>3.70 (1.32)</td>
<td>2.81 (0.67)</td>
<td>3.50 (1.33)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.72)</td>
<td>3.12 (1.55)</td>
<td>3.76 (1.40)</td>
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<td>Palestine</td>
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<td>2.59 (0.83)</td>
<td>3.38 (1.54)</td>
<td>2.38 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.28 (1.59)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>3.85 (1.16)</td>
<td>2.77 (0.87)</td>
<td>3.50 (1.31)</td>
<td>2.50 (1.76)</td>
<td>3.16 (1.51)</td>
<td>3.66 (1.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
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<td>2.71 (0.69)</td>
<td>3.64 (1.35)</td>
<td>2.75 (2.05)</td>
<td>3.57 (1.50)</td>
<td>3.86 (1.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
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<td>2.77 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.40 (1.33)</td>
<td>2.36 (1.44)</td>
<td>3.40 (1.45)</td>
<td>3.60 (1.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>3.67 (1.47)</td>
<td>2.79 (0.85)</td>
<td>3.25 (1.77)</td>
<td>2.58 (1.75)</td>
<td>3.46 (1.75)</td>
<td>3.88 (1.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>3.96 (1.27)</td>
<td>2.88 (0.83)</td>
<td>3.71 (1.40)</td>
<td>2.54 (1.71)</td>
<td>3.42 (1.70)</td>
<td>3.75 (1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
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<td>2.67 (0.76)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.56)</td>
<td>2.29 (2.10)</td>
<td>3.14 (1.84)</td>
<td>3.81 (1.56)</td>
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<td>Syria</td>
<td>3.77 (1.39)</td>
<td>2.68 (0.61)</td>
<td>3.41 (1.69)</td>
<td>2.55 (2.01)</td>
<td>3.41 (1.69)</td>
<td>3.59 (1.63)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>3.87 (1.67)</td>
<td>2.69 (0.77)</td>
<td>3.63 (1.50)</td>
<td>2.53 (2.11)</td>
<td>3.37 (1.79)</td>
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<td>Iraq</td>
<td>3.67 (1.85)</td>
<td>2.80 (0.65)</td>
<td>3.67 (1.54)</td>
<td>2.87 (2.05)</td>
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<td>3.83 (1.78)</td>
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<td>Non-MENA</td>
<td>4.37 (0.98)</td>
<td>3.43 (0.45)</td>
<td>4.22 (0.89)</td>
<td>2.68 (1.65)</td>
<td>3.86 (1.18)</td>
<td>4.04 (1.14)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bold text indicates significance at the 0.05 level or lower, results from T Test of unequal variances.
Undergraduate Students’ Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Study Abroad Programs: Validating the Self-Efficacy in Study Abroad Scale (SESAS)

By: Lily D. Lopez-McGee, PhD* (George Mason University)

This study seeks to validate the Self-Efficacy in Study Abroad Scale (SESAS), a tool designed to assess students perceived self-efficacy beliefs in cross-cultural competence, resilience, study behaviors, international mindedness, and problem solving. Data were collected via a questionnaire with several sections including: personal data questionnaire, previous travel experience and study abroad program information, the Study Abroad Goals Scale (SAGS), and the SESAS. Survey responses were collected from 163 student participants who studied abroad on short-term programs and responded to the questionnaire. The results from the principal component analysis demonstrate that the SESAS is a valid instrument resulting in five factors with acceptable reliability indices. This study provides practitioners a tool for assessing students’ self-efficacy in applying what they have learned from their time abroad. The study offers potential topics for future research with regard to developing students’ self-efficacy in these five domains.

Keywords: self-efficacy, undergraduate students, study abroad, principal component analysis

Introduction

In 2014, the Institute for International Education (IIE) put forth a challenge to higher education institutions and organizations involved in international educational exchange to double the number of U.S. college students participating in an educational experience abroad—the Generation Study Abroad initiative (IIE 2014). In addition, there has recently been a surge in the mainstream media coverage of study abroad, defined as an educational experience outside of the participant’s home country, and the purported benefits of spending some time in an international context (Anderson 2015; Cirino 2015; Edwards 2015; Lasker 2015). As a result, international educators and study abroad enthusiasts have expressed, with increasing urgency, the need to develop better empirical tools to measure the academic and nonacademic learning outcomes students gain from going abroad (Bolen 2007; Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill 2009; Brewer et al. 2015; Chieffo and Griffiths 2004, 2009; Engle 2012; Hovland 2010).

The need for more tools and resources to measure what students are learning has also come as a result of the increase in the number of short-term study abroad programs (e.g., 8 weeks or less [IIE 2018]) and faculty-led initiatives (Chieffo and Griffiths 2009; Mullens and Cuper 2012). For many years, there was an implicit understanding that the duration of the program determined how much a student was able to learn during their time abroad: longer programs

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generated better learning outcomes (Vande Berg et al. 2012). In recent years, however, studies have shown that the quality of the program and students’ engagement during their time in-country are potentially more important to increasing students’ intercultural learning than the amount of time they are abroad (M. Bennett 2010; Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill 2009; Chieffo and Griffiths 2004, 2009; Vande Berg et al. 2012). However, these findings have focused almost exclusively on intercultural competence, defined as “a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts” (J. Bennett 2011, 3), and the field has only recently begun looking at other approaches to assess a wider range of ways that students grow from an international experience.

Study abroad has many purported benefits for those who ultimately decide to pursue it, including language acquisition, intercultural competence, and cross-cultural communication, among others (M. Bennett 2010; Kim 2001; Lee, Therriault, and Linderholm 2012; Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner 2014). Fewer studies, however, have sought to empirically assess the veracity of the claims that students would, for example, come home from their time abroad more confident in implementing their newly acquired skills (Brenner 2003; Juhasz and Walker 1988). Several assessment tools exist to measure language acquisition, intercultural/cross-cultural competence, and global competence, including the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al. 2003), the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (Kelley and Meyers 1995), the Global Perspectives Inventory (Braskamp et al. 2009), and the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (Shealy 2016). However, the application of tools that measure psychological development have only recently gained traction in education abroad (e.g., Savicki and Cooley 2011; Savicki, Arrue, and Binder 2013). For this reason, more work needs to be done to assess students’ psychological and cognitive changes—often referred to as personal growth or transformation—to demonstrate that students benefit in a variety of ways from going abroad. This study sought to advance these efforts by validating a scale that looks at students’ self-efficacy in five domains including cross-cultural communication, resilience, study behaviors, international mindedness, and problem solving, in order to offer another tool for the field to better understand students’ perceived gains from going abroad.

**Literature Review**

Self-efficacy, a personal factor and cognitive process, refers to a person’s perception of her or his own capacity to engage in a specific task or activity (Bandura 1977; Eccles and Wigfield 2002; Pintrich 2004; Schunk 1990). Sources of self-efficacy come as a result of enactive mastery (action and practice), vicarious experience (modeled learning), social persuasion (responses from the environment), and the individual’s psychological state. These constructs help build the foundation for how self-efficacy is used in this study, since study abroad entails a range of experiences, activities, and engagements. Individuals with higher senses of self-efficacy have been shown to take on more challenging activities, see those activities as challenges to be mastered rather than threats, and recover more quickly from setbacks (Bandura
In the context of studying abroad, it could be helpful to understand students’ present state of self-efficacy to identify the activities they might pursue or avoid and identify students who might be more at risk for responding negatively to a different environment (Brenner 2003). It may also be helpful to know students’ self-efficacy in the domains of learning applicable to study abroad to determine how likely they are to pursue other international and intercultural opportunities and apply their new knowledge from being abroad to their experiences back home (Brenner 2003; Church 1982; Davis 2000; Gabriel 2008). Milstein summarizes this well by stating, “key to the rise or drop in self-efficacy beliefs is the individual’s cognitive processing of the diagnostic information that performances convey about capability” (2005, 224). Scholars from diverse disciplines have confirmed that perceived self-efficacy plays an important role in human self-development, adaptation, and change (Bandura 2006), and thus may shed light on what students stand to gain from study abroad experiences.

Self-efficacy in Study Abroad

In a recent study, Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund (2016) look at the effects of study abroad on students’ general self-efficacy beliefs. The study compares pre- and postgeneral self-efficacy survey results from 93 students who had studied abroad for a semester to results from 128 students who had not. Their findings indicate a significant difference between the sojourners and non-sojourners in their perceived sense of general self-efficacy after a six-month period. Students who reported a higher sense of general self-efficacy prior to having gone abroad were found to report feeling a new culture as less threatening than those who had reported a lower sense of self-efficacy before having gone abroad. Also notable, the study finds that the number of social contacts students met per week while abroad served as a mediator for developing higher senses of self-efficacy abroad. This finding, in particular, suggests that students who can meet with more people while abroad (particularly those who are abroad for at least a semester) may also experience increases in their sense of general self-efficacy. While the study does not explore domain specific self-efficacy indicators, this and previous studies offer evidence to suggest that study abroad has the potential to enhance a student’s sense of self-efficacy. Increases in self-efficacy, then, may translate into other areas of students’ academic and professional experiences, including academic performance, goal setting, and participation in more challenging activities.

