The Impact Of Integrative Programs And Services On International Students’ Transitions At Three Regional State Colleges

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THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ON INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS TRANSITIONS AT THREE REGIONAL STATE COLLEGES

by

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A DISSERTATION
Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of
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at the University of New England
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THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATITIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TRANSITIONS AT THREE REGIONAL STATE COLLEGES

Abstract

Over one million international students study at colleges and universities across the U.S. each year. Yet, some international students struggle academically, not because they do not have the cognitive intelligence to excel but they find it difficult to adapt into the American academic culture that is oftentimes significantly different from their own. The study sought to understand the use of integrative programs and services at three select Pennsylvania state institutions and their impact on international students’ successful transition as a part of their campus community. The intent of this study was to understand the complexities that international students face as they try to assimilate and adapt to academic environments in the United States. Phenomenology methodology was used, over 40 international students were surveyed, and interviews were conducted about student use and satisfaction of university programs and services provided during their transitional year.

The study’s findings indicate that: (1) international students believed their initial campus reception and use of transitional services played a part in their satisfaction and ability to integrate; (2) international students are highly dependent on ongoing support from international student support services; and (3) international students have a strong desire to form genuine connections with members of the university community. It was concluded that international students value academic supportive services while studying in the U.S. It is recommended that institutions implement adequate academic, social, and supportive services to ensure adaptation to higher education and improve matriculation among international students.
Keywords: international students, belonging, integrative programs, transitions, student support, genuine connection, internationalization, international enrollment
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I dedicate this dissertation to my sons, Cristian Nikolai and Cameron Pierce. I love you more than words can express. It’s an honor to be your mom.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Internationalization of higher education is “the integration of an international, intercultural and or global dimension into the curriculum and teaching-learning process” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). The promotion of internationalization of higher education institutions has increased over the last two decades (Hudzig, 2011). Internationalization of higher education institutions reflects factors such as student mobility, international partnerships and programs, and the internationalization of the curriculum (Garson, 2014).

The leading indicator of an institution’s internationalization efforts is the active and successful recruitment of international students to their degree programs (Rust & Kim, 2012). According to the 2015 Institute of International Education’s Open Doors Report, there were approximately 1 million international students within the United States on F or J visa categories—contributing over $34.5 billion in tuition and living expenses to the U.S. economy (Farrugia, 2016). Despite the added revenue secured by increased international enrollment, schools often fail to strategically plan for the successful transition of these students upon arrival to campus (Choudaha, 2013). U.S. institutions must ensure that their recruitment efforts are aligned with integrative services available on campus—investing in their support services to encourage retention of their students (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014).

International students often struggle with language issues, culture shock, isolation, and adjusting to social norms (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). According to Zhai (2002), these transitional issues for international students often manifest themselves as social withdrawal, sadness, depression, and ultimately affect academic success. International students must immediately develop relationships upon arrival to minimize the feelings of isolation,
thereby, reducing adjustment difficulties (Adesina, 2013; Dunkle & Presley, 2009; Glass, 2011; Pederson, 1991). Failure to plan adequately for an increased enrollment of international students could result in low levels of satisfaction by international students.

The misalignment between a student’s expectations and their initial experiences on campus can disrupt the student’s adjustment period and ultimate satisfaction (Zhai, 2002). Student satisfaction ultimately impacts retention, attrition, persistence and graduation rates (Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). Miller, Bender, and Schuh (2005) asserted that “creative promotion on the part of admissions literature contributed to the unrealistic expectations regarding the college experience” (p. 61). The authors’ findings suggest that institutions work to help students create more realistic expectations through orientation and individual courses (Miller, Bender, & Schuh, 2005).

**Problem Statement**

The rise of globalization has caused the rapid internationalization in many industries. In higher education, globalization is easily observed as it often is portrayed by increased global mobility of students and faculty. Many U.S. universities continue to face an ever-looming budget crises, with a continued decrease of yearly allocation by individual state governments—from 32 % to 23 % between 2003 and 2012 (Emery-Arras, 2014). According to the National Association for Education Statistics, full-time college enrollment has decreased 5% nationwide between 2010 and 2014 but are expected to increase by approximately 13% by 2024 (Kena et al., 2016). According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, public higher education institutions continue to experience significant budget cuts (2016). These reductions represent reduced access and will continue to make college attendance out of reach for many students, especially those dependent on federal or state aid.
Many state institutions, including those in Pennsylvania, look for full-paying students, such as international students, as a source of revenue to supplement continued state cuts (Aw, 2012). In Pennsylvania, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2016) found that the per-student funding has decreased by 33% since fall 2008, ahead of only five states, Arizona, Illinois, Louisiana, South Carolina and Alabama. International students pay double or triple in-state tuition and fees at public institutions without reliance on federal or state financial aid.

U.S. institutions have been successful in the strategic marketing and enrollment of international students (Farrugia, 2016). International students from over 220 countries study in the U.S. each year and may face insurmountable challenges associated with transitioning to the U.S (Farrugia, 2016; Glass, 2011; Zhai, 2002). University administrators must provide the necessary financial and human resources needed to implement crucial support initiatives to address these needs by creating strategic enrollment plans that include specific plans for the students’ social integration on campus (Bissonette & Woodin, 2013).

International student persistence and retention is rarely a topic of focus in research—since international student data is often not currently required for reporting purposes by federal agencies (Mamiseishvili, 2012). While several studies explored the social integration of college students, there is a lack of research that focuses on international students and their successful transition in their first year. The problem being addressed in this research is the use of integrative programs at regional institutions and its impact on the successful transition of international student experiences during their first year in the U.S. The failure to adequately address international student transition may impact international student recruitment and retention and ultimately have financial implications for higher education institutions.
Statement of Purpose

Institutions that actively seek to increase their international student enrollment should prepare the campus for these students through the implementation of programs and services designed to assist in the student's successful transition on campus. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to better understand the initial transitional experience of international undergraduate students attending U.S. institutions and to evaluate what types of programs and services had the most and least impact on the successful initial integration of international students from three regional universities.

Research Question

Overarching question and driver of this study was to explore how do integrative programs and services impact the successful transition of a select sample of international students on three campuses. There were three supplemental questions to support the overarching agenda of the study:

- How do international students describe their transitional experiences during their first year of college?
- What types of university-initiated programs and services best assist international students in their adaptation to U.S. college life?
- How do international students describe their sense of belonging during their first year?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Appendix A) highlights four concepts (1) campus preparedness and engagement, (2) integrative programs and services, (3) the level of student engagement, and (4) student motivation as key factors in successful transitions. Schlossberg’s transitional theory described four major factors (situation, self, support, and strategies) that
influence a person’s ability to cope with a transition (Arthur, 2003; Kim, 2012). This study considered Schlossberg’s theory in the successful transition of international students during their first year. International students must develop relationships upon arrival quickly to minimize the feelings of isolation—reducing adjustment concerns (Glass, 2011; Pederson, 1991). Tinto’s (1987) Theory of Student Departure investigated students that enter college and the impact of characteristics related to familial support and cultural and social values on their successful transition (Long, 2012; Mayhew, Vanderlinden, & Kim, 2009; Tinto, 1987). The researcher aimed to understand the risks associated with college transition for international students.

Berry’s Model of Acculturation (1980) investigated how individuals adapt to a new culture using the four modes of acculturation—assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). Berry’s model helped the researcher examine how international students create a connection with the university, therefore, increasing the level of integration and ultimately a sense of belonging (Dellinger, 2014). The theory also provided a lens to examine how integrative programs and services offered by the institutions supported the students in creating connections. Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1985) suggests that students who spent quality time on campus outside of class would be more likely to succeed (Grayson, 2008). The theory was used to investigate what strategies facilitated the successful transition of the select sample of international students to the sample campuses.

**Researcher’s Perspective**

From the outset of the study, the researcher was a higher education administrator with 12-plus years of experience in international education. With personal experience as a former international student in the United States, the researcher had the passion and vested interest in the topic of international student integration. This shared experience provided the benefit of
credibility during individual interviews. The researcher used journaling as a method to articulate and reflect on researcher bias during the study.

Assumptions, Limitation, and Scope

The scope of the study was the integrative programming available to first-year, degree-seeking international students at Pennsylvania’s regional higher education institutions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) surmised the need to look for and acknowledge the limitations of a proposed study—demonstrating the critical thinking through the research process. The researcher made a strong effort to minimize limitations caused by engaging in a phenomenological study. These studies take place in a natural environment on a college campus and represent specific settings. It was important for the researcher to use member checks and peer debriefing to strengthen reliability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The participants of the study were degree-seeking international students at three regional Pennsylvania universities. Sample sites were chosen based on their active recruitment of international students and because of their orientation and other integrative programs and services for students upon arrival. The students were expected to experience varying levels of transition to the American education system and culture. Approximately 42 international students at the selected sites were surveyed. Additional research was conducted through the use of individual interviews. Qualitative data was collected regarding the transitional experiences of international students during the first year.

Rationale and Significance

The findings from the study provide a model for higher education administrators to use for international students who face transitional challenges, and provide strategies to support their integration to the U.S. academic and social experience. Research findings offer international
student services administrators the tools needed to best develop and implement programming and
support services that assist in the successful transition of first-year international students. The
results will help frame policies and procedures related to the international student experience.
Faculty members will benefit by implementing best strategies to engage international students in
their classroom, as well as developing and improving resources to increase their academic and
social success. Administrators will have the opportunity to highlight the impact of international
students on campus, and how their presence can positively impact the overall global competency
of students, faculty, and staff.

**Definition of Terms**

**Culture Shock.** The collective impact of unfamiliar experiences on cultural travelers
(Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008).

**Department of Homeland Security.** A federal agency established in 2002, consisting of
22 different federal departments and agencies, including the Coast Guard, Immigration, and
Customs Enforcement and Federal Emergency Management Agency (Department of Homeland
Security).

**Global Competency.** Having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural
norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate
and work effectively outside one’s environment (Dewey & Duff, 2009).

**Globalization.** The rise of factors and forces that transcend borders and sovereign states
(Hudzig 2011).

**Higher Education Institutions.** Postsecondary institutions offering programs at a variety
of levels and degrees, including associates, bachelors, masters, and doctoral programs.
**Integrative Programs.** Pre- and post-arrival academic and social support services, geared towards the positive orientation and transition of students to a university campus. Examples of integrative services include those involved in new student orientation, international student services, student success services, and student involvement.

**International Student.** A temporary, non-immigrant actively enrolled in an academic course of study at an institution of higher education in the United States. Degree-seeking international students are in the F- or J- visa category.

**International Enrollment Management.** An area of work within international education that involves, but is not limited to the recruitment and retention of international students.

**Internationalization.** The integration of an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the curriculum and teaching-learning process (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

**Orientation.** The deliberate programmatic and service efforts designed to facilitate the transition of new students to an institution (NODA: Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education, 2016).

**Retention.** Enrollment within the same institution for the fall semester of a student’s first and second year (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008).

**Transition.** An event, or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Schlossberg, 1981).

**Visa.** An endorsement on a passport allowing the holder to visit a foreign country for a defined purpose and length of time.

**Conclusion**

While many colleges and universities across the United States actively engaged in international student recruitment, their leadership must also make plans to integrate this unique
population into the campus community (Kahanec & Králiková, 2011; Nellum & Hartle, 2015; Zhai, 2002). Institutions must work to intentionally address potential transitional issues faced by international students, especially in their first year (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014). The research sought to address the integration experiences of international students on three regional institutions within the state of Pennsylvania, while also examining how programs and services encouraged or impeded their transition to campus—impacting their academic and social success.

Chapter 2 highlights literature related to international student mobility and strategic enrollment management, the international student experience, and ways institutions can address international student integration issues proactively. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in the study, including the setting of the survey, the participants, and the type of data and instruments to be used in collecting the data. Data was collected on the international student experience during the first year and how the implementation of integrative initiatives can impact their success.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis, summarizing the international student experience within their first year and how they were linked to the successful integration of international students at U.S. higher education institutions. Chapter 5 provides interpretation of the findings, how they can benefit higher education institutions and the increased international student enrollment.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher analyzed international integrative initiatives and support services at three Pennsylvania regional higher education institutions and measured the impact related to international students’ successful transitions. The aim was to document the considerations U.S. university administrators at three state colleges made when preparing for the growth of international students on their campuses and to make recommendations about how to provide better integration and transition programs and services based on the diverse needs of incoming international students.

This literature review highlights international student mobility and strategic enrollment management, the international student experience, and ways institutions can proactively address integration challenges. Articles, websites, and books were reviewed to find themes relating to international student integration in U.S. universities and the impact of integrative programs and support service on their success.

Research Objectives

The study investigated international integrative programs and support initiatives and measured their effectiveness on the student’s successful transitions during their first year at U.S colleges and universities. The intent was to find the types of programs that may have the most impact on the successful integration of international students. The aim was to understand leaders' considerations when preparing for the growth of international students on their campuses. The literature reviewed here suggests that an intentional approach to integrative programming and support was best suited to address the transitional needs of international students during their initial year in the United States.
Overview of International Student Mobility

International student mobility has become an increasingly important topic for many stakeholders, including institutions, host countries, and a student’s home country. Mobility is primarily affected by the socioeconomic, immigration, and higher education policies of the receiving country (Kahanec & Králiková, 2011; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) surmised that international students often choose a destination based on future immigration plans after completion of their academic programs. Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) also found that countries will actively recruit international students based on their projected workforce and population needs.

Rust and Kim (2012) inferred that the desire to gain worldwide recognition and prestige caused competitiveness between countries and institutions. The United States commands 19% of the total number of international students worldwide (Kahanec & Králiková, 2011). A 2008 study by Noel-Levitz (2008) found that the market share of the U.S. continues to decrease over the years, because of attractive immigration rules in many competing countries, such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The report also found that these countries often made centralized efforts to market themselves as best options for international students seeking to study and migrate abroad.

When making the decision to study overseas, 78% of prospective international students consider the financial affordability, while approximately 31% of these students thought the lack of familial and social support as their most prominent concerns (Noel-Levitz & College Week Live, 2015). International students had concerns regarding their adjustment to U.S. college life, including language proficiency, perceived discrimination, homesickness, social support and their ability to establish relationships with Americans (Mittal & Wieling, 2006; Poyrazli & Lopez,
Institutions seeking to attract international students should consider opportunities to mitigate these concerns (Bista & Foster, 2011; Cornelius, 2012).

**Strategic International Enrollment Management**

Over 383,000 international graduate students were studying in the United States in 2015-2016 academic year, while over 427,000 make up undergraduate students and over 85,000 attending non-degree programs such as intensive English language programs (Farrugia, 2016). Over 66% of international students are funded through personal and family finances (Farrugia, 2016). Pennsylvania ranks sixth in the U.S. with over 48,000 international students, who contribute approximately $1.7 billion to the state’s economy each year (Farrugia, 2016).

Asia makes up over 66% of the market share of international students in the United States—India and China with over 680,000 students combined (Farrugia, 2016). Andrade (2006) and Hudzik (2011) concluded that institutions must implement strategic international enrollment management models to diversify their international student population—increasing the sustainability of their programs. Many institutions have enjoyed the benefits of several government-sponsored programs, from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States (Ngo & Lumadue, 2014). The current economic and political environment, however, has caused many thriving government-sponsored programs to decrease or eliminate their scholarship initiatives—causing enrollment decline across U.S. universities and independent intensive English programs—many of which have become over-reliant on these programs for enrollment (Ngo & Lumadue, 2014; Taylor & Albasri, 2014).

Childress (2009) found that while many college administrators were using internationalization as a buzzword on campus, not many of them developed policies or protocols to operationalize it. Childress (2009) found that only 71% of the universities surveyed had
purposefully structured internationalization approaches to programming. Administrators often recognize the value of internationalization, but the lack of communication at the institution often caused an adverse reaction to such initiatives by faculty and staff. There is often a disconnect between administrators, who decide to aggressively recruit international students, and the faculty and staff who often feel ill-prepared to provide a smooth transition and rewarding academic and social experience for the students (Moscati, 2007).

Bissonette and Woodin (2013) found that to achieve successful internationalization, an institution must (1) establish a baseline, (2) review and discuss its findings, (3) develop a strategic plan, and (4) commit to and engage in the plan. Bissonette and Woodin found that “the importance of having the right mix of allies and challengers at the table is to develop an internationalization plan” (p. 21). A complete and transparent internationalization plan will ensure that an increase in international student enrollment is met with excitement, instead of indifference or hostility by faculty and staff (Childress, 2009; LaBeau, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). Internationalization can only be done by making campus stakeholders a part of the efforts—so they fully embrace the initiative (Agnew, 2012; Brustein, 2007). Faculty and staff must recognize underlying issues and concerns that may affect the overall success of such initiatives.

According to Freisen (2012), innovative change theory allows the opportunity to explore how values and needs influence faculty engagement in campus internationalization. The author theorized that internationalization “is best received when faculty members believe that the change being undertaken is relevant to their professional academic objectives and aligns with the core values of the institution” (Freisen, 2012, p. 16). Administrators must engage faculty throughout the internationalization process.
The International Student Expectation and Experience

U.S. students are often inundated with information by higher education institutions, through counselors, school visits, mailings, campus tours and email communications (Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 2001; Stephenson, Heckert & Yerger, 2016). Unlike their domestic counterparts, most international students are unable to visit physical locations before making a decision—relying instead on the Internet, the university’s admissions counselors, and word of mouth by current and former students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Moogan, 2011; Russell, 2005). Moogan (2011) also found the need for “institutions to be realistic to the student’s expected experience” (p. 574). The disconnect between students’ expectations and their experience upon arrival to campus can cause problems regarding the student’s adjustment period and ultimate satisfaction—for both domestic and international students (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014).

Institutions monitor student engagement and satisfaction by administering surveys resulting in an improvement to policies, as well as student programs and services (Grebennikov & Shah, 2013). Student satisfaction ultimately impacts retention, attrition, persistence, graduation rates and institutional loyalty (Ali, Zhou, Hussain, Nair, & Ragavan, 2016; Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004). In 2011, the National Survey of Student Engagement found that students who actively participated in high-impact activities self-reported satisfaction with their first-year experience (Tukibayeya & Gonyea, 2014).

International Student Integration and High Impact Practices

International students often struggle with culture shock, isolation and other adjustment problems (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). They defined culture shock as “the collective impact of such unfamiliar experiences on cultural travelers” (p. 63). According to Zhai (2002), transitional issues often manifest as social withdrawal, sadness, depression, and
ultimately affect academic success. Yan and Sendall (2016) found that institutions can ensure that support programs, such as counseling and academic advising, are in place. Staff must have adequate preparation to deal with the unique challenges of serving these students.

Glass, Wongtrirat, and Buus (2015) posited that university leadership must strive to build inclusive campus climate through high-impact programming, both in and out of the classroom. Schlossberg’s transition theory indicates that programs that create and promote community will limit social estrangement and alienation (Arthur, 2003; Kim, 2012). Woosley (2003) found that initial social adjustment was the only initial variable (employment and academic adjustment being the others) to increase the likelihood of success and degree completion significantly. Research suggests that the creation of shared experiences and learning communities can increase a student’s chance for academic success (Tinto, 2003).

According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2008), high-impact practices are techniques that are considered beneficial to student engagement and success. Institutions have found success by creating initiatives that aid in the integration of international students to campus, such as intentional orientation, first-year seminars, living and learning communities, mentorship and bridge programs for a special population of students, as needed. Tukibayeya and Gonyea (2014) found that high-impact practices were seldom implemented in isolation and allowed a variety of opportunities for students to develop meaningful relationships with people on campus.

**Orientation.**

A study by Mayhew, Vanderlinden, and Kim (2009) evaluated how orientation programs helped students learn the skills needed to adapt to their new environment. Furthermore, Mayhew et al. (2009) posited that:
Orientation programming affected a student’s academic and social success during their transition to university and was credited with a student’s ability to develop friendships and their use of campus resources. (p. 337)

Additionally, orientation and other freshman programming had received the attention over the past years because of their role in improving student success and overall retention of college students (Mayhew et al., 2009). These programs help with the transition between high school and college and contribute to successful student acclimatization.

According to Noel-Levitz (2008), international students place a higher value on new student orientation, as it helps them adjust to the campus and American culture. Schools have found that they must employ innovative ways to deliver orientation to international students—taking into account their unique needs and limitation (Valosika, 2014). Institutions must create pre- and post-arrival programming and services to build a sound basis for international student integration (Andrade, 2006; Jacob & Greggo, 2001).

In a study of international students, Zhai (2002) found that a comprehensive orientation that addressed academic and cultural differences were the most beneficial. The Canadian Bureau of International Education found that institutions should look at orientation as an ongoing process for students, addressing known risk factors and barriers often faced by students (Smith, 2016). Orientation programming throughout the course of the first semester or year to assist with the transition by providing support and feedback over the period (Dorsett, 2017; Smith, 2016).