Another area of study abroad that has been explored through the lens of self-efficacy is sojourner adjustment abroad. One might expect students who are more confident in specific domains such as language and intercultural competencies to also be able to adjust or adapt more effectively than students who are not as confident in their skills. One study qualitatively examines the experiences of U.S. teachers in Belize and finds evidence to suggest that sojourners with high self-confidence are likely to have an easier time adjusting to their new environment than those who do not express high self-esteem (Gabriel 2008). In another study by Brenner (2003), 52 U.S. study abroad students were tracked from predeparture through their experiences abroad and upon their return to record their intercultural experiences and assess their self-awareness and sociocultural adjustment. Results from the study suggest that students with higher levels of intercultural adjustment self-efficacy exhibited a stronger relationship between self-
awareness and sociocultural adjustment (Brenner 2003). These results indicate, then, that students may be better able to adjust to their new environment if they exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy.

The five domains of self-efficacy identified for this study (e.g., global competence, cross-cultural communication, problem solving, resilience, and study behaviors) are particularly relevant given the nature of studying abroad. Students with a strong sense of their abilities to tolerate ambiguity and manage unfamiliar social situations may be better positioned to thrive in an international context. This is particularly relevant for study abroad because the experience requires a certain amount of self-efficacy as participants will engage in a new cultural environment and engage with people from diverse backgrounds (Juhasz and Walker 1988; Milstein 2005; Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund 2016). First, and most prominent in the literature, is the need for knowledge of international issues or global competence, as students who go abroad are expected to come back with a greater sense of the challenges that people face around the world and how their individual experiences are tied to those global issues (Grosse 2004; Michigan State University 2003; Mullens and Cuper 2012; Stoner et al. 2014). Understanding complex world issues and being confident in one’s understanding of those matters may potentially encourage students to apply such knowledge in the classroom, discussions with peers, and conversations in social settings.

A second important concern of many international education efforts is getting students to communicate more effectively with those from different cultural backgrounds. In an international context, students are frequently confronted with the need to master the host culture’s communication rules, cues, and codes that go beyond comprehension of the language (Kim 2001; Milstein 2005). Understanding students’ perceptions of their cross-cultural communication abilities (i.e., willingness to initiate and test interactions with local community members) may provide support for curricular interventions that help students practice different communication scenarios with the host culture and increase the likelihood that students will independently pursue such opportunities outside of the classroom.

A third cognitive domain used during study abroad is general problem solving, as students will encounter situations while abroad that require an ability to resolve unexpected issues. Problem solving, referred to here as “the cognitive processing directed at achieving a goal when the problem solver does not initially know a solution” (Mayer 2013, 769), is an important tool students may call on when exploring their new surroundings (e.g., using public transit) and engaging in day-to-day activities (e.g., paying for a meal at a restaurant without knowing how or when to leave a tip). Thus, students’ perceived abilities to problem solve may determine if and how they engage with unfamiliar situations.

Related to problem solving, students who go abroad may find themselves in circumstances that are disappointing (e.g., difficulty finding comfort food), challenging (e.g., getting lost), and troublesome (e.g., being pick-pocketed). Successful navigation of such experiences requires and facilitates the cultivation of skills in persistence and resilience (Savicki et al. 2004). Within the context of study abroad, resilience has particular relevance as it relates to a student’s ability to adapt to various challenges that occur in an international context, such as
culture shock, communicating across language barriers, and navigating unfamiliar places (Connor and Davidson 2003; Klemens and Bikos 2009). Though the concept of resilience is most often associated with an individual’s ability to recover from loss or trauma, the experience of placing one’s self in a foreign context with only a rudimentary understanding of the social and cultural environment can be quite challenging. Students’ perceptions of their abilities to persist through difficult circumstances can be useful in adapting to the new and unfamiliar environment inherent in studying abroad.

Finally, because study abroad is innately academic in nature, students’ beliefs in their capacities to perform well in their coursework and manage competing priorities are critical to their success in taking their studies abroad. Taking classes in an international context may change or challenge students’ perceptions of their abilities to complete academic tasks while they are also adapting to and engaging with a new peer-group and cultural context. Ultimately, students’ self-efficacy in their study behaviors may influence how they perform in their classes (Bandura and Schunk 1981; Schunk and Pajares 2005; Zimmerman 2000). For these reasons, this study focuses on testing a scale (i.e., the SESAS) that measures study abroad participants’ perceived self-efficacy beliefs in global competence, cross-cultural communication, resilience, study behaviors, and problem solving; the following research question guides the analysis of the findings: does the SESAS demonstrate acceptable construct validity and reliability?

**Methodology**

The research presented in this article is part of a larger study that uses a concurrent nested mixed methods approach to understand the goals college students have for their study abroad experience and their perceived self-efficacy in five domains of self-efficacy—general problem solving, study behaviors, cross-cultural communication, resilience, and global competence. The larger study aims to implement a longitudinal design that examines students before and immediately after their study abroad experience. While the full study entails a mixed methods approach, this article focuses specifically on the quantitative component of the research and the validation of the SESAS.

*Initial Development and Pilot Testing of the SESAS*

The SESAS is a tool that was developed for the purpose of this study to better understand the self-efficacy beliefs of study abroad participants. A pilot of the SESAS was initially conducted in 2014 to explore a set of newly developed items in specific domains of self-efficacy beliefs considered relevant to the study abroad experience. The items were developed utilizing existing research from a number of disciplines, including educational psychology, international education, and study abroad. The pilot version of the SESAS, which garnered 65 responses, included six subscales: study behaviors, cross-cultural communication, problem solving, resilience, identity and purpose for study abroad, and global competence. The overall SESAS produced a high level of internal consistency of the items, having generated a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 during the pilot study (Lopez-McGee 2014).
While the pilot study provided an opportunity to test the initial reliability of the SESAS, a larger-scale study was needed to further test its validity and reliability. For this reason, the items were not modified, and the present study served as an opportunity to refine, adjust, and remove items that may not be as relevant to the intended population (i.e., study abroad participants in higher education).

Research Design

The larger study used a survey design that includes both a predeparture and a reentry survey of students who participated in any study abroad program during the 2017 winter term and the 2017 summer term. Both surveys were conducted online. Students were approached using electronic correspondence, both from the researcher as well as education abroad staff at the institution. The emailed announcements were posted in tandem with the mandatory predeparture orientation that students attend (November for winter term students and April for summer term students). In total, the predeparture survey includes 60 items and took 16 minutes to complete on average. Students received additional correspondence for the reentry survey directly following their return to the United States to capture their immediate reactions to their international experience. This portion of the study relied on reaching a broad range of students to ensure a sufficient number of responses in order to validate the SESAS.

Setting

The researcher selected the institution, a large public university located in the mid-Atlantic region, based on having worked with the education abroad office to administer the survey for the pilot study. The university offered numerous faculty-led and direct-enroll programs for students to go abroad and receive credit for their coursework with 29 unique programs offered during the 2017 winter term and 58 programs during the 2017 summer term. Students also had the opportunity to seek out their own study abroad program, which required a separate appeal process from those already approved by the university; however, none of the students who participated in this study participated in such programs. The university offered study abroad programs all over the world with programs in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. All of the winter programs were faculty-led, run by U.S.-based faculty, and administered directly through the institution, with an average duration of 2 weeks abroad. The summer programs offered opportunities that were as short as 1 week and as long as 10 weeks, with an average program length of 4 weeks. The number of credit hours students received ranged from three to six credits, of which all were considered transfer credit and may not be included in the students’ overall grade point average.

Participants

The study was initially designed to collect survey data from students participating in study abroad programs during one term; however, survey data were collected during two different terms, winter and summer 2017, as a result of receiving an inadequate number of student responses during the first call for responses in winter 2017. During any given year, the university sends 300 to 500 students on education abroad programs. Given the range in study
abroad programming offered by the institution, students represented study abroad programs ranging in length (i.e., from 2 to 10 weeks abroad), program type (e.g., faculty-led, direct enrollment, third-party provider), and location. Any student who was registered as studying abroad through the institution’s education abroad office during the specified time period received the survey. Approximately 300 students were contacted between the winter and summer programs. However, the number of responses from the winter (n=29) and summer 2017 programs (n=69) alone were not sufficient to conduct the necessary statistical analysis for validation of the SESAS. However, the pilot data and subsequent iterations of the SESAS were sufficiently comparable in their design and implementation to support their integration. As a result, the responses from the pilot survey (n=65) were combined with those of the winter and summer 2017 programs (N=163) to run the appropriate statistical tests, including principal component analysis (PCA), and to generate composite scores for each scale.

Data Collection Instruments

There were several instruments included within the questionnaire to which students were asked to respond for the larger study: a personal data questionnaire, previous travel experience and study abroad program information, the Study Abroad Goals Scale (SAGS) (Kitsantas 2004), and the SESAS. As this article focuses on the validation of the SESAS, details are presented here to focus on the personal data questionnaire and the SESAS instrument.

Personal data questionnaire. The initial survey includes a personal data survey that consists of 13 general demographic items (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, major, income level).

The Self-Efficacy in Study Abroad Scale (SESAS). The SESAS is a 25-question inventory (see table 1) created for the larger study and made up of five subscale areas aimed to assess an individual’s perceived self-efficacy in problem solving, cross-cultural communication, study behaviors, global competence, and resilience. Participants are asked to rate their perceived self-efficacy on a scale from 0 (no confidence in ability) to 100 (highest confidence in ability). As mentioned, the overall SESAS scale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 during the pilot study (Lopez-McGee 2014).

Cross-cultural communication self-efficacy subscale. This subscale consists of six questions related to communication self-efficacy. Sample items include “communicate with people who do not speak the same language you do.” During the pilot study, the subscale had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.81.