**Living-Learning Communities.**

The theory of motivation was developed by Maslow and established the hierarchy of needs. He theorized that behavior is driven by satisfaction (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Maslow’s hierarchy of needs suggests that after meeting basic physiological and safety needs, a person is
motivated to meet psychological needs—a sense of belonging and feeling of being valued. International students benefit from gaining social support at U.S. institutions by engaging in rich conversations and by creating meaningful connections with American students (Özturgut & Murphy, 2009).

Chickering’s Identity Development Theory suggests the importance of students developing interpersonal relationships and a sense of purpose during their time in college (Long, 2012). Residence halls provide an opportunity for international students to develop interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging on campus. Living-learning communities inside residence halls “bridge a student’s academic and non-academic life” (Spanierman et al., 2013, p. 310). Living-learning communities “offer students the opportunity to form deeper ties with their peers and with faculty, thereby strengthening their support networks and institutional attachment” (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013, p. 102).

Zhao and Kuh (2004) investigated the value of learning communities, and found that “participation in such a program is strongly linked to active and collaborative learning with faculty members” (p. 127). Students who take advantage of out-of-class activities associated with living-learning communities were more likely to form a strong sense of community—leading to social and academic success (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). These intentional approaches assist with the integration of international students into the campus community and allow domestic students the opportunity to interact with diverse cultures from across the globe—ensuring cross-cultural learning by all (Glass, Wongtrirat & Buus, 2015).

**First-Year Seminars and Experiences.**

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2008) considers First-Year Experience programs a high-impact educational practice that is meant to place great emphasis on
a student’s development and initial transition. Andrade (2009) found that “first-year experience seminars were examples of programming that have a long-term impact on student success through the use of intentional monitoring and assessment of students throughout their first year” (p. 485). Often, first-year experience programs were not created to address the unique needs of international students (Yan & Sendall, 2016). Successful programs often have expected outcomes aimed at an international student’s successful adaptation to campus life, including institution knowledge, adjustment to American classroom culture, developing healthy relationships and academic preparation (Yan & Sendall, 2016).

**Social, Cultural and Academic Adjustment.**

Young Yun Kim (1988) theorized that cross-cultural adaptation is the process in which a person adjusts to a new culture. Kim’s (1988) Stress-Adaption-Growth Model suggests a most cyclical process of adaptation, rather than the traditional U-curve. International students were undergoing transitional experiences, along with their American peers, but are doing so while adapting to a new culture—often without the help of familial support (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012). International students are also adjusting to a new education system, being completely taught in a secondary or tertiary language. They must learn the skills needed to recognize adaptation patterns to limit the negative impact of transitions (Althen, 1994). Cross-cultural transitions are necessary, and students must be motivated to engage in their new surroundings, or risk being separated or marginalized (Althen, 1994; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Mentoring programs pair incoming students with current students or faculty and staff, allowing a student support before arrival, which can help address the potential issue of the power differential. Barstow (2008) defined power differential as the enhanced power that accompanies
any position of authority. Issues of power differentials become apparent in an international student’s initial weeks on campus (Oyserman, 2006). In American society, which is predominantly individualistic, there is a small power distance between student and faculty, while in other cultures, often collectivistic, the power distance is often significant (Oyserman, 2006; Triandis, 2001). Students from a society where it is uncommon to participate in class or disagree with the instructor, often struggle with fully engaging in classes.

**Academic Adjustment and Issues with Integrity.**

The “academic adjustment of a student is their ability to cope with the varying academic demands of the new academic environment” (Rienties et al., 2012, p. 687). A student’s language ability, especially oral communication, impacts their transition, and often affects their entire experience (Dorsett, 2017; Smith, 2016). Dorsett (2017) found that English language learners, for example, often perceived obstacles to their academic and social success on campus, including their ability to participate effectively in class discussions and group work. Institutions should provide the tools needed to increase international student’s confidence in facing language challenges and provide assistance whenever necessary (Dorsett, 2017; Soria & Stebleton, 2013).

Plagiarism is often a new concept to many international students, which becomes a concern for many administrators and faculty (Gunnarsson, Kulesza & Pettersson, 2014). “The motivation for plagiarism often involves a lack of familiarity with the language, how to convey concepts and ideas and an unfamiliarity with U.S. academic protocol” (Doss et al., 2016, p. 543-544). The Wall Street Journal found that international students were five times more likely than domestic students to cheat (Jordan & Belkin, 2016).

Failure to adjust can lead to problems with academic integrity for international students. Institutions must create educational support structures to enhance student learning outcomes.
Throughout the literature review, little research was found on international student success outside of the scope of academic performance and completion rates. Academic success improves based on increased student engagement and the use of intentional student support (Day & Long, 2015). Institutions cannot merely give warnings and punishment to these students, but instead need to assist them to succeed by offering workshops about the research process and the standards of academic integrity (Chen & Van Ullen, 2011).

**Building Meaningful Relationships.**

International students study outside of their home country because of the flexibility and innovative learning that takes place in the United States—building life-long friendships and networks along the way (Glass, 2011). The students bring different viewpoints that assist in the internationalization of the campus and classroom. A survey by Urban and Palmer (2013) found that international students wanted to be engaged through meaningful interactions with American students and professors, along with having international perspectives integrated into the classroom. International students bring stress-free opportunities to engage with people from countries and cultures that would otherwise be out of reach for many Americans.

Upon arrival, international students must quickly develop relationships to minimize the feelings of isolation to minimize adjustment challenges (Glass, 2011; Zhai, 2002). Until this adjustment is achieved, students will struggle to attain self-fulfillment and wellness (Adesina, 2013; Dunkle & Presley, 2009). Students need the opportunity for social and personal support, as well as to be satisfied with the quality and frequency of their interactions with faculty, staff, and other students (Astin, 1984; Tinto 2003; Vianden, 2015).

International students often need help learning about American culture. In a study of University of Toledo international students, it was found that while some international students

(Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2009).
felt exposed to American culture before arrival, they struggled to ask questions—because of the fear of being judged (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). Homestays, mentoring programs, and conversation circles, for example, were university programs that allowed opportunities for international students to learn about and celebrate American culture and traditions with faculty and staff, students, and community members (Andrade & Evans, 2009; Ogden, 2010; Zhou & Cole, 2016). University-initiated programs encourage the development of relationships with people of diverse backgrounds and bridge the gap between the international students’ expectations and realities (Noel-Levitz, 2008; Noel- Levitz & College Week Live, 2015).

**Campus Preparedness and Engagement**

While the financial benefit of international student enrollment is often the primary impetus for higher education internationalization, its primary purpose must be to improve the global competency of faculty, staff, and students (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014). Dewey and Duff (2009) define global competency as “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work efficiently outside one’s environment” (p. 491). A globally competent campus recognizes and celebrates the intersectionality of its students, faculty, and staff. Its faculty members embrace the notion of an internationalized curriculum across all disciplines (Brustein, 2007; Choi et al., 2014; Dewey & Duff, 2009).

**Faculty and Staff Engagement.**

Higher education administrators must promote transformative learning and development to encourage faculty to engage in the internationalization of their institution (Freisen, 2012; McEwen, Strachan & Lynch, 2011; Stohl, 2007). Nieto and Booth (2009) found that the increase in international student enrollment sometimes causes unintended consequences on college
campuses—especially in the classroom. For internationalization to be successful, the authors suggested that faculty have an intercultural sensitivity to teach students who were from different cultures successfully.

Institutions often create a goal of increasing international student enrollment for financial gain, sometimes causing complicated relationships between international students and faculty and staff on campus (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Faculty members and administrators sometimes view international students with indifference or frustration because of the perceived added challenges brought to the classroom and service departments, as well as the assumption of privilege (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). While many may have difficulties engaging with international students, others find them to be a resource for internationalizing the campus (Hser, 2005).

Campus-wide discussions regarding the increased enrollment and the impact on academic and administrative offices must be transparent (Marković, 2008). Throughout the review of the literature, little evidence exists regarding the faculty and staff perspectives of unexpected enrollment growth of international students, and what it means for their involvement and interaction with those students. Jiang and Carpenter (2013) found that faculty and staff members were unprepared to deal with the increase in international students—especially those with different levels of needs and expectations than those to which they were already accustomed. Institutions are encouraged to work across departments and division to develop initiatives that best equip units to anticipate and serve the needs of international students adequately (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Stohl, 2007).

Faculty engagement can limit disagreement and breakdown in communication regarding the administration’s true intentions of increasing the institution’s international student enrollment
(Dewey & Duff, 2009; Garson, 2014; Kreber, 2009). Faculty involvement in the process through engagement surveys and creation of incentives increases commitment and engagement on campus (Brustein, 2007; Hudzik, 2011). Faculty members sometimes perceive that the internationalization of the classroom exists only to “accommodate” international students for the institution’s economic gain (Kreber, 2009). However, the internationalization of the curriculum includes the goal of an institutional mission to create globally competent graduates—preparing them to be well-rounded citizens with the ability to function on teams made up of people from cultural backgrounds that differ from their own.

**Intercultural Development**

Faculty and staff development in global competency will assist them through enhancing their empathy, instead of reacting in frustration regarding international students’ difficulty assimilating into the American college life (Garson, 2014; Kreber, 2009). Universities must assess the need for cross-cultural training for its faculty, staff, and administrators to improve communication between individuals and groups (Althen, 1994). Cross-cultural training programs bring attention to the influence of culture on a person’s thoughts and behavior and provide the opportunity to for them to understand the differences among diverse groups and how to approach interactions with positivity and intentionality, thereby assisting with fostering deeper connections (Althen, 1994; Palmer, 2016; Sandeen, 2004).

Faculty, staff, and administrators must have empathy for international students, helping to facilitate a smooth integration into the new education system and way of life, instead of the unrealistic expectation of immediate and complete assimilation (Andrade, 2006). Nieto and Booth (2009) acknowledged that faculty members with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity not only understood the challenges of completing a degree in a second language and were more
likely to help international students feel accepted as they encountered aspects of American culture. They were also more likely to be aware of the need to create an environment that encouraged students to engage in class.

**Limitations and Pitfalls to Increase International Student Enrollment.**

Change initiatives have potential pitfalls regarding implementation and sustainability—especially a successful international enrollment plan. The lack of shared views and values regarding this type of internationalization activity makes it difficult to create the necessary international student success initiatives (Marković, 2008). Institutions should strive to be intentional and purposeful in its integration efforts—resulting in long-term, positive implications for both the institution and students (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014).

There is limited research regarding the impact of intentional programming and services available to international students’ pre- and post- arrival and how they impact the student’s overall success. One recurring theme in the literature includes student success efforts at institutions—often focused on American students (Andrade, 2006; Feldman, 2005; Spanierman et al., 2013). Literature that mentions international students were limited to a student’s academic success, instead of their successful social and academic integration.

Childress (2009) found that while institutions undergo strategic international enrollment management planning as a part of their overall internationalization plans, it was evident that the plan rarely includes goals regarding international student integration and success. LaBeau (2010) suggested that “internationalization plans are rarely fully operationalized—concluding that there must be a systematic, institutional plan with clearly articulated rationales and mission” (p. 44). Institutions must avoid the urge to engage in aggressive recruitment of international students.
without putting similar efforts into the preparation of the campus for successful student integration.

**Conceptual Framework**

Finding one’s place on a college campus affects a student’s sense of belonging and overall satisfaction. This connection to campus is directly related to student persistence and success. Tinto’s theory of student departure and Astin’s theory of student involvement state that students need to be satisfied not only in their academics but also with their social integration on campus (Mamiseishvili, 2012). Berry’s Model of Acculturation looks at the value that is placed on students (1) maintaining their cultural identity, and (2) maintaining relationships with the host culture (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015).

Because of the need for administrators to understand the impact of international students studying in the United States, using Schlossberg’s transition theory as a framework will help the researcher analyze the coping needs of students (Arthur, 2003; Kim, 2012). Schlossberg 4 S’s situation, self, support, and strategies explain how an international student copes with the transition to U.S. college campus (Arthur, 2003; Kim, 2012). The research focused on the Schlossberg’s social support and strategies factors associated with the integration of international students.

Institutions should be intentional in their integrative programming and support services—resulting in long-term, positive implications for the student’s ability to form meaningful relationships on campus (Mamiseishvili, 2012). The theories provided by Astin and Schlossberg support analysis of integrative and support services and programs at U.S. higher education institution and assist in determining their quality and impact on the successful transition of international students to campus (Appendix A). Theories by Berry and Tinto support the idea
that the successful transition of international students occurs through successful integration into the U.S. college culture. The researcher documented and evaluated individual and campus strategies that impact successful transitions to college.

**Conclusion**

The U.S hosts over one million international students at its higher education institutions each year. Institutional leaders sometimes engage in the active recruitment of these students to attract them to their respective campus as a part of an intentional international enrollment management plan. Colleges and universities should work to implement high-impact practices as a part of their integrative initiatives to promote the successful transition of international students during their first year. While literature was found related to student transition from high school to college, and the impact of programming on student success and retention, there is a gap in research as it relates to international students. A phenomenological study was conducted at three regional Pennsylvania universities to determine how integrative programming impacted the ability of first-year international students to transition to U.S. college life successfully.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

U.S. colleges and universities have engaged in the recruitment of international students as the enrollment of domestic students continues to decrease nationwide (Kahanec & Králiková, 2011; Nellum & Hartle, 2015). Universities must work to provide a positive campus environment for new international students, or risk not addressing integration challenges experienced by the students, as well as the faculty, staff, and domestic students with whom they interact. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the initial transitional experience of international undergraduate students attending U.S institutions. The study also evaluated the types of programs and services that had the most and least impact on the successful initial integration of international students at three regional universities.

The study identified how integrative programs and support services influenced an international student's successful transition within their first year. Roberts (2010) surmised that the qualitative approach to research is based on people’s experiences and perceptions. This method was appropriate for studying the transition of international students during their first year at U.S. higher education institutions. The study considered several student development theories from Schlossberg, Berry, Tinto, and Astin to evaluate how campus services and programs encouraged or impeded the transition and integration of international students to campus within their first year (Arthur, 2003; Grayson, 2008; Kim, 2012; Lee, 2010).

Chapter 3 describes the context of the study, including the setting and the rationale behind the sampling methods to be used. It outlines the data collection and analysis methods of the study and address issues of limitation, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.
Setting

Pennsylvania ranks sixth in the nation with over 48,000 international students enrolled in colleges and universities across the state (Farrugia, 2016). At the beginning of the study, approximately 2,000 international students were actively enrolled at the fourteen regional higher education institutions in Pennsylvania. To ensure a suitable sample population, the researcher invited three regional Pennsylvania universities to participate in the study, based on their active international student recruitment of and services for degree-seeking international students. Each site had members of their student body living in university-owned or affiliated housing.

This researcher sought to answer the following overarching question: How do integrative programs and services impact the successful transition of a select sample of international students on three campuses? Related questions included:

- How do international students describe their transitional experiences during their first year of college?
- What types of university-initiated programs and services best assist international students in their adaptation to U.S. college life?
- How do international students in the selected sample describe their sense of belonging during their first year?

During the study, the researcher was employed as Director of Global Education. The unit oversaw the comprehensive internationalization initiatives of the campus, including international student services that were a focal point of the study. The study was conducted using an online survey and individual interviews with participants from each campus. The researcher worked with Senior International Officers or their designee, at three regional universities, as well as their respective research office on each campus to gain access to the international students and data.
that was used. The three institutions chosen were classified as medium-sized with between 7,000 and 14,000 undergraduate student enrollments. Each site was in communities with populations of 20,000 or less. There were on average approximately 90 international students on each campus from 37 countries worldwide. Each site had a separate IRB process that required approval before the commencement of the study.

Participants and Sample

The study focused on degree-seeking international students at three pre-identified regional universities in Pennsylvania. The study sought to understand the transition of international students in the U.S. and their thoughts regarding how the integrative programs and support services offered at their respective institutions assisted in their successful integration to campus. Perceptual data was collected to answer the study’s research questions. The criteria for selecting participants were:

- All participants were full-time degree-seeking international students, on F or J student visa.
- All participants lived in the U.S. less than two years.

Data Collection

In the initial phase of data collection, an online survey (Appendix B) was given to international students studying at three regional Pennsylvania universities. “Surveys are easy to administer and allow the participant to respond with relative privacy” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 157). The survey included the use of Likert scales to collect perceptual data on international student transition and their satisfaction with their experience at their respective institution. The survey instrument was developed by the researcher using information learned during the literature review related to adjustment issues faced by international students studying...
in countries worldwide. Schlossberg and Astin’s student development theories were used as a framework for the instrument. The instrument had 30 items and was critiqued by experts in the international education field. This activity ensured that questions considered duplicate and unclear were found and revised or eliminated—providing clarity and validity of the instrument. The researcher used the survey tool QuestionPro to distribute the online survey. Participants had three weeks to complete the survey—prompted twice during this time to encourage maximum participation.

During the second phase of data collection, participants were contacted via email (Appendix C; Appendix D) to schedule focus groups or individual interviews. The theme of the interviews followed the survey instrument and was conducted by the researcher. Participants were asked a series of questions (Appendix E) about their expectations versus their experiences and their use and overall perception of integrative activities offered on campus, as well as their satisfaction—in hindsight.

There were difficulties in gathering participants for on-campus focus groups, because of the annual summer vacation, so the researcher implemented the use of individual semi-structured interviews. These interviews took place over a three-week period within a month of the participant’s completion of the survey instrument. Using multiple means of collecting data ensured trustworthiness and accuracy of the data collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Audio-recording was utilized during individual interviews to record the activities through Free Conference Calls, which utilized industry standard encryption.

**Data Analysis**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), “qualitative analysis brings order, structure, and meaning of data collected during a study” (p. 189). The authors also suggest that “When the
inductive approach to data analysis is used, it offers holistic and descriptive findings” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 40). Data collected was transcribed using a third-party service (Rev.com) and coded for data analysis; NVivo was used to assist in analyzing the data for themes and assigning codes to the collected data.

Phenomenological research “requires the researcher to analyze data to develop themes of meaning” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 238). During the data analysis portion of the study, the data underwent a narrative analysis to look for patterns and reoccurring themes based on the data collected during the survey and interview activities. The researcher analyzed the frequency of topics identified regarding international student perceptions of their time during the transition to college in the U.S.

“Researchers must strive to ensure the credibility of their study by employing methods to improve accuracy from all standpoints” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 176). Peer-debriefings were used to ensure credibility. The researcher sought feedback on the transcripts from interview participants through a member check process — improving the validity of the data.

**Participants’ Rights**

The researcher followed the protocols identified through the IRB process at the University of New England and the respective sites related to data collection, storage, and interpretation. Informed consent forms (Appendix F) was required for all participants before data collection to ensure their desire to continue participation. The researcher anticipated minimal risk, harm or discomfort from involvement in the study. The researcher took the proper precautions to minimize any misleading questions and conversation during the data collection process by conducting a pilot of the surveys and interview questions to elicit comments. The
creation and utilization of interview and focus group protocols allowed the researcher to ensure the validity of the data collected.

Copies of signed informed consent forms were stored in a secured, locked office accessible only to the researcher. The data gathered via the online survey was kept securely using QuestionPro, which utilizes a high standard of data security. All audio recordings and transcriptions made during interviews were encrypted using industry standards and stored on a locked device, accessible only to the researcher. All data collected, as well as research documentation, was kept until the conclusion of the study. Information was destroyed using standard methods designed for that purpose. The researcher was responsible for reporting any ethical issues occurring during and after the study, and appropriately referencing any data received from other sources.

**Potential Limitations**

The researcher began the study with substantial knowledge in the field of international education in U.S. higher education institutions. The researcher’s previous experience as an international student also provided the knowledge and familiarity to understand the transitioning phenomenon that was studied. This experience also had the potential of posing a threat to the research. Journaling was used to monitor potential researcher bias. It was important to be neutral about the findings and not allow pre-existing attitudes and assumptions to cloud the researcher’s ability to objectively acknowledge the important details of the study. The potential bias would have threatened the credibility of the data and overall trustworthiness of the research results. Offering thorough explanations and a description of the rationale used during the study ensured the reliability of the data.
Conclusion

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the methodology used in the intended study. The researcher undertook a phenomenological study of the experience of international undergraduate students at three midsize universities in Pennsylvania, USA. Perceptual data was collected using an online survey and individual interviews. The researcher continued to undergo a review of current literature related to the study throughout the study. The data gathered was analyzed for reoccurring themes and patterns. The researcher followed proper protocols to ensure ethical concerns or issues of credibility and reliability were minimized. While there were some limitations to the study, the researcher worked to reduce the negative impact of these occurrences.
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the initial transitional experience of international undergraduate students attending U.S. institutions and to evaluate the types of programs and services that had the most and least impact on the successful initial integration of international students. The students addressed the use of integrative programs on the successful transition of international students. The research was expected to inform best practices for international student services and support and universities across the United States. This chapter presents the responses obtained through an online survey and eight in-depth interviews with current international students from three Pennsylvania regional universities.