The resilience in self-efficacy subscale. This subscale includes five items centered on examining students’ self-efficacy in their resilience. This subscale includes statements such as “bounce back after you tried your best and it did not work out (e.g., not passing a language exam after studying for hours).” This subscale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 during the pilot study.

The efficacy in problem solving subscale. This subscale includes three questions related to students’ perceived ability to respond to uncertain situations. This scale includes statements such as “can adapt in situations that are vague or uncertain.” During the pilot study, the problem solving subscale achieved an alpha of 0.74.
The efficacy in study behaviors subscale. This subscale includes four statements aimed at determining students’ self-efficacy in academic tasks. Statements for this dimension include items such as “focus on your coursework while also experiencing your host country/community” (e.g., find time to study and hang out with new friends).” This subscale generated a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.73 during the pilot study.

The efficacy in global competence subscale. This subscale aims to captures students’ efficacy in their global competencies. The scale includes six items that included statements such as “understand cultures that are different from your own” and “feel confident in your ability to find information related to international news from various perspectives.” The current study aims to determine the reliability of the subscale.

Data Analysis
To help determine the structure of the SESAS subscales, a PCA was used to confirm whether the underlying factors of the SESAS reflect the constructs they initially set out to measure (i.e., cross-cultural communication, global competence, resilience, problem solving, and study behaviors) and to compute composite scores for each of the factors.

Results
The following section details the results associated with each part of the analyses to answer the following research question: does the SESAS demonstrate acceptable construct validity and reliability?

Participants
In looking at the data gathered from the 163 students for this research, the majority of respondents participated in study abroad programs located in Europe (55 percent), with the United Kingdom as the destination with the greatest number of respondents (n=11). Other programs in which students participated took place in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The average amount of time students spent abroad was 4 weeks. Though study abroad is generally available to students of all classifications at the university (e.g., freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors), a majority of students reported being in either the junior year (48.5 percent) or senior year (27.6 percent) of their undergraduate programs. Of the 163 participants who completed the predeparture survey, 61.3 percent identified as white/Caucasian, 11.7 percent identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 10.4 percent identified as Hispanic/Latino, and 9.2 percent identified as black/African American, with the remaining 7.4 percent of students identifying as two or more races, Native American/Native Alaskan/Native Hawaiian, or other. The participants were predominantly female (120 female, 40 male, and three transgender participants) and 16 percent of the respondents identified as first-generation college students. Students participating in this research, on average, had a GPA of 3.45 with a standard deviation of 0.38.

Principal Component Analysis
To help determine the structure of the SESAS subscales, a PCA was conducted. Initially, the factorability of the 25 SESAS items was examined using several criteria for the factorability of a correlation. First, it was observed that all 25 items exhibited correlations above 0.3 with at
least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy—a test to determine whether data are appropriate to run a factor analysis—was found to be 0.83, above the commonly recommended value of 0.6, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 (300)=1,585.12, p <.00$). The diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were also all over 0.5. Finally, the communalities were all above 0.3, further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Based on these favorable results, factor analysis was deemed to be suitable with all 25 items.

No items were eliminated from the SESAS, as they all contributed to a simple factor structure and met a minimum criterion of having a primary factor loading of 0.5 or above (Dimitrov 2013). Seven items had a cross-loading above 0.3 (marked with an asterisk in the factor loading matrix presented in table 1). These items were assigned to the factor with which they had the highest loading. All but two of these items had their high factor loading of 0.6 or greater, the preferred threshold for factors to be considered adequate in supporting the underlying construct. The other two loaded at 0.59 and 0.54 (“Study in an environment different from what you are used to” and “Feel confident in your ability to develop relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds,” respectively) and should be interpreted with caution as they were below the preferred 0.6 threshold.

PCA was also used in order to identify and compute composite scores for the factors underlying the SESAS. Initial Eigen values (i.e., the amount of variance explained by the factors) indicated that six factors explained 72.31 percent of the variance, aligning with theoretical expectations and results of the initial pilot study. As a reminder, the original six factors based on theory were cross-cultural communication, global competence, resilience, problem solving, and study behaviors. The six factors were then each examined using varimax rotations of the factor loading matrix to maximize the sum of the variances of the squared loadings. However, after reviewing the rotated component matrix, only one of the items loaded greater than 0.3 on the sixth factor. In order to run additional statistical analysis to generate the Cronbach’s alpha for each factor (subscale), it is preferable to have more than two items per factor, though more items are preferred to fewer (Cortina 1993). Because of this, another PCA was run to extract a five factor solution, which was also confirmed using varimax rotations. The five-factor solution was found to explain 68.06 percent of the variance (17.94 percent for cross-cultural competence, 15.54 percent for resilience, 13.57 percent for study behaviors, 11.97 percent for international mindedness, and 9.04 percent for problem solving) and determined to be more suitable, as the one item that had previously loaded to the sixth factor was found to load above 0.3 on the fifth factor, and the Eigen values after the fifth factor had diminishing additional value to the overall variance.
Table 1. Factor Loadings for Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of the SESAS (n=163)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cross-Cultural Competence</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Study Behaviors</th>
<th>International Mindfulness</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with people from different cultures while you are abroad</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable studying with people from a different culture</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with people from different cultures within your own country</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand cultures that are different from your own</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with people who do not speak the same language you do</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable in multicultural environments that may be different from your own</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study in an environment different from what you are used to</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident in your ability to develop relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce back after you tried your best and it did not work out (e.g., not passing a language exam after studying for hours)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get rid of self-doubts after you have had tough setbacks</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get yourself to keep trying when things are going really badly</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep from being easily rattled (e.g., staying calm when you may have misplaced your cell phone)</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep tough problems from getting you down (e.g., being homesick)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain your GPA</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident that you can do well in your classes in the U.S.</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work towards your academic goals even when you feel discouraged</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident that you can do well in your classes while abroad</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on your coursework while partaking in activities outside of school (e.g., find time to study and hang out with new friends)</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel informed of current world events and issues</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss international issues with your friends</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident in your ability to find information related to international news from various perspectives</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss international issues with your family</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can adapt in situations that are vague or uncertain</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify alternative options when something does not go the way you originally planned</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlist others to help you when you are faced with a problem or challenging situation</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Factor loadings >0.40 in bold
*cross-loading above 0.3

In further examining the data from the PCA, which revised the structure of the SESAS from six factors to five, several items were associated with different and new subscale factors based on their loadings (see table 2).
After reviewing the loadings of the individual indicators, three of the subscales aligned with the initial constructs—resilience, study behaviors, and problem solving—while the remaining two factors had a combination of indicators pulled from various areas of the original scale (e.g., global competence indicators loading with cross-cultural communication indicators). As such, the new factor loadings were used to form two new subscales (i.e., cross-cultural competence and international mindedness) that reflect constructs closely aligned with the original five domains of the self-efficacy scale, but may be more precise in what they measure. The first new factor of international mindedness includes indicators that ask students about their perceived interest in internationally-oriented topics. With statements such as “discuss international issues with your friends” and “feel informed of current world events and issues,” these indicators consider students’ perceived efficacy in thinking broadly about issues that include an international bent. The second new factor for the revised SESAS, cross-cultural competence, is comprised of indicators that capture students’ perceptions of their ability to engage in cross-cultural exchanges and adapt to different cultural environments. This factor includes statements such as “feel comfortable in multicultural environments that may be different from your own” and “feel confident in your ability to develop relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.” Therefore, the revised SESAS includes the following five factors: (1) cross-cultural competence, (2) resilience, (3) study behaviors, (4) international mindedness, and (5) problem solving (as depicted in table 1). Subsequent results are reported with the indicators in the revised subscales of the SESAS.

Scale Internal Consistency
Each of the five subscales of the revised SESAS was further examined to determine the internal consistency of each subscale (i.e., how closely related the items are) using Cronbach’s alpha. All of the alphas were strong at 0.70 or above (see table 3), and the resilience subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Original subscale</th>
<th>New subscale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work towards your academic goals even when you feel discouraged</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Study behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study in an environment different from what you are used to</td>
<td>Study behaviors</td>
<td>Cross-cultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand cultures that are different from your own</td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td>Cross-cultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable in multicultural environments that may be different from your own</td>
<td>Global competence</td>
<td>Cross-cultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident in your ability to develop relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds</td>
<td>Global competence</td>
<td>Cross-cultural competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss international issues with your friends</td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td>International mindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss international issues with your family</td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td>International mindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel informed of current world events and issues</td>
<td>Global competence</td>
<td>International mindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel confident in your ability to find information related to international news from various perspectives</td>
<td>Global competence</td>
<td>International mindedness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. New Subscale Factors After Principal Component Analysis
was the strongest ($\alpha=0.92$). No substantial increases in alpha for any of the subscales could have been achieved by eliminating any items.

**Table 3. Reliability of Adjusted SESAS Subscales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>$M$ (SD)</th>
<th>Cronbach’s $\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>79.92 (12.62)</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural competence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>83.69 (13.24)</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study behaviors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.84 (13.99)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>76.93 (17.86)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International mindedness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.68 (17.28)</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, these analyses indicate that the SESAS is a valid tool made up of five distinct factors—problem solving, cross-cultural competence, study behaviors, resilience, and international mindedness—and that these factors are internally consistent.