The study was conducted with student participants from three regional state institutions in the state of Pennsylvania using a survey created online by the researcher. The survey was comprised of four sections: (1) demographic data such as age, sex, languages were spoken, years in the U.S., and countries represented, (2) use and satisfaction of student services and support activities, (3) connection to campus, and (4) perception of campus. The study sought to determine international student perception of their transitional experience during their initial year at their institution and how the students described their sense of belonging or connectivity to campus during their first year.

Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation of Data

Data from sections 2, 3, and 4 of the survey, and data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using phenomenological analysis through NVivo to identify the frequency of answers to questions and clusters of themes. This data analysis approach is most suitable for this type of
study as it allowed for the research to address individual views and opinions of their lived experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Roberts, 2010).

**Survey Participant Demographics**

The survey instrument was sent by email to approximately 150 international students from three sites. Table 1 shows the characteristics of each site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Description based in undergraduate enrollment</th>
<th>Undergraduate Enrollment</th>
<th>Non-Resident Alien (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 Four-year, medium, primarily residential, suburban setting</td>
<td>7,052</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 Four-year, large, primarily residential, suburban setting</td>
<td>14,212</td>
<td>&lt; 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 3 Four-year, medium, primarily residential, suburban setting</td>
<td>7,566</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants from Site 1 represented 40% (n= 17) of respondents, while Site 2 and Site 3 represented 45% (n= 19) and 15% (n= 6) respectively. Forty-two international students from 22 countries participated in the survey- a 28% response rate. Table 2 shows the list of countries represented.
Table 2

**Survey respondents by country**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th># of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty-eight percent \((n=24)\) of the survey participants identified themselves as female, while 42% identified as male \((n=18)\). Also, approximately 62.8% \((n=26)\) of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 24. Figure 1 indicates that 83.3 % \((n=35)\) of participants identified themselves of non-native speakers of English, speaking 18 distinct languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, French and a variety of languages from the Indian subcontinent.
Interview Participant Selection and Demographics

Each survey participant was given the option of participating in a focus group or interview after completion of the survey. Potential interview participants were contacted by email to schedule interviews. Eight students from across the three research sites were interviewed during the second phase of the study. Table 3 shows interview participants based on gender, country of citizenship, and native language spoken.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Bahamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey and Interview Responses

The study was conducted using a researcher-created survey (Appendix B) and interview questions (Appendix E). The aim of the study was to gain insight into the students’ perceptions during their first year that their institution, including, (1) their feeling of being a valued member of campus, (2) their willingness to seek assistance, (3) their ability to make campus connections, and (4) their utilization and satisfaction of various student services on campus. The chapter presents and analyzes students’ responses from the online survey and individual interviews.

Feeling Valued.

The researcher aimed to gain a better understanding of the student's perception of feeling valued by faculty and staff on their respective campus. Questions 11, 12, 13, 18, and 19 of the
online survey sought to gather this data. Table 4 indicates the students’ overall responses of their perception of interactions with faculty and staff.

Table 4

*Responses related to feeling valued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>strongly agree or agree</th>
<th>neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>disagree or strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People are interested in me and my point of view</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty respect me and are interested in my international perspective</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff respect me and are interested in my international perspective</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from the survey were consistently positive. Table 5 indicates responses of students who either agreed or strongly agreed at each site.

Table 5

*Responses related to feeling valued by site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People are interested in me and my point of view</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty respect me and are interested in my international perspective</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff respect me and are interested in my international perspective</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Questions 1 and 7 were used to get additional information on the students’ perceptions regarding feeling valued on campus. Individual interviews supported the data from the survey. P1 stated, “Faculty is great… You just need to talk with faculty about it or ask for help. They really care,” and P2 remembered fondly a professor’s ability to say her commonly mispronounced name, by stating “…one professor who pronounced my name straight off the list, read my name and so I knew that I felt a connection.” P6 highlighted opportunities provided by a
faculty member to share an international perspective in the classroom, by stating “The professor started to ask my classmates and me to bring my experience to the class.” P8 stated, “I was surprised how well-intentioned and welcoming the staff and faculty were… That encouraged me a lot.”

**Making Connection.**

The researcher aimed to gain a better understanding of the student’s perception of their ability to connect to people on campus. Survey Questions 15, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, and 29 were asked to elicit the participants’ responses. The survey indicates that participants agreed that there was a connection to campus and the interests of forming relationships with other students. The survey response data in Table 6 suggest that international students’ views about campus connectivity were highly favorable.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses related to making connections</th>
<th>strongly agree or agree</th>
<th>neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>disagree or strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a member of the University community</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am making friends with other students</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the campus</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to attend my university</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend my university to other international students</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made the right decision to attend my current university</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses were highly positive across sites. Table 7 indicates responses of students who either agree or stronger agree at each location.
Table 7

*Responses related to making connections by site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like a member of the University</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am making friends with other students</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to the campus</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to attend my university</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend my university to other</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>international students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made the right decision to attend my</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Question 6 was used to obtain data related to the student's perception of making a connection on campus. The individual interviews brought out statements to support the data gathered during the survey. For example, P1 highlighted the relationship to American students by stating "I have a really good connection with American students so far.” P2 emphasized the relationship with other international students by stating “…we had so much in common just because we were both international students in the same space” and P8 agreed, stating “[international students] relied upon one another to get acclimated to the new environment… The connection was pretty strong because we had something in common.” P3 and P4 emphasized the importance of making connections, by stating "if you speak to people… That connection is important—having friends" and "I get to meet other students who are similar which is really helpful.”

While survey results indicated that connections were being made, some interviewees questioned the genuineness of the connection, and whether they truly were a part of their community. For example, P2 stated, “they would talk but not listen, or they would not have the
exchange in conversation but rather tell stories to each other.” P5 agreed with the sentiment, by stating “I could see it in their eyes that they were curious to know something about me, but they did not try, or they did not talk to me.”

**Seeking Assistance.**

The researcher aimed to gain a better understanding of the student’s perception regarding their ability to seek and receive assistance. Survey questions 13, 14, 20, and 21 were asked to elicit the international students’ responses. Table 8 indicates the students’ responses related to their capacity to seek needed assistance on campus.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses related to seeking assistance</th>
<th>strongly agree or agree</th>
<th>neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>disagree or strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can speak to faculty advisors about academic matter</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can speak to staff members about non-academic matter</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty notice if I need help</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff notice if I need help</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to survey were relatively positive regarding the student’s perception regarding seeking assistance. Table 9 indicates responses of students who either agreed or strongly agreed at each site.
### Table 9

**Responses related to seeking assistance by site**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can speak to faculty advisors about non-academic matter</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can speak to staff members about non-academic matter</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty notice if I need help</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff notice if I need help</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview questions 2, 8 and 9 were used to elicit additional information to add more detail to the findings of the survey. All agreed that connection with an academic advisor was critical to a student's academic success. While most interviewees recalled examples of positive interactions, P4, for instance, recounted negative experiences on campus while seeking help, stating, “I sometimes felt marginalized, like they doubted me.” Some interviewees agreed that they relied on family, friends, supporters, and mentors outside of the university setting. P6 stated, “I do not seek help from people from campus.” P7 agreed by stating, “the help is offered on campus, but usually the schedule does not match mine.” All interviewees mentioned utilizing the school’s website to seek assistance during their transition. P1, believe she was able to navigate a difficult initial semester “by conducting research on the university website,” and P8 concurred by stating “I relied heavily on the website because it had most of the information that anyone would need to navigate student services.”

**Utilization and Satisfaction of Services.**

The researcher aimed to gain a better understanding of the student’s use of a variety of services available throughout campus. Question 16 of the online survey was asked to gather responses. Table 10 indicates the students’ responses regarding their utilization of a variety of student service opportunities on campus.
Table 10

*Responses related to utilization of student services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>offered-used</th>
<th>offered-not used</th>
<th>not offered-used</th>
<th>not available</th>
<th>unsure if available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Student Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pre-arrival communication (email, phone call, social media)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• arrival support (arrival pick-up, check-in services, supply shopping)</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• orientation programming</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• immigration and cultural advising (visa assistance, immigration and cultural workshops)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mentoring program</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Success Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tutoring</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counseling</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic Advising</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing Services</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First-Year Seminars</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing and Residential Services</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living and learning community</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homestay</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dining Services</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Life Activities</strong></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Athletics and Intramural Sports</strong></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43
The survey showed that while many programs and services were available on campus, students sometimes chose not to participate. Table 11 indicates responses regarding the level of utilization at each site by different student service areas.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Site 1 Used</th>
<th>Site 1 Not Used</th>
<th>Site 2 Used</th>
<th>Site 2 Not Used</th>
<th>Site 3 Used</th>
<th>Site 3 Not Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Services</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>46.6%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Residential Services</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life Activities</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics and Intramural Sports</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 indicates the percentage of students that were either unsure or believed that services were unavailable by different student service areas at each research site.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Site 1</th>
<th>Site 2</th>
<th>Site 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Services</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Residential Services</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life Activities</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics and Intramural Sports</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 17 of the online survey was used to understand the student’s satisfaction with student services received during their transition. Table 13 shows the responses of the international students.

Table 13

Responses related to the satisfaction of student services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Highly satisfied or satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied or dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• pre-arrival communication (email, phone call, social media)</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• arrival support (arrival pick-up, check-in services, supply shopping)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• orientation programming</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• immigration and cultural advising (visa assistance, immigration, and cultural workshops)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mentoring program</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tutoring</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counseling</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic Advising</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing Services</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• First-Year Seminars</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Residential Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living and learning community</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homestay</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dining Services</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A vast majority of participants spoke positively about their overall experience with the international student support unit at their institutions, as well as the ongoing support received. There were, however, participants who did not feel supported, or felt support was limited to immigration processing and maintenance, and not their transition and success at the institution.

Table 14 indicates responses regarding students that considered themselves either satisfied or highly satisfied of varying student service areas by research site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14</th>
<th>Responses related to the satisfaction of student services by site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Services</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Services</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Residential Services</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life Activities</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics and Intramural Sports</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The follow-up interview questions in this category were Questions 3, 4, and 5 which sought to determine the level of usage and satisfaction of student services provided to international students.

Satisfaction with international student services, for example, varied across the three sites, which was evident in the individual interviews. P2 stated, “I relied on the [office], I would go to their office, and they would either help with it right away or guide me to where I needed to go.” P7 added, “Every time I needed help, I always went to the [office] and always feel welcome there… That is where I go.” However, some participants expressed levels of dissatisfaction with
their level of support by their respective international services department. P1 stated, “I have not had rapport as I thought I would from the [office]… It should be the place where you feel like going to first.” P4 agreed to state, “I reflect on that, and I think that those are huge disparity and I think I could have benefited more if the [office] was more proactive.” P5, however, acknowledged that the small number of international students at her campus might contribute to the lack of services available.

According to the interviews, International Student Orientation often plays a key in the initial student transition to campus. Most participants had a relatively positive view towards their orientation during their initial semester. P3 spoke fondly of her International Student Orientation by stating, “the [office] would give you a call to ask if you have special needs, and have an orientation where the tell you about opportunities on campus and the expectations.” P7 stated, “we had all the information we needed from orientation day.”

P1, however, shared the displeasure of having a separate International Student Orientation by stating, “The orientation was not very exciting… I felt very excluded from the other students; I wish there was a way to could have met the other freshman at our orientation.” P4 agreed by stating “all I remember was that there was always paperwork and things I could or could not do as an international student, as compared to being welcoming and oriented to campus like my American counterpart.”

All interview participants recalled using several student services on campus, especially career services. For example, P1, P4, and P6 credited their experiences with the career services on their respective campus with their ability to successfully compete for on-campus jobs. However, P8 shared some frustration with career resources, because of the inability to pursue many of the career opportunities being highlighted through that office.
The level of satisfaction with transitional services seems to mirror the student’s level of active involvement on campus. All interview participants shared similar sentiments regarding the advantages and obstacles to getting involved on campus. P2 summed up these sentiments by stating, “participating in activities put on by the university and student organizations helped [me] to make friends and get closer to people that lived in the United States. It was easy to access them even as an international student.” However, when asked about the obstacles faced with getting involved it was also shared that “You can sometimes feel alone and isolated because everyone knows each other, the clubs are already established… I do not want to feel like the weird stranger.”

**Discussion of Findings**

Five major themes emerged from this study. These include:

- A majority of participants indicated a strong desire for genuine connections with students.
- All interview participants cited the importance of transitional services, such as New Student Orientation playing an essential role in navigating student services and opportunities to get involved.
- The overwhelming majority of participants believed the ongoing support through the international support office was critical in their ability to overcome obstacles faced during their transitional year.
- Most participants cited the importance of positive faculty and staff interactions as essential to feel supported on campus.
- All interview participants indicated the importance of their initial reception on campus to their transition and satisfaction.
Table 15 shows the core themes and the frequency of responses for eight interviews. The chapter discussed the backgrounds of the participants, the findings of the survey and individual interviews, and how it relates to the student’s perception and satisfaction of their first-year experience on campus.

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Themes</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Frequency of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer Connectivity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Interactions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing International Student Support</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitioning</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

In Chapter 4, phenomenological research analysis was used to analyze two data sources to answer the question of how integrative programs and services impact the successful transitions of international students. Data of international students were analyzed from three regional public institutions in Pennsylvania through an electronic survey, and individual, audio recorded interviews with eight students. Chapter 4 summarized the findings of both the survey and qualitative interviews and focused on international student perception of their integration to U.S. college life. The data revealed that international students desired genuine connections and interaction with faculty, staff, and students on campus, where there is intentional transitional services and ongoing international student support services. Chapter 5 provides interpretation of these findings, and how they can be used to benefit higher education institutions in the United States.
CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Institutions that are innovative prepare themselves to compete at the global level with their peers—nationally and internationally. “One of the main internationalization activities that institutes engage in often involves recruiting and enrolling international students” (Hudzik, 2015, p. 11). Institutions that actively recruit international students as a part of their enrollment strategy should also work to prepare their operations to provide programs and services to support the students’ successful transition and integration on campus (Childress, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the experiences of international students at three regional public universities in Pennsylvania and understand the students’ perceptions of the impact of these programs and services on their initial transition.

This study concluded with the researcher having a deeper understanding of how U.S. institutions can work to provide better services and programs for their international students. For this study, the researcher used a phenomenological approach to collect perceptual data on international students on the transitional services and programs available at three regional Pennsylvania universities. Using a survey created by the researcher and individual interviews, the researcher used inductive data analysis, which offered more holistic and descriptive findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Chapter 5 provides insight into the results and interpretations of the research study, and how it informed the initial research questions. It provides implications of the findings, address the limitations of the study, make recommendations for possible action, in addition to recommendations for further research.
Interpretation of Findings

During the thorough qualitative analysis of data, the researcher found three major themes in the participant responses. Although five themes emerged during the data analysis, two of them did not have sufficient frequency as compared to the other three. First, all survey participants indicated that their initial reception impacted their integration and overall satisfaction. All interview participants cited the importance of their initial reception and quality of transitional programs and services in playing a critical role in navigating support services and student engagement opportunities. Second, the majority of interview participants (n=6) believed that the ongoing support from the international services office was essential in their ability to overcome obstacles faced during their transitional year and beyond. Third, all interview participants indicated a strong desire for genuine connections with students and cited the importance of positive faculty interactions as critical to feeling supported as a member of the campus community.

Theme 1: Campus Reception and Transitional Services.

Tinto’s student development theory found that a student’s failure to integrate socially and academically is one of the reasons for unintended student departure and that institutions must intentionally work to integrate students to increase the likelihood of student retention (Long, 2012; Tinto, 1987). In this study, international students were involved in a variety of student engagement activities. Six of 8 interview participants (n=6) reported having had a positive reception to campus and in their community and said that transitional services and programs were crucial for them as they navigated student services and opportunities to get involved. Over half of interview participants (n=5) indicated that positive transitional services assisted in their initial satisfaction with their institution.
While 75% of the interviewees gave positive feedback of their reception and their satisfaction with the role of transitional services to their integration to campus, in general, the survey told another story of students who indicated relatively low satisfaction across all three sites (48.6%). Some interviewees (25%) stated that negative experiences, as well as the feeling of isolation during their initial arrival to campus, affected their ability and the length of time taken to integrate. Dorsett (2017) surmised that a student’s expectations are often influenced by the student’s personal experience and their home country environment. This study confirmed that there was sometimes a disconnect between an international student’s expectations of their U.S. college experience and their realities upon arrival, regarding their transition—both academically and socially.

University leaders should strive to implement innovative ways to provide the relevant information needed for international students to succeed in the U.S. (Dorsett, 2017; Mayhew, Vanderlinden & Kim, 2010). English language fluency and learning in a new educational and cultural environment can affect an international student’s arrival and learning experience (Harvey, Robinson & Welch, 2017). Approximately 83% of the participants of the study were non-native English speakers. The researcher found that, while a vast majority of students participated in International Student Orientation, some still felt unaware of the services and programs available on campus.

The study found that initial campus reception and the availability of transitional services were linked to how international students felt about their integration to campus and how connected they felt to the campus community. This outcome is in line with the researcher’s conceptual framework, as it relates to student involvement and satisfaction, in addition to their ability to successfully integrate into college life. Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1985)
stated that high-quality programs and services were more likely attract student participation and must be accessible and relatable to the student experience (Grayson, 2008; Long, 2012).

**Theme 2: Ongoing International Student Support.**

Schlossberg’s Transitional Theory identifies four factors that influence an individual’s ability to cope—situation, self, support and strategies (Arthur, 2003). To best understand the impact of the transition to U.S. college campus on international students, it was important to look at the context in which they often occur. Schlossberg theory indicates that the concurrent stresses of leaving the comfort of a known environment, and the loss of social support, along with transitioning to college life in a new country indicates the critical need for the university to provide ongoing support to students (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Kim, 2003). The findings from the study answered the initial research question related to the transitional experiences of international students and which programs or services assisted in their success.

Harvey, Robinson, and Welch (2017) found that international students faced varying forms of distress from being away from family and extended support structure and argued that this issue should be a significant concern for universities that host international students. Dorsett (2017) stated that international students should not be solely responsible for ensuring their adjustment to U.S. college life. Instead, institutions, specifically international student services offices should work to implement activities that foresee and address international student challenges, and provide support (Dorsett, 2017, p. 14). Institutions should look beyond concerns related to a student’s academic and linguistic adjustment, to include programs and services that provide opportunities for social support and adjustment (Dorsett, 2017; Harvey, Robinson & Welch, 2017)
International student support offices often play a vital role in the international student’s successful transition and need for a foundation or anchor on campus and often the United States (Zhai, 2002). While most participants (76.3%) were aware of, and readily utilized international student support services on their respective campus, only approximately half of the participants from Site 2 and Site 3 indicated satisfaction with the services provided. Three interview participants indicated their international student support services office when prompted for where they sought ongoing non-academic support regarding challenges, while two participants indicated other on-campus resources. The other three participants reported reliance on non-university individuals, such as family, friends, and mentors, for ongoing support.

The researcher’s conceptual framework stated the importance of institutions being intentional in their integrative and ongoing support services for international students transitioning to U.S. college life. The study found that students looked to the international student support services as a primary source continued support throughout their time in the U.S. The study demonstrated a link between campus strategies regarding transitional services and the impact on the ease of international students transitions. Findings also highlighted the importance of evaluating programs and services to ensure that they meet desired objectives.

**Theme 3: Positive Interactions and Genuine Connections to Campus.**

Berry’s Model of Acculturation looks at the value of an individual’s ability to build and maintain relationships with a host culture (Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). Reinties et al., (2012) and Yeh and Inose (2003) found that the initial loss of an international student’s social support has a significant influence on their well-being. It is often a predictor of acculturation stress, such as loneliness, homesickness, and the perception of the lack of acceptance in a new environment (Reinties et al., 2012; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang, 2012). The researcher found that
international students desired a genuine connection to the campus community, through meaningful relationships and positive engagement with faculty and staff. The findings directly answered the initial researcher questions related to the international student’s sense of belonging and the perception of their experience during the first year of school in the U.S.

International students often find it difficult to make friends with U.S students because of the differences in levels of friendships, and are often left feeling like an outsider (Dorsett, 2017; Harvey, Robinson & Welch, 2017; Zhang 2012). Opportunities for interactions included classroom experiences, work, research, volunteering, and advising—both formal and informal. The study found that international students valued their interactions with faculty and staff and indicated positive experiences with faculty and staff. Participants agreed that there was a connection to campus and that they were interested in forming relationships with students.