**Discussion**

The study primarily set out to determine if the SESAS could serve as a tool to measure study abroad students’ reported self-efficacy across multiple domains. The results indicate that, after revising the structure to include five primary factors instead of six, the SESAS is an internally consistent tool and may be a resource that study abroad professionals can use to measure students’ self-efficacy in areas pertinent to an experience abroad. While two of the factors in the revised SESAS were found to be distinct from the initially proposed constructs, the adjusted subscales are closely aligned to the original constructs of interest. Cross-cultural communication was shifted to more broadly reflect cross-cultural competence, which also incorporates competencies in communicating across cultures. Similarly, global competence shifted to include items that reflect concepts of international mindedness that may be broader in their conception of expressed interest in the world, understanding and recognition of interconnectedness, and an openness to learning about others (Haywood 2007).

This study provides evidence that assessing students’ self-efficacy across multiple measures—problem solving, cross-cultural competence, study behaviors, resilience, and international mindedness—is important, as these factors may individually and collectively influence a student’s experience abroad. The field of study abroad continues to develop and test different forms of assessment, and this study provides an additional tool to explore cognitive learning and psychological development in study abroad participants.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The current study presents several limitations. A challenge with researching issues specific to study abroad students is that students who choose to study abroad may be a self-
selecting group with greater abilities to self-regulate and higher levels of general self-efficacy (Bolen 2007; Milstein 2005). Future research should include a control group of students who remain at their home institution for the same period of time as the group studying abroad to see if there are other activities in which students participate that may also influence increases in cross-cultural competence self-efficacy. Furthermore, a growing body of research suggests that students who come into college with an established interest in international issues are much more likely to study abroad than those that come in with little interest or knowledge of international issues (Allen 1999; Bauer and Liang 2003; Goldstein and Kim 2006; Salisbury et al. 2009). Students who ultimately choose to go abroad may already have an idea formulated in their minds about what they would like to gain from an experience abroad.

Additionally, the statistical analysis used for the present study was done using combined data sources. While the student populations of participants in the pilot study and participants in subsequent iterations of the SESAS were similar (e.g., program types, institutional affiliation), as was the manner in which the SESAS was administered, there were some differences in the items included in the subscales. As with any study that integrates data sources, the results should be interpreted with some caution.

There were also several compelling findings in the results of this study that deserve the attention of future studies. In future studies, it would be prudent to look more closely at whether or not students who go abroad bring experiences with them that allow them to already feel self-efficacious in areas such as problem solving, study behaviors, resilience, international mindedness, and cross-cultural competence.

Conclusion

Scholars from diverse disciplines have confirmed that perceived self-efficacy plays an important role in human self-development, adaptation, and change (e.g., Bandura 2006; Milstein 2005; Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund 2016). Self-efficacy has been shown to be a predictor of developing students’ self-regulated behaviors, persistence, and interest in taking on more challenging activities and tasks (Bandura 2009; Schunk 2001; Zimmerman 2000, 2004) and has the potential to measure more broadly the various benefits students gain from going abroad. As the field of study abroad and student exchange continues to develop a more robust set of tools to assess specific outcomes (individual and otherwise) of international programming, self-efficacy should be an area of inquiry for future research.

Even with the limitations in mind and breadth of future research possibilities, the present study contributes to the field of international education by presenting validation of the SESAS, a potentially useful tool that can be used to assess students’ perceived self-efficacy in cross-cultural competence, study behaviors, resilience, international mindedness, and problem solving. Knowing students’ levels of self-efficacy at the time they first embark on the study abroad experience may provide insight into what personal attributes students bring with them to the experience, and what activities or opportunities students may be best positioned to take advantage of while they are abroad to increase their self-efficacy in particular areas. Though
there is much work to be done, this study contributes to the field’s understanding what components of the students’ experiences abroad influence their sense of self-efficacy.

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The International Student Experience and Engagement Model: A Framework for Best Practices and Support Founded Through Grounded Theory

By: May Lee Moua-Vue, EdD* (Xavier University) and James W. Koschoreck, PhD (Texas State University)

This article presents a model founded through grounded theory for international practitioners at a medium-sized Midwestern institution that maps out best practices to support international students. The article shares further details of how grounded theory and Design Thinking were utilized to understand the international student experience, uncover new ideas, and ultimately construct the International Student Experience & Engagement (ISEE) model to help practitioners in the international office improve and better support their international students. This study can potentially help other practitioners in the field of international education.

Keywords: international students, student engagement, integration, best practices

Introduction

International students face a variety of obstacles and challenges in order to study in the United States (Mori 2000; McLachlan and Justice 2009; Beatty et al. 2012; Ozturgut 2013). According to the Institute of International Education’s (IIE’s) 2018 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (IIE 2018a), the institute’s earliest documentation of international students studying in the United States was in 1948 when a total of 25,464 international students were studying at institutions throughout the nation. Since then, the number of international students in the United States has grown. The 2018 Open Doors report indicates that the international student population for the 2017–18 academic year in the United States had increased to 1,094,792. According to IIE researchers (IIE 2018a), higher education is among the United States’ top service sector exports, as international students provide revenue to the U.S. economy. In 2017–18, international students contributed over $42.4 billion to the U.S. economy (IIE 2018b).

Many U.S. higher education institutions are dependent on international student enrollment to generate tuition revenue due to the recent trend of declining enrollment of domestic high school students (Rubin 2014). In consideration of increasing diversity, international students also contribute to the internationalization efforts of higher education institutions (Andrade 2006). As more U.S. universities and colleges compete to recruit international students, institutions are reporting challenges and concerns related to how to best serve and support this unique population (Andrade 2005; Beatty et al. 2012; Choudaha and Schulmann 2014; Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2010; Ozturgut 2013; Tas 2013). According to Choudaha and Schulman (2014), lead researchers...
of a NAFSA report on international student retention, schools that do not complement recruiting efforts with corresponding investment in retention services can harm their brand and that of the United States.

This study examines international students’ experiences at a medium-sized private liberal arts university to identify the students’ needs and concerns and find best practices for their support and adaptation. This research study aimed to find the challenges, as well as disprove or affirm any previously stated obstacles from other studies, that international students experience in the United States. The research sought to identify best practices, contributing factors, and individual coping mechanisms that international students could employ to support themselves in engaging and adjusting to their new environment. Furthermore, this study aimed to identify new ideas to better support international students and take the next step forward by constructing a grounded theory to guide best practices in supporting international student engagement and their adaptation experience on U.S. campuses. The research questions used for this study are:

1) What is the international student initial transition and integration experience at the research site?
2) What is the impact of student engagement on international students’ adaptation and overall experience?
3) How engaged are international students at the university?
4) How might the university engage and support international students to positively impact their adjustment and make them feel welcome?
5) Are there adequate programs, services, and opportunities available to support and engage international students?

**Literature Review**

There exists a vast body of knowledge about student engagement and adaptation (Astin 1999; Glass, Buus, and Braskamp 2013; Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie 2009; Kuh 2008; Lizzio 2006; Tinto 2006). However, although we have made strides in identifying the needs of domestic majority students within their first year of studies (Andrade 2006; Lizzio 2006; Mori 2000), there is comparatively little research focused on undergraduate international student adjustment and retention (Choudaha and Schulmann 2014).

Beyond student engagement, there are several studies that have focused on international students’ shared experiences and the challenges they encounter (Mori 2000; McLachlan and Justice 2009; Beatty et al. 2012; Ozturgut 2013). Unlike their domestic counterparts, international students are further challenged by language barriers, cultural differences, differences based on U.S. academic teaching and classroom expectations, difficulty in developing relationships with domestic students, and a lack of social support (Andrade 2005; Eland, Smithee, and Greenblatt 2009; Gu, Schweisfurth, and Day 2010).

Based on the literature review, few studies exist that offer specific frameworks or models to help practitioners in their daily work with international students. More research is needed on how to engage and integrate international students at U.S. institutions. Additionally, more studies
are needed to inform international education practitioners of frameworks and/or models to help guide their work with international students. The literature review propelled this study to move beyond the basic understanding of international student experiences to a more action-oriented phase of addressing the challenges present at the research location with a Design Thinking focus group, and ultimately construct a model that would map best practices and services to help the institution keep abreast of international students’ needs.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

Three conceptual research frameworks are utilized and adapted for this study. The first conceptual framework that is applied is taken from a study on first-year international students’ experiences by Beatty and colleagues (2012). The second research framework that is utilized is Ozturgut’s (2013) table of best practices in recruiting and retaining international students in the United States. Finally, the study also incorporated Lizzio’s (2006) Five Senses of Successful Transition model, used in conceptualizing and organizing programs for transitioning new students to college. Each conceptual framework merits further discussion.

A team of researchers at Edith Cowan University (ECU) conducted a qualitative study of first-year international students’ experiences and satisfaction at their institution (Beatty et al. 2012). Participants responded to open-ended questions (via survey or in person) and shared both positive and negative experiences of being a first-year student at ECU. Using data from 53 students, they found over 80 percent of the students were highly satisfied with their experience at ECU, despite unique challenges, and recommended future research to consider interviewing students to review social and emotional issues.

The conceptual framework and methodology of the ECU study seemed closely related to this study. Therefore, the following items were adapted and included as interview questions for this study:

- Share something that the university has done well that made you feel welcome and appreciated as a student.
- Share something that the university has not done well that resulted in you feeling uncomfortable.
- If there were things you could change about your university experience, what would they be?
- What could the university offer to support you and other international students throughout your studies?

The idea was to use similar questions to collect data and unveil more about international student experiences at the research site.