Four interview participants identified mismatched expectations regarding building relationships as the source of some frustration. Previous studies indicate that faculty mentorship and other opportunities for campus engagement helps to limit this frustration (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014; Mayhew, Vanderlinden & Kim, 2010). The ability to forge relationships was very important to study participants and demonstrated that genuine connection on campus increased the student’s feeling of being valued, and subsequently their university pride and overall satisfaction. This outcome was in line with previous research, which found that faculty members are often the most influential person shaping an international student’s sense of community (Glass et al., 2017; Urban & Palmer, 2013; Zhai, 2002).

The researcher’s conceptual framework highlighted the importance of campus preparedness and engagement. This includes faculty and staff development opportunities related to addressing international student matters, as well as the creation and improvement of policies
and process to attempt to eliminate or lessen barriers that can cause an adverse student experience. The research found that while international students at the study sites had overall satisfaction with their interactions with members of the campus community, they were more interested in interacting on a deeper, more authentic level.

**Impact of Limitations**

Several limitations accompany the findings in research. For this study, the length of study, sample size, and the phenomenological approach used made it difficult to achieve a cross-section of students, which potentially limits transferability of the study. Also, convenience sampling used to select research sites may be considered a limitation, because of sampling error, and the possibility of inaccuracies (Creswell, 2015). During the study, the decision was made to change the preferred, secondary data collection method to individual interviews, instead of conducting on-campus focus groups. This decision was made to move the study forward, instead of risking further unintended delays. “While individual interviews often allow for the collection of rich data, it can also be difficult if participants have difficulty expressing themselves” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 154-155). In future studies, it will be essential to have a larger sample size to create more confidence in the researcher’s ability to generalize findings.

**Implications**

Implications regarding the creation and improvement of educational policies and student services can be made based on the results of this research study. University personnel involved in transitional services must intentionally reach out to the students to ensure awareness and utilization of programs and services (Pyburn, Horst, & Erbaucher, 2016). International students need to form positive relationships with faculty and staff, as they play a fundamental role in the academic success, and subsequent persistence of international students on campus.
(Mamiseishvili, 2012). This theory was demonstrated during the study, as over half the interview participants \((n=5)\) identified faculty and staff as mentors and resources in times of need. It was important for them to get opportunities to have genuine connections with other students, both domestic and international. Having a higher sense of belonging to the campus community has a stronger positive effect on a student’s intercultural interactions and overall academic success (Spencer-Oatey, Dauber, & Williams, 2014).

International students, who are often without the ongoing support of family and friends tend to focus on their academic adjustment while neglecting to engage in social activities (Mamiseishvili, 2012). Institutions must provide ongoing access and support through international services offices, in collaboration with other academic departments and support services for international students to intentionally educate the students about their options for engagement upon arrival (Mamiseishvili, 2012; Noel-Levitz, 2008). The study found that participants were often aware of international student services, but lacked the understanding of the breadth of programming and services, often assuming services were limited to orientation services and immigration enforcement.

It is crucial for institutions to ensure knowledge of and access to high impact support services for their international students on campus. There must be widespread support from institution stakeholders to increase these types of institutional efforts for it to become a more substantial part of the institutional climate (Brustein, 2007; Childress, 2009). The study found that while international students were able to find needed resources, they often felt unsupported, because of the unfamiliarity of how international students were able to engage with their department’s services and programs.
The results of the study were in line with previous research related to student development theories, such as student transitions and acculturation. The research findings contribute to the field by proposing a revamping of student development theories focused on the international student experience. The results of the study will benefit the field, considering the increased international student mobility to U.S. higher education institutions. This increased enrollment justifies the need for better support services and programs to ensure the student’s successful transition and overall success. Institutions that apply the recommended approach will be able to better attract and retain international students. Higher education administrators will have the tools necessary to improve the student experience, as well as ensure adequate campus preparedness, by looking at the critical areas that affect international student satisfaction that was uncovered during the study.

**Recommendations for Action**

The implementation or improvement of these transitional services to better serve international students will assist with the issues uncovered in the study of participants having problems seeking assistance and not actively using programs and services available to them. The improvement will likely lead to improvements in student utilization and satisfaction to transitional services offered. Students will seek assistance sooner when faced with cultural, social or academic difficulties, instead of attempting to navigate this on their own.

Based on the research findings, it will be important for all the sites to work on the efficacy of the programs and services offered by their international student services area. Monitoring student engagement and satisfaction, as well as encouraging their inclusion in the development and execution of support services and programs can assist in increasing efficacy
(Grebennikov & Shah, 2013). This process will ensure that the students are receiving and benefiting from the services that they need.

Without the usual direct social support from family and friends, it is important for institutions to create opportunities that encourage international student engagement with faculty, staff, and fellow students. The study found that there are opportunities for all three sites to create opportunities for more positive interactions between international students and other students, faculty, and staff, which will likely result in these students feeling better able to reach out for ongoing support and to seek help when needed.

**Recommendation for Further Research**

Future research on the efficacy and effectiveness of international services programs offered at institutions of different Carnegie classifications is warranted, and institutions with varying structural and financial models of operation. Future studies should look at programs that span the entire international student journey from admissions to graduation. The research would be used to address the gap between student expectations and their reality upon arrival, in addition to ensuring the offered programs are achieving the desired outcomes for the students. The results could also lead to the utilization of best industry practices for developing and improving international student services.

Further research is needed to focus on faculty and staff engagement regarding internationalization, specifically the trend of strategic enrollment directions focused on increased international students on campus. Additional studies could look at the perception of faculty and staff whose work is indirectly impacted by enrollment growth of international students. The proposed study could be used to inform how international student enrollment increased is
perceived on campus, and how to ensure adequate acceptance of and support from the faculty and staff who are expected to support international students.

**Conclusion**

The most academically and culturally prepared students still face challenges when transitioning to an unfamiliar environment, and often suffer from a lack of institutional connection (Mamiseishvili, 2012). The researcher conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to explore the transitional experience of international students at three Pennsylvania regional universities. An electronic survey followed up with individual phone interviews allowed the researcher to gain insight into the student’s feeling of connectedness and feeling valued on campus during their transitional year. The study aimed to evaluate the types of programs that had the most positive impact during of assisting the student’s integration into campus.

The study found that international students valued academic and support services during their transition to U.S. college life. It is recommended that institutions work to put in place adequate academic and social support services to safeguard overall student success. It should be the goal of every institution that actively recruits international students to create the needed services required for their integration and overall student success, including putting in best practices regarding student success policies and programming.

The final reflection by the researcher indicates the past six months conducting the study has been an enriching experience. The study validated theories initially used in the researcher’s conceptual framework regarding student transition, involvement and the importance of feeling connected to campus, and the importance of maintaining relationships. The data collected can be used to create better, intentional transitional programming and services for international students during their transition to U.S. college life.
The researcher reflected on the data that was gathered in both the survey and one-on-one interviews. The interviews brought to light the desire of international students to have strong, genuine connections during their time on U.S. college campuses. They need positive faculty and staff interactions to feel supported. They overwhelmingly look to international student support offices for ongoing support as they navigate their journey through the U.S. and college life. These participants’ stories gave the researcher the data needed to make recommendations to institutions so they can provide better services and programs for this unique student population. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to look at the utilization and satisfaction of transitional services provided on campus, which was critical in understanding the lived experience of international students attending college in the United States.
REFERENCES


NRCCUA and e2 communications create online service to offer high school students targeted information from colleges. (2001). *The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education, 11*(10), 47. ISSN: 10542337


APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUCCESS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Institution must show commitment by implementing processes and procedures to prepare for international student success.

- Faculty Development Opportunities
- Staff Development Opportunities
- Internationalization of operations and policies

Continuous activities are crucial to encouraging student involvement within their first year.

- Recruitment/Admissions/Pre-Arrival
- International Student Orientation
- International Student Services
- Classroom Experience
- Curricular Support

Campus Preparedness and Engagement

- Student Life and Services
- Cross-cultural Adaptation

Student must be interested in being involved. While involvement may vary by student, the level or type of involvement will positively correlate with retention and academic success.

Intentional International Student Transition and Integration Services

- Student Life and Services
- Creating a Sense of Belonging
- Building Relationships

Creating a sense of belonging positively correlates with the sense of a student’s self-worth and affects the outcome of the college experience.

Social and Cultural Adjustment

- Student Motivation

Creating a sense of belonging positively correlates with the sense of a student’s self-worth and affects the outcome of the college experience.

International Student Engagement and Involvement

- Recruitment/Admissions/Pre-Arrival
- International Student Orientation
- International Student Services
- Classroom Experience
- Curricular Support

Continuous activities are crucial to encouraging student involvement within their first year.

- Student Life and Services
- Creating a Sense of Belonging
- Building Relationships

Campus Preparedness and Engagement

- Student Life and Services
- Cross-cultural Adaptation

Institution must show commitment by implementing processes and procedures to prepare for international student success.

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Creating a sense of belonging positively correlates with the sense of a student’s self-worth and affects the outcome of the college experience.
APPENDIX B

Online Survey

Introduction [title, topic, informed consent form]
My name is Patriece Campbell, and I am a doctoral student at the University of New England. I am studying how international students are able successfully to transition to U.S. college life through integrative programs and support services. Your input will be beneficial to the field of international education throughout the U.S.