Another study with a relevant conceptual framework is Ozturgut’s (2013) research on best practices in recruiting and retaining international students. In his study, he conducted a nationwide survey of university services for international students with data separated by institution sizes (i.e., four-year institutions, master granting institutions, and doctoral granting institutions). His conceptual framework, which lists all the programs and services that are offered by different universities of various sizes, helps other institutions with benchmarking and
assessing whether enough support and services are being offered to international students. Ozturgut’s lists of best practices are utilized in this study when mapping out future ideas to implement on the grounded theory model.

A third conceptual framework relevant to the process of improving programs and services for international students is Lizzio’s (2006) Five Senses of Successful Student Transition (see figure 1), which highlights certain areas that need to be addressed during the first year to help with student retention: (1) the student’s Sense of Capability; (2) the student’s Sense of Connectedness; (3) the student’s Sense of Purpose; (4) the student’s Sense of Resourcefulness; and (5) the student’s Sense of Academic Culture. The model is useful in reviewing a university’s overall services and programs to ensure that all five student senses are being addressed.

**Figure 1.** The “Five Senses” of Successful Transition. Reprinted with permission from Lizzio (2006)

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Lizzio’s model describes the Five Senses for students as:

1. **Student’s Sense of Capability:** Successful students understand what is expected of them in their student role. Are they mastering the basic academic skills needed to be successful learners? How can that be done better?
2. Student’s Sense of Connectedness: Students who are successful develop the relationships and connections to support their success and enhance their satisfaction at the university. Are they connected with a diverse network of students, faculty/staff, and community members to help them personally and academically succeed?

3. Student’s Sense of Purpose: Students with a clear sense of purpose are more likely to find their studies rewarding and be more committed and persistent when the work gets challenging. How are we helping students discern their educational goals, establish realistic milestones, and prepare for future career choices?

4. Student’s Sense of Resourcefulness: Successful students know how to study and proactively manage the challenges of their whole university experience. What is being done to help new students navigate the campus and learn about the vast array of resources available to them?

5. Student’s Sense of Culture: Successful students know the value of learning “how things are done” and what is important or valued in their new culture. How do new students learn about the university’s mission and values and school traditions? How are new students included and introduced to school spirit at community events, such as basketball games?

Although this framework is not specific to just international students, it can be utilized for a targeted population. Lizzio asserts that once an institution helps a student gain their Five Senses, the student will successfully transition into their new environment.

These three studies (Ferguson et al. 2011; Ozturgut 2013; Lizzio 2006) and their conceptual frameworks serve as the foundation for this study. During the analysis of the interviews and focus group data, they often served as cross-references for the coding and synthesis phase.

Methodology

This research study entailed three parts: interviews, a focus group, and the construction of the grounded theory. In the first part of the study, international student participants were interviewed to learn more about their experiences at the university. The second part of the research included a focus group to understand and uncover new findings about the international students’ experiences and how to best support them at the university. The final part of the research involved constructing the grounded theory, the International Student Experience & Engagement (ISEE) Model.

Research Site

The research site for this study is a medium-sized, private liberal arts institution in the Midwest United States. The institution places a strong emphasis on the care and development of the whole person and emphasizes community support to create a positive campus climate for the successful adaptation of all students. The overall student body is a little more than 6,500, with the international student population comprising about 2 to 4 percent of the total student population at the university. The university has a Center for International Education (CIE) that
provides support for international students and scholars in addition to managing study abroad opportunities for the university. Moreover, the CIE provides international education programming for the entire campus community comprised of educational events, socials, excursions, and cross-cultural programming intended to educate the community.

**Participant Selection**

As stated, two methods of data collection were used in this study: individual interviews and a focus group. For individual interviews, purposeful sampling was used to select participants who would provide the best and most useful information to understand the experiences of international students. Ideal participants had been at the school for at least 2 years or had recently graduated from the university and could clearly articulate their experiences. Participants from various countries, socioeconomic backgrounds, and genders were carefully solicited to participate. In grounded theory studies, it is important to interview as many participants as possible until saturation, a state where no new data is found (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009). Ultimately, 11 individuals participated in the personal interviews.

Additionally, 20 individuals volunteered to participate in a focus group. The focus group occurred after all the individual interviews were conducted, had been transcribed, and an initial analysis of the data had begun; as such, some of the primary findings and insights from the individual interviews were shared with the focus group. The focus group was comprised of four international students (two had participated in the initial interviews), four U.S. students, seven staff, two faculty, and three university-affiliated community members. A skilled facilitator was brought in to teach participants about Design Thinking (described further in next section) and to facilitate a brainstorming session that resulted in a multitude of ideas to address the problems identified. The focus group lasted for 3 hours to allow the group enough time to learn about Design Thinking and to brainstorm.

**Research Strategies and Methods**

The research strategy for this study involved a qualitative applied research methodology using grounded theory and Design Thinking principles (Brown 2009; Kelley and Kelley 2013; Pink 2006).

**Grounded theory.** Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology aimed at discovering or learning more about a particular phenomenon (Corbin and Strauss 2015; Creswell 2013; Merriam 2009). The grounded theory method requires additional steps with further analysis through coding of data by breaking them into insightful and unique categories, synthesizing the data to discover any relationships among the various categories through a process called axial coding, and finally deriving a theory from the data and process involved. Thus, the theory is “grounded” in the data from which it is derived.

**Design Thinking.** Design Thinking is a different paradigm for creative problem solving that utilizes a familiar research process to come up with a meaningful human-centered solution (Brown 2009; Kelley and Kelley 2013; Pink 2006). In Design Thinking, the goal is to find the “sweet spot,” the middle ground of three important constraint factors: desirability (what people want), viability (what is likely to become sustainable), and feasibility (what is possible within
current resource and time constraints) (Kelley and Kelley 2013). In Design Thinking, the process for coming up with an innovative solution requires observing the people in the study, conducting empathy interviews (UBC n.d.), and inducing new meaningful insights from the data (Brown 2009; Kelley and Kelley 2013; Pink 2006). Design thinkers are encouraged to reframe the problem and solutions through different angles or perspectives, analyze (break apart) and synthesize (put together) data, and employ divergent (creating choices) and convergent (making choices) thinking (Brown 2009; Kelley and Kelley 2013). This process includes brainstorming to help generate a large quantity of ideas to address or resolve the research findings or insights (Curedale 2013; Isaksen 1998). The technique of brainstorming was first introduced and popularized by Alex Faickney Osborn (1953) through his book, *Applied Imagination*.

The importance of the Design Thinking focus group in this study was threefold: (1) to include the participants and targeted audience of this study in finding solutions that are participant-centered as well as desirable to them; (2) to empower the international student population to articulate and share their experiences with noninternationals and encourage campus dialogues about their challenges and unique needs; and (3) to help triangulate and validate the findings from the interviews to inform the grounded theory.

**Interview Findings**

From the interviews with students, 20 major themes were identified relating to their successes and challenges:

- U.S. high school or college prep study
- Ease and friendliness of admission
- Language translation
- Preparation and research before arrival
- First campus experiences at orientation
- Roommates (love ‘em or hate ‘em)
- The Café as a central student hub
- Intentional delay of involvement first year
- Involvement and engagement increased sense of belonging
- Establishing a support network is crucial
- On-campus employment helps with integration
- U.S. classroom and academic challenges
- Language and cultural barriers
- Transportation challenges
- Housing challenges
- Visa status challenges
- Campus climate and bias challenges
- Family matters (support and disconnect)
- International athlete challenges
- Guidance and support for postgraduation

Most findings were consistent with previous studies and confirmed similar obstacles and challenges that the international students encountered: language, cultural, academic, and immigration status challenges (Andrade 2005; Eland, Smithee, and Greenblatt 2009; Rubin 2014; Tas 2013). Students whose main language was not English experienced additional challenges as they faced communication barriers along with understanding and speaking the new language. They reported personal and academic issues related to language:
People have laughed at my accent. (Student 2 from Kenya)

That was awful because I didn’t want to speak to anybody. Especially because of the language, my English was not as good. I was really uncomfortable. Also, I had a difficult time adjusting to accent and slang. When I learned in school, I didn’t learn those slang. I only learned the proper English. So I had a hard time with the team, especially, in the locker room. They were talking, and I thought I would never be able to talk; [mumbling] whenever I came up with something, I could say it’s already gone. I just sat there quietly. I was just intimidated by the whole experience. I was new, and I felt uncomfortable. At first, I feel like I don’t have friend at all. Slowly I started to change. I met more and more people. (Student 11 from Finland)

Students also emphasized the cultural differences in forming and maintaining friendships:

I feel like in the American society, friendships start at the finish line. You end up being friends with people and then you realize they are not who you thought they were. (Student 9 from Nigeria)

By comparison, another student noted having a different experience:

Wow, too much friendliness when I first came here. (Student 8 from Saudi Arabia)

Other comments point to the cultural differences in expectations around food:

I had a hard time adjusting to the food. It was just so overwhelming. Having pizza and burger out there every single day and they were eating the fries. People were actually eating that. I was shocked. High school was different but there was a main line that has healthy food. They always have salad before that. Everyone was fine with that. We only have juice and water. If we have milk, it’s the best thing ever. So having that soda machine in the cafeteria was so shocking. No wonder some people are struggling with their weight control. That’s what they offer in the cafeteria. I found that it was not good for my skin, my face. (Student 11 from Finland)

Other challenges that were reported included campus climate issues and bias incidents. There were also six new findings from the interviews that were unique and not addressed in previous studies: several students had studied at a U.S. high school or a college prep international high school; roommates had a significant impact on the international students’ first-year experience; some students intentionally delayed their involvement on campus during the first year; family support for international students can be a double-edge sword (overseas and host families residing in the United States); Caucasian international students are often invisible on U.S. campuses; and there is a need for greater guidance and transitional support postgraduation.