Demographic Information
1. Gender Identity [Male, Female, Other]
2. Age Group [under 20, 20-24, 25 and over]
3. Country of Citizenship
4. Is English your Native Language? [Yes, No]
   a. If No, what is your Native Language
5. Current Institution [Millersville University, Slippery Rock University, West Chester University]
   a. When did you first arrive to your current institution [Spring 2017, Fall 2016, Spring 2016, Fall 2015 or earlier]
6. Academic College [MU- College of Education and Human Services, MU- College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, MU- College of Science and Technology, SRU- College of Business, SRU- College of Education, SRU- College of Health, Environment and Science, SRU- College of Liberal Arts, WCU- College of Art and Humanities, WCU- College of Health Sciences, WCU- College of Business and Public Management, WCU- College of Science and Math, WCU- College of Education and Social Work]

Qualifying Questions
7. Are you currently on an F- or J- non-immigrant visa? [Yes, No]
8. Are you currently enrolled full-time (minimum 12 credits)? [Yes, No]
9. Length of time in the US [Less than one year, 1- 2 years, 2- 3 years, 4 or more years]

Perception to campus [strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]
10. I am satisfied with my university experience during the first year
11. People are interested in me and my point of view
12. I feel that faculty are interested in my international point of view
13. I feel that staff are interested in my international point of view
14. I can speak to faculty advisors about non-academic matter
15. I can speak to staff members about non-academic matter

Social and Living Experience Use and Satisfaction
Please indicate your use of the following programs and services during your first year [offered-used, offered-not used, not offer-used, not available on my campus, unsure if available]

16. International Student Services
   a. pre-arrival communication (email, phone call, social media)
   b. arrival support (arrival pick-up, check-in services, supply shopping)
   c. orientation programming
   d. immigration and cultural advising (visa assistance, immigration and cultural workshops)
   e. mentoring program

17. Student Success Services
   f. Tutoring
   g. Counseling
   h. academic advising
   i. writing services
   j. first year seminars

18. Housing and Residential Services
   k. Living and learning community
   l. homestay
   m. dining services

19. Student Life Activities
20. Athletics and Intramural Sports
21. Other [open slot]

Please indicate satisfaction with programs and services on campus [highly satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied or dissatisfied, dissatisfied, highly satisfied, not applicable]

22. International Student Services
   n. pre-arrival communication (email, phone call, social media)
   o. arrival support (arrival pick-up, check-in services, supply shopping)
   p. orientation programming
   q. immigration and cultural advising (visa assistance, immigration and cultural workshops)
   r. mentoring program

23. Student Success Services
   s. Tutoring
   t. Counseling
   u. academic advising
   v. writing services
   w. first year seminars

24. Housing and Residential Services
   x. Living and learning community
   y. homestay
   z. dining services

25. Student Life Activities
26. Athletics and Intramural Sports
27. Other [open slot]
Connection with others [strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]
28. Faculty respect me or my international perspective
29. Staff respect me or my international perspective
30. Faculty notice if I need help
31. Staff notice if I need help
32. I feel like a member of the university community
33. I am making friends with other students
34. I feel connected to the campus

Final
35. How influential were the following factors in your decision to enroll at this particular institution? [no influence, somewhat influential, influential, very influential, critical]
   a. school reputation
   b. academic program availability
   c. safety
   d. cost of attendance
   e. location
   f. scholarship
   g. social activities
   h. work opportunities
   i. other [open slot]
36. Which of the following sources of influence were most important to you in deciding to study at this particular institution? [no influence, somewhat influential, influential, very influential, critical]
   a. university website
   b. friends
   c. agent
   d. family members
   e. alumni
   f. university admissions staff
   g. teacher/staff from a previous institution
   h. social media
   i. university fair
   j. EducationUSA
   k. home government
   l. other [open slot]
37. I am proud to attend my university [strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]
38. I would recommend my university to other international students [strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]
39. I made the right decision to attend my current university [strongly agree, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree, strongly disagree]
40. Are you willing to participate in a 30-minute follow-up focus group or interview regarding your experience? [Yes, No]
a. If Yes, please provide your contact email address.

Thank You
Thank you for your time and sharing your experiences as an international student. The information shared will help university administrators evaluate programs and support to help international student integration to campus. Feel free to contact Patrice N. Campbell (pcambell2@une.edu) at any time with any questions or concerns that you may have about this research. You are also welcome to review the completed dissertation if you desire.
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL #1

My name is Patriece Campbell, and I am a doctoral student in the Education Department at the University of New England. I am contacting you because I am conducting a study regarding how international students benefit from university-initiated integrative programs and support services.

Participation in this study involves completing an online survey and participating in a focus group or individual interview on campus.

The study has been reviewed and sanctioned through the University of New England Institutional Review Board.

Please take some time to read the consent form (insert link). Completion of the survey serves as consent to participate. Should you participate in the focus group or interview, you will be asked to sign the consent form at that time.

If you are interested in participating, please complete this short online survey (insert link)

Your input will be beneficial to the field of international education throughout the U.S.

Sincerely,

Patriece N. Campbell
Doctoral Candidate, University of New England
Contact Email: pcampbell2@une.edu, Phone Number: (810)877-4550
My name is Patriece Campbell, and I am a doctoral student in the Education Department at the University of New England.

Thank you for taking the survey for my doctoral dissertation study on the impact of integrative programs on the successful transition of international students.

I am contacting you because you indicated in the online survey that you were interested in participating in a focus group or interview on-campus, which is approximately 30-45 minutes.

The focus group will take place:

(Location)
(Time)

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email.

Please take some time to read the consent form (insert link). You will be asked to sign the consent form at the beginning of the focus group or interview session.

Your input will be beneficial to the field of international education throughout the U.S.

Sincerely,

Patriece N. Campbell
Doctoral Candidate, University of New England
Contact Email: pcampbell2@une.edu, Phone Number: (810)877-4550
APPENDIX E

Focus Group Interviews

My name is Patriece Campbell, and I am a doctoral student at the University of New England. I am studying how international students can successfully transition to U.S. college life through integrative programs and support services. Your input will be beneficial to the field of international education throughout the U.S.

To make my note-taking process more efficient, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. This was covered in the consent form that was signed when you participated in the online survey. The consent form stated, and I would like to “make clear” that all information discussed will be held in strict confidence and your participation is voluntary. Also, there is no intention of harm during this focus group. The focus group is planned for approximately 30-45 minutes. I have several questions related to your experience as an international student here on campus.

Questions
1. Over this past year, how welcome did you feel on campus?
   a. What was there that influenced how welcomed you felt?
2. How have you navigated the student services on campus?
   a. How long did it take?
3. What types of services, events, or activities were available to you when you were making your transition and which ones they actually participated in?
   a. In what ways were they helpful?
   b. In what ways did they serve as obstacles?
4. What expectations did you have about what college would be like?
5. What did you experience as compared to your expectations?
6. Describe your connection with other students? American student? International students?
7. What interactions with faculty and staff helped you feel they were interested (or not interested) in you and your point of view?
8. From whom do you seek academic advice?
9. With whom do you talk about non-academic concerns?
10. Of all the things we have talked about today, what is the most important to you?

Probes
1. Would you explain further?
2. Would you give an example?

Closure
Thank you for your time and sharing your experiences as an international student. The information shared will help university administrators evaluate programs and support to help international student integration to campus. Feel free to contact me at any time with any questions or concerns that you may have about this research. You are also welcome to review the completed dissertation if you desire.

Thank you again!
APPENDIX F

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Project Title: A Phenomenological Study of the Impact of Integrative Programs and Services on the Successful Transition of International Students at Three Pennsylvania Regional Universities

Principal Investigator(s):
Patrice E. Campbell, Director of Global Education, Millersville University
Doctoral Candidate, University of New England- Contact Email: pcampbell2@une.edu

Introduction:
• Please read this form; you may also request that the form is read to you. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about this research study, and if you choose to participate, document your decision.
• You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete. You can take as much time as you need to decide whether or not you want to participate. Your participation is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
• You are invited to participate in a research study of the experiences of international students in the United States during their first year of study. Your responses will inform the research about the level of satisfaction regarding on-campus engagement and services, and provide information about how the services can be improved.

Who will be in this study?
• You must be a currently registered international student at a participating institution.
• You must be at least 18 years of age to participate.
• You will be one of approximately 30 people surveyed for this research.
  o You may be among 10-12 people to participate in on-campus focus groups.

What will I be asked to do?
• You will be invited to complete an online survey. Your participation is confidential. Please answer as openly and honestly as possible. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and must be completed in one sitting. If you close the browser, you will lose any previously entered responses.
• Participation involves being a part of focus groups conducted by student researcher, Patrice Campbell. The focus groups will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes and audio recording of the focus groups will be taken during the focus groups.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?
• There is no foreseeable risks, harms, discomforts, or inconvenience associated with participation in this study.
**What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**
- Although you may not directly benefit from being in this study, the results will provide valuable information about international student support on campuses in the United States.

**What will it cost me?**
- There is no cost associated with participating in this study.
- There is no compensation for participation in the online survey.

**How will my privacy be protected?**
- Members of the on-campus focus groups will be asked not to repeat what is discussed but the researcher cannot ensure that they will respect other participants’ privacy.
- No faculty and administrators from your campus will be present at the focus groups nor have access to raw notes and transcripts. This will be done to protect your privacy and prevent individual comments having any negative repercussions.
- Insights gathered from participants will be used in writing a dissertation. While direct quotes may be used, your name and other identifying information will not be used.

**How will my data be kept confidential?**
- Please note that regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board may review the research records.
- A copy of your signed consent form will be maintained by the principal investigator for at least three years after the project is complete before it is destroyed. The consent forms will be stored in a secure location that only members of the research team will have access to and will not be affiliated with any data obtained during the project.
- The study will include the use of a confidential on-line survey and will transfer collected data over the internet. The online survey is developed using QuestionPro. Your responses are accessible only by the researcher. This tool adheres to a high standard of internet security.
- The researcher will use a third party provider, Rev.com, for transcribing audio recordings from the focus groups. Files are encrypted and transmitted securely using a high standard of security.
- Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:
  - Research records will be kept in a locked file in the locked office of the researcher
  - Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
  - All audio recordings and transcriptions made during focus groups will be securely stored on a secured locked device that only the researcher will have access to its files. Audio recordings will be encrypted using industry standards and destroyed using a commercial software application designed for that purpose after transcription.
  - Individually identifiable data will be destroyed after the study is complete.

Research findings can be provided to participants upon request. To do so, contact:

*Patrice N. Campbell, Director of Global Education, Millersville University Doctoral Candidate, University of New England*
What are my rights as a research participant?

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current immigration or academic standing as a student at the University.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- If you choose not to participate, there is no penalty for you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the research, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.

Whom may I contact with questions?

- The researcher conducting this study is Patrice N. Campbell. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact her at (810)877-4550 (PI) If you choose to participate in this research study and believe you may have suffered a research related injury, please contact:

  Patrice N. Campbell, Director of Global Education, Millersville University
  Doctoral Candidate, University of New England
  Contact Email: pcampbell2@une.edu, Phone Number: (810)877-4550

  Dr. Marylin Newell (Faculty Advisor)
  Educational Leadership, University of New England
  Contact Email: mnewell@une.edu, Phone Number: (207) 345-3100

- If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Olgun Guvench, M.D. Ph.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?

- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement
I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

Participant’s signature or
Legally authorized representative

Date

Printed name
**Researcher’s Statement**
The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

_________________________________________  ______________________________
Researcher’s signature                      Date

_________________________________________
Printed name