U.S. High Schools/College Prep Studies

It was surprising that out of the 11 students interviewed, six students had attended high school in the United States. One additional student had attended an international high school in
his home country (i.e., a U.S. college prep school where classes were taught by U.S. expatriates). In addition, three other students mentioned that they had attended boarding schools during their junior high and high school years, and thus already had experience living away from home.

**Roommates**

Some students had concerns about making friends and being accepted; those concerns included navigating roommate issues. Five of the students shared that they had a love-hate relationship with their roommates; some students commented on how wonderful and supportive their roommates were:

We went out for dinner with his parents so that was cool. I was lucky I got a roommate that was not too bad. Almost the same type of habits like study habits. Everything worked out fine. I didn’t get along a lot with the other people in my hallway. (Student 1 from Honduras)

It was a small room in [the dormitory]. Two of my roommates didn’t get along with the other. One of them was a little…he had issues. One of them was great; I was very fortunate to have a good roommate. I still talk to him. He is an American from Chicago. He transferred his sophomore year to another school. (Student 4 from Mexico)

Other students reported negative roommate experiences:

My first semester, I had a roommate who was really mean to me. I feel like she didn’t want to room with an international student. Because at first when I came to this country, I was really quiet. So, our cultures were really different. She thought I was closed off, so she was really mean to me. They should ask all American students if they would want to room with an international student roommate. They should explain to them this is how it’s going to be and how it can be different from what you are used to. (Student 2 from Kenya)

We all have different schedule because we all had different majors. I have class at 8:30 [a.m.] but some of my roommates don’t have classes until noon. Like my alarm would go off in the morning, at the time I was in the second bunk, upper bunk, I would set my alarm on my phone. My phone would fall off the bed in the middle of the night, so I can’t reach it. All those dramas going on, but it was fine. I kinda learned from my home stay during high school because I was also in a new environment. Meet new people, also living with different family. Kinda respect them like on some issues. And also tell them what’s really matter to me. We kinda exchange give some compromise and get along. (Student 3 from China)

**Intentional Delay of Involvement**

Nine of the 11 students confirmed that getting involved on campus had helped increased their sense of belonging to the university, or as one student stated:
Getting involved helped that I could depend on people and call people my friends and not feel too isolated. (Student 9 from Nigeria)

Nine of the 11 students participated in three or more university activities long-term, four students had jobs, nine students frequently visited three or more university offices, and all students had visited and/or received support from at least one university office. However, many students also mentioned that they had intentionally made the decision to delay involvement in campus activities until after their first year. As one student reported:

My first year, I didn’t get involved in anything, just adjusting. I just wanted to know what’s going on in school, what clubs we have. (Student 6 from Thailand)

Other students reported that their focus in the first year was to survive and thrive academically before they shifted their focus to extracurricular activities. One student summed it up as:

So basically I studied a lot first semester. (Student 5 from China)

Another student expanded on that theme:

When I got here, I feel like I did more than the regular students, but it wasn’t from day one. I spend most of my freshman year studying and making sure I’m here to learn and get good grades. It was the main thing. It was sophomore [year] when everything started. (Student 1 from Honduras)

**Family Support**

Nine of the students interviewed mentioned their families in the interviews. Many reported that their families were still enormous sources of support. However, as some students admitted, family can also present a source of stress and tension. Six of the 11 students arrived at campus with family or host family members and five students had host families in the United States prior to arriving to campus. Surprisingly, five students arrived at campus for the first time at orientation, alone.

Most of the students mentioned how they relied on their families or host families for many things:

My aunt, she experienced American culture first. She kinda told me what to expect, what to say, and what not to say. (Student 6 from Thailand)

My mom and I drove for 40 hours because I wanted my car here. (Student 10 from Canada)

Several students mentioned specific support their families provided during their academic programs, both in academic and social situations:

My host family also encouraged me to run [for student senate]. (Student 5 from China)

Having my brother here kinda made it more homey, I think, because at least I have somebody I know here. (Student 8 from Saudi Arabia)
My mom and my host sister came here and helped me adjusted. My mom came here with me dropping off my application and it was in the middle of winter, it was so cold, so my mom just stayed in the car and I went on the tour on my own. (Student 7 from Ghana)

My family and I talk on the phone at least once a week. Sometimes because my parents are retired so they have more time and they might call me more. I might tell them that I have difficulty in class and they support me to do it. What really matter is communication. They guide me like why not try more. I came here undecided major. I decided to pick a major that my parents are already working in. (Student 3 from China)

By contrast, some students mentioned that family can make things more complicated and stressful. One student commented:

Your family don’t understand either because they don’t experience what you are experiencing. They don’t know what you are doing. (Student 6 from Thailand)

Another student reported interference from their parents:

I said I would attend [a different university] because of its location in New York, and easy access to the market after graduation. But my parents kind of looked at it as, ‘oh my gosh, it’s close to New York City so I would get distracted.’ But in my head I’m like ‘you think I’m going to have money every weekend for a ticket to go down to the city.’ But my parents are very religious and said that if they were going to pay for school, they would pay for an institution that was affiliated with the Catholic church. (Student 9 from Nigeria)

Some students went further in their interviews and contributed ideas that they considered would have made their experience better. One student recommended a “family day for all students including, U.S. students who don’t have family visiting” (Student 2 from Kenya), while another noted, “My parents could have help more…like how to deal with [athletic] coaches, what are the right things to say” (Student 11 from Finland).

Invisible International Students

Several Caucasian international students reported that they are often “invisible” and may pass as U.S. students since they look like average, white, middle-class, U.S. college students. For some of these international students, English is their native language. Some of these students may decline the services that others who are more visibly recognized as international students use, as they may not feel that they need all the support that is offered. Although these international students may blend in racially, they still may experience the culture shock, adjustment challenges, and even language barriers (accent, slang, popular terms) that other international students experience. One student reported that although they may be invited into conversations more easily, they are firmly aware that they are international:
It’s more, like just shocking, like when you sit in the classroom. I was just like *what the heck*. Even just some conversation I had with my teammates, I feel like they are very conservative, very close bordered. And like the things that they say, I’m thinking, ‘you do realize that I’m not an American.’ It’s crazy to me. It’s like people so are quick to judge and just put people into boxes. You learn, and you accept it as just how it is here. (Student 10 from Canada)

**Postgraduation Guidance and Support**

Two of the students interviewed who recently graduated mentioned that they would like more support to help in transitioning after graduation. One student wanted guidance on the job search process in the United States:

Like the career field, they just say, ‘sorry we don’t hire international students.’ That really turns some students down. That’s really discouraging. As for [a neighboring university], there is a career field for international students, who those companies are willing to hire international students for OPT or later sponsor them for job. Maybe [this campus] can do more of getting companies who are willing to accept OPT or cooperate with [the other school] since we don’t have large number, which they do. Really help them to find more opportunities after graduation. (Student 3 from China)

The other student wanted more help with the transition process of returning home after their studies:

At this point, I have to go back because of personal family things. I will go back. If I didn’t have the family thing, I really want to stay to work, but I don’t think I would attend [this school]. I probably might have chosen another school, maybe on the coasts—Florida, Boston, or California. Most of my friends who attend those schools have jobs even with business majors, not just engineering. It’s also the state [and] the school in general. It’s mix. (Student 1 from Honduras)

Student 1 from Honduras verified that he had a difficult time adjusting back to what he called a “third-world country,” where air conditioning, internet access, and paved roads were less accessible, stating “May Lee wasn’t joking about the adjustment phase.” He reported experiencing reverse culture shock and recommended that all students attend a workshop offered on campus (“Journey Home”) if they are returning home.

Overall, the individual student interviews were very insightful and provided rich data to answer the first three research questions (i.e., What is the international student initial transition and integration experience at the research site? What is the impact of student engagement on international students’ integration and overall experience? How engaged are international students at the university?). The interviews resulted in 20 major findings to provide a better picture of international students’ experiences at the university. The majority of students confirmed in interviews that getting involved on campus helped them increase their sense of belonging. We also learned more about the students’ engagement in activities at the university in terms of how many activities and what they chose to get involved in. As noted previously, most
of the students chose not to engage in university activities within their first year due to stress and focusing primarily on their academic success. Altogether, the interviews resulted in rich stories and helped with further understanding international students’ experiences at the university.

Design Thinking Focus Group Findings

As mentioned earlier, the second part of data collection involved a focus group with 20 participants comprised of domestic and international students, community members, and affiliated local community members who came together to talk about the international student experience at the university. This focus group utilized Design Thinking principles to engage the participants in understanding the human-centered approach behind why the international student experience should be an important issue for the community and how the group might then come up with new ways to address some of the issues and gaps brought up from the student interviews. The focus group addressed research questions four and five:

- How might the university engage and support international students to positively impact their adjustment and make them feel welcome?
- Are there adequate programs, services, and opportunities available to support and engage international students? (For the focus group, this question was slightly changed to, “What are other programs, services, and opportunities that the research location could offer to support, engage, and integrate international students?”)

The focus group was presented with the initial data from the international student interviews and given a background of international students’ experiences at the university. Through skilled facilitation, the focus group came up with over 250 sticky notes of ideas to address the research questions. It is important to note that a Design Thinking ideation session is not a traditional brainstorming session, as outrageous and extreme ideas are encouraged to address the challenge and come up with new innovative ideas to do things differently. The ideas from the sticky notes are listed as tables in appendix 2. Not all of these ideas have been used, but there were several ideas that were useful and could be implemented quickly and cost effectively. Some of the ideas that emerged from the focus group were incorporated in the subsequent grounded theory model to help the university plan for new programs and services to best support and serve their international student population.

The ISEE Model

During the interviews, the students had shared stories from when they first applied, to when they arrived at campus, to what happened during their first year. Some even talked about graduation and transition after college. Given this progression, it made sense to construct the new categories for the axial coding based on a linear timeline, popularity, and importance of the themes to the students. With further data analysis and axial coding, the initial 20 themes from the interviews were further regrouped into six overarching broader categories that were used to construct the grounded theory of the ISEE Model (see table 1).
• **Prearrival:** This category is for all themes and activities that occur prior to admission, during admission, and before students arrive at orientation.

• **Orientation:** This category encompasses the period when students arrive to campus to attend international student orientation, move-in, and prepare for the start of their studies.

• **CIE Ongoing Support Services:** This category represents the international office and their critical support services, which all international students are introduced to at orientation and stay engaged with throughout their studies to help them persist and complete their studies.

• **Community Building and Network:** This common theme from all students stems from the importance of building positive relationships, a supportive network, and a welcoming campus climate. The focus of this category is on personal, professional, and social support around campus and with the larger community.

• **Campus Engagement and Support:** This category represents all the noninternational office support services and opportunities available throughout campus for international students.

• **Departure Transition Guidance:** This theme denotes the need for the university to provide support services and transitional guidance for students graduating and continuing to the job search, job market, and/or departing to return to their home country. This includes alumni services and university relations for both domestic and international students.
Table 1. Major Themes from Findings and Alignment with Framework Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Major Framework Categories</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Studied in at U.S. High School/College Prep Int'l High School</td>
<td>Prearrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Easy &amp; Friendly Admission Process</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Provide Language Translation</td>
<td>CIE Ongoing Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: More Preparation &amp; Research</td>
<td>Community Building &amp; Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: First Time Here Was At Orientation</td>
<td>Campus Engagement &amp; Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Roommates - Love 'em or Hate 'em</td>
<td>Departure Transition Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7: The Café is a Central Student Hub</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8: Intentional Delay of Involvement First Year</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 9: Involvement &amp; Engagement Increased Sense of Belonging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 10: Establishing a Support Network is Crucial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 11: On-Campus Employment Helps with Integration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 12: U.S. Classroom &amp; Academic Challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 13: Language &amp; Cultural Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 14: Transportation Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 15: Housing Challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 16: Visa Status Challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 17: Campus Climate &amp; Bias Challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 18: Family Matters (Support)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 18: Family Matters (Disconnect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 19: International Athlete Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 20: Guidance &amp; Support for Postgraduation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in table 1, each of the initial 20 themes was placed next to its coded major framework category. Most of the research themes were multifaceted and were placed next to multiple framework categories. For example, theme 20, Guidance and Support for Postgraduation, could be part of CIE Ongoing Support Services, Community Building and Network, Campus Engagement and Support, or be just as significant on its own as Departure Transition Guidance.
Since not all of the six major framework categories were linear, the following grounded theory model was formed using a circular-spiral formation. This shape depicts the international student experience and life cycle as a cyclone—with things going in, getting mixed up, and eventually coming out. This framework also permits the possibility of getting sucked back in. The resulting ISEE model (see figure 2) represents the grounded theory constructed from all the various themes gathered from the interviews and focus group. It is important to keep Lizzio’s (2006) Five Senses of Student Transition in mind when developing programs or making changes to address international students’ transition, engagement, and adaptation. With permission, Lizzio’s (2006) Five Senses of Student Transition were adapted into the ISEE model, to help better address transitions for international students and discern best practices for international student engagement and adaptation. Placed on the ISEE model, Lizzio’s model serves as a reminder to also use the Five Senses as another useful tool to evaluate international student support. Lizzio’s model was not meant to be used interactively with the six categories of the ISEE model, but rather stems as a reminder to use this model separately in its entirety and usefulness to further inform the university and practitioners in how to best support their international students.

The ISEE model incorporates the six major framework categories. The top of the cyclone depicts the first category of Prearrival. Four other categories were arranged near the core—Orientation, CIE Ongoing Support Services, Community Building and Network, and Campus Engagement and Support—to symbolize that these major categories help students engage and feel integrated. There are not directional arrows because once the students arrive at orientation, the rest of the 20 themes identified throughout international student experiences can fit in many of the different major categories and each of the various themes or student concerns could be addressed through various support areas identified within the six major framework categories. The last category of Departure Transition Guidance is depicted at the bottom of the ISEE model with an arrow going out as the students requested transitional guidance and support when leaving the university. Such guidance could be in the form of a departure orientation such as the “Journey Home” workshop, support for career development and the job search, connection to professionals in the field, or alumni support and networking. Students also mentioned the possibility of wanting to return and study in the future. The following ISEE model (see figure 2) was used to map a detailed version of the services and support at the research location, including current offerings and services as well as noting ideas to be implemented to improve international student experiences overall.
As illustrated in the above ISEE model, the model can be used to map out best practices and to plan for relevant programs and services to support international students. With the ISEE model, the researchers were able to list down what is currently provided by the university within the six categories. Additionally, focus group ideas and campus community feedback can then be added on the ISEE model as new ideas to implement in the future within each of the categories. Ozturgut’s (2013) list of best practices (see appendix 1) and the Design Thinking focus group ideas (see appendix 2) can be referred to periodically to map out current offerings on the ISEE model for the institution. The model also permits new ideas to implement to be listed within each category. In reviewing best practices for recruiting and retaining international students, professionals could also implement ideas already offered by peer institutions (Ozturgut 2013).
This allows the university to continuously assess and improve their programs and services to their students. After periodic reviews and evaluation, new programs and services could be offered based on benchmarking, ideas from best practices (Ozturgut 2013), and feedback through focus groups to implement and best support international students.

**Conclusion**

This research topic is timely for leadership in higher education across the United States. Higher education administrators have struggled with the balancing act of recruiting and tending to a growing international student population, all with limited staffing, campus resources, and financial means. The research findings and major themes that arose from the student interviews and focus groups were used to create a grounded theory model (i.e., the ISEE model) addressing international student engagement and adaptation experiences at the university. Although the grounded theory is specific to this research location, the hope is that this framework and the knowledge presented can shed some light for other international offices and help our leadership make responsible decisions, improve processes and services, and implement strategies to support the international student population.

**Limitations**

This research study is directly related to supporting the international students at the research site. Data was limited to the 11 interviews and the focus group with 20 members. Although there were a variety of themes and topics that arose, these findings are considered unique to the research location and its international student population. As such, these findings and the grounded theory may not be directly generalized to other institutions. However, the knowledge could be transferrable to other institutions and other international educators may find the information insightful.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

There are many areas that further studies can address to better understand international student experiences and to design a better transitional experience. Based on the findings, future research may focus on international athletes and how international educators can best support them. Another area to look into is the high school experience of international students. It seems that boarding school at a young age is now common for international students, so it would be interesting to see how those experiences impact college experiences. Moreover, a new idea for further study would be the “invisible international student” experience.

Overall, the study resulted in rich stories, insights, and ideas to answer the five research questions posed at the beginning of the study:

1. What is the international student initial transition and integration experience at the university?
2. What is the impact of student engagement on international students’ integration and overall experience?
3. How engaged are international students at the university? What activities, services, and organizations do international students choose to engage in?
4. How might the university engage and support international students to positively impact their integration and make them feel welcome?
5. Are there adequate programs, services, and opportunities available to support, engage, and integrate international students?

In conclusion, this study is just one of many research endeavors needed to further understand, analyze, and transform international student experiences in the United States. Overall, there are still many opportunities to further explore and study about international students’ experiences and the ISEE model may serve as a framework for other international educators in implementing best practices for support and adaptation of international students at their institutions.

References


## Appendix 1: Summary of the Responses from Doctoral Institutions Listed in the Order of Utilization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention Method</th>
<th>Examples from the Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Cultural Engagement &amp; Support</td>
<td>• Providing special programming and activities  &lt;br&gt;• Hosting a semiannual international student conference  &lt;br&gt;• Organizing U.S.-culture field trip excursions  &lt;br&gt;• Providing social support through clubs and organizations, roommate program, buddy program, and friendship family program  &lt;br&gt;• Host family and other volunteer supports  &lt;br&gt;• Focused provision of targeted (by academic level) audiences of international students  &lt;br&gt;• Providing international students with orientation sessions to introduce new international students to the university community  &lt;br&gt;• Initial and ongoing orientation and cultural adjustment programs  &lt;br&gt;• Engagement opportunities (e.g., international house living, international coffee hour, international culture/friendship program, etc.)  &lt;br&gt;• Taking an active role through the student organizations and getting involved in campus life and the community  &lt;br&gt;• Facilitating and advising various culture sharing programs throughout the year that allow international students to connect not only to the university, but also to the local community  &lt;br&gt;• Providing cocurricular opportunities, programs, services, and the environment international students need to develop personally, socially, and professionally  &lt;br&gt;• Multicultural students services—a resource for international students who need assistance with financial aid concerns, housing, tutoring, social cultural issues, and academic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Programming &amp; Support</td>
<td>• The ongoing provision of top-quality international advising services to currently attending international students—from matriculation to graduation  &lt;br&gt;• “Education” orientation to students—service combined with learning  &lt;br&gt;• Providing quality academic and support services  &lt;br&gt;• Presentation of well-planned international program informational workshops and seminars for academic, nonacademic (e.g., immigration benefits), cultural, and employment purposes  &lt;br&gt;• Actively engaging with students having academic or personal issues  &lt;br&gt;• Provide special assistance to graduate students who need speaking practice  &lt;br&gt;• Providing academic support (e.g., tutoring, etc.)  &lt;br&gt;• Providing special English courses, if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student &amp; Scholar Services Staff</td>
<td>Very professional international student/scholars services staff who ensure that the international students are fully briefed about SEVIS regulations/restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid, Health Services, Religious Support, &amp; Immigration Support</td>
<td>Merit and need-based financial aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The academic learning center provides study and reading assistance to international students to help them become more efficient and effective learners
- Courses are offered in reading, study strategies, and power reading to help students in target areas for which they may be lacking the skills to achieve the grades they want
- The tutor program offers individual tutoring in general study strategies, time management, and test taking, as well as subject tutoring for some general education courses
- Through the Leadership Exploration and Development Program, international students can access leadership exploration, education, training, and development experiences in many different contexts throughout the university
- Engaging in many types of experiences within academics, as part of specific programs and through cocurricular involvement
- Actively engaging with students having academic or personal issues

Appendix 2: Summary of Ideation from Design Thinking Focus Group

1. How might we offer a more seamless transition from application to the first day of classes?
   - Class registration guidance
   - Pair with a mentor before international students arrive
   - From moment of acceptance, receive an “international” student package of info
   - Precororation; food party, tour of the city
   - Fly everyone to campus for a visit
   - Connect with international chamber of commerce
   - Campus virtual tour before arrival
   - Start sending international students essential information before they come to campus
   - Online visit/tour days
   - Map the first week: arrival, first day, etc.
   - Move in early; learn the city, campus community
   - School-coordinated
   - Airplane, what to wear, bring, pack
   - List of places to get affordable books
   - Hire cars or shuttles for airport
   - Campus tour with their schedule
   - Where to hang out? 24/7 buildings
   - Pay for a family member to come in with them
   - Free ride from airport
   - Student book
   - A week in your country
   - “Road to Campus” for international students in their language; for parents too!
   - VR/AR tour of campus and [city]
   - Periscope—in on everything
   - VR of housing
   - First-year students’ orientation for international students
   - 3D printed model of campus
   - Painted lines that show where to go
   - Airport au pair
   - Mentor new international student with senior international student
   - Airport arrival and ride with mentor
   - Letters to their parents in native language
   - On-campus entertainment
   - Have a pre-orientation orientation
   - Bring parents with them
   - U.S. tour for 30 days
   - Make low hanging fruit
   - Divide orientation 1/2 English 1/2 No English
   - Fill out preference sheet; more data=engagement
   - Easter-egg-like map orientation
   - Assign a U.S. buddy to international students they can ask questions to before departure
   - Make orientation an online for those who missed it or record it
   - U.S. survival guide/package
   - Make “orientation” digital and interactive; a game with a prize at the end
• Arrange transport from airport
• Pokémon “catch them all” scavenger hunt
• Multilingual campus guide
• Onboarding for a week in home country
• Detailed guide of university accommodations and services
• Pair international students up with a group of students before coming to campus

2. How might we foster a welcoming campus climate and inclusive environment for new international students?

• Fly in parents for a week
• Fly on the wall experience
• Offer a class about each country of international student on campus
• Freaky Friday swap with roommate
• Hanging international flags
• Hello week in a different language
• Mini world quest
• Ice cream social
• Have international groups with international faculty, staff, and students
• Family weekend for international students
• Virtual alternate break
• Trip to Washington DC/White House tour
• International fair + authentic foods, culture, etc.
• Host family
• International food shopping
• International club that receives university funding
• Learn to make international food
• City tour
• Invitations to café to sit with people
• International federal student scholarships
• Partner before they get here
• Buddy system with U.S. students
• Climate games
• Fly to Epcot=visit countries
• Project runway international
• Learn an international dance
• Wear a pin from another country
• Spend a day with international student
• Speed introductions

3. How might we support international students throughout their first year to help them with adjustment?

• International food at café
• International calendar that recognizes their countries’ holidays
• Weekly international night
• Connect a study abroad alumnus to international student
• Programming specifically for international students
• Empathy session
• Have faculty, staff, and students lunch
• Pay for family to visit twice a year
• No lone student at café
• Have a night where international students can share crazy U.S. things that have happened with others
• Attend a religious service with international student
• First-year student seminar just for international students
• International DJs
• Dorm programs
• Share culture experience
• Tutor in writing lab
• Invite international student to party week
• Tours
• Family Skype night
• Allow domestic students to choose if they would like to have international roommate
• Local family/adopt a student
• Invite students to classes with emphasis on their language/culture
• Food tasting
• More awareness in clubs/organizations in city

4. How might we encourage international students to get involved in extracurricular activities?

• Survivor game where people have to work together (e.g., breakout room)
• Have different clubs speak at international orientation
• Mini and quiet orientation session before shouting orientation
• Rollercoaster day before an exam
• Use Google Translate and make fun of it
• Give a car, but they have to take a student somewhere new
• Free trip motivation
• Make it a part of the mandatory first-year seminars
• Costume party; each club has a costume related to it
• Introduce to international student leaders their first semester
• All club dues are free
• Have a peer mentor show international students around club day
• Peer-to-peer program
• Offer extra credit
• Points/$ for multi-international clubs
• Fun day for free tuition
• Survey on interest
• International night at a basketball game
• Invite international students to cook for clubs
• Make traditional dances a sport and/or make a marathon
• International club day
• Bring musicians from their home country
• Invite students to take their friend to an event in their home country
• Create cultural activities of interest
• Organize international recreational sports team through office
• Earn badges for participation
• Language translator for interaction
Teleport device to club meetings
Feature a country’s music in a band/choir concert
Club explanation day
Established international club
International board with advertisement and opportunities in [city] community
International guide to clubs and affinity groups
Club day but for neighborhood and community organizations
Create virtual country experience
Engage with local companies’ diversity groups
Funding for events on campus and in the community
Free trip to...
Teach everyone 20 languages
International food fair
Get involved to get scholarship
International food cooking day
“Road to Campus” involvement and choose your own adventure
Nutrition; eating balanced with unfamiliar foods
International student association + $20,000 budget
Free food and t-shirt
Scavenger hunt to different offices on campus
Leadership positions in at least two organizations get scholarships

5. How might we help international students navigate transportation challenges?

- Transportation buddy
- International exploration club
- Student pairing for rides
- International Uber/Lyft
- Airport shuttles
- Grocery Saturday shuttle
- Vespa discount at metro scooter
- Arrival flight free ride
- Bike path
- Free bus pass
- Scooter ride sharing
- Free bikes
- Uber, etc. gift card for semester
- Car sharing zip car
- On-campus driving course
- Students who have cars post where they are going so student may catch a ride
- Campus car rental office
- Give a tour of the area and downtown
- Faculty/staff ride share
- On call rides
- Mentor driver program
- International ride board
- Driving boards for carpoools
- Bus guide
6. How might we support junior/senior international students differently?

- Visa day; convert or work visa automatically
- Bring international office staff to visit them at home
- Start a university company where each person can do practical training/CPT
- After 3 months, have home invite them back to U.S./travel free
- Ongoing vacation after college to travel the world
- Connect international students with new students to share their experiences
- Give them access to transportation
- Better career advising
- Connect them with organizations that have international students
- Take friends from university back home with them
- Secret tunnels connecting
- OPT fee waived
- Get involved in city and community
- Free tickets to city games
- Give money to visit companies
- Allow job shadow on campus
- Buy homes in neighborhood
- Create free summer travel experiences
- Talent show with employers in audience
- Invite parents to campus/free trip
- Make a musical about their campus experience
- Partner with a university employee for the summer
- Field trips
- Summer career experience on campus
- Summer career fair
- Alumnus-student pairing to support each other
- Give the junior/senior chance to own business on campus and run it
- Career center for international students
- Service learning in home country
- Google
- Win trip to U.S. national park
- Offer job interviews provided by international grad to prepare for jobs
- Create job/culture immersion program
- Programs for international students with international associations
- International summer camps for kids on campus
- Help international students find a job
- Advocate for full-time job sponsorship
- Going global training
- International student mentorships
- Free scholarships for GMAT, GRE, etc.
- Support international students’ internships
- Virtual career fair
- Connect Career Development Office with international companies
- Alternate break trip organized by international student
- Connect with chambers of commerce
- Career Skype room for international views
- Cross-cultural bus meeting training
• Trips to interview with international companies
• U.S. mentors to do résumé critiques and mock interviews

7. How might we better facilitate international students with their transition after college?
• Connect international student with U.S. company that is also overseas
• International student career fair
• Pair with grad student that graduated with same major
• Travel home with adviser/professor/staff/etc.
• Promise a job after graduation as part of recruitment process
• Give them each five U.S. things to take with them
• Free housing for a year after graduating
• U.S. consulate on campus for international students
• List of businesses that sponsor work visas
• Foreign city alumni groups
• Job shadowing
• International chamber connections in the city
• Monthly meeting with other international students from their class
• Networking for international students
• One-month stay dorm before finding a job
• Make a real direct path back to the university
• Expose students to local corporations
• Buy a giant island and employ all grads
• Transition mentors
• Begin transition process junior year
• “Road from Campus”
• Paid flights home
• Care package
• International job match program