Holistic Strategies for Nurturing Undergraduate International Students' Success in U.S. Higher Education

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CONTENTS

• Background
• Importance
• Theoretical frameworks for nurturing undergraduate international students’ success
• Holistic strategies for career counselors and educators to support international student success
• Conclusion
Who are undergraduate international students at US higher education institutions?
Undergraduate international students are

- Individuals who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of pursuing higher education.
- Typically holding a temporary visa, such as an F-1 or J-1 visa in the United States.
- Enrolled in undergraduate programs.
- Not permanent residents or citizens of the host country (USA, in our case).
Why do they pursue higher education here?
Reasons that international students pursue higher education here

- Reputation for quality education
- Diverse educational opportunities
- Cultural experience
- Career/professional development
- Language
- Global alumni network
Why are they important to US?
Because...

- **Economic contribution**
  - to U.S. economy
  - to U.S. institutions
  - to colleges and programs (especially those under Responsibility Center Management [RCM] model)

Figure from: https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2#trends_reports

NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2022
Institute of International Education (IIE), 2022
What else?

- Cultural diversity
- Academic benefits
- Global reputation
- International relations
- Talent pool
Facts about International Students and Enrollment
Trends in International Student Enrollment

In 2021/22, the total number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities increased by 4% to 948,519 students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total int’l students</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>1,094,792</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>1,095,299</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/20</td>
<td>1,075,496</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21</td>
<td>914,095</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021/22</td>
<td>948,519</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure from: [https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/](https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/)
### Where are international students from?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2020/21</th>
<th>2021/22</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORLD TOTAL</td>
<td>914,095</td>
<td>948,519</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>317,299</td>
<td>290,086</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>167,582</td>
<td>199,182</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>39,491</td>
<td>40,755</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25,143</td>
<td>27,013</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>21,631</td>
<td>20,713</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>19,673</td>
<td>20,487</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>21,933</td>
<td>18,206</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>14,897</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>12,986</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>12,860</td>
<td>14,438</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>11,785</td>
<td>13,449</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>11,172</td>
<td>11,779</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>8,598</td>
<td>10,597</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8,028</td>
<td>10,292</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>9,614</td>
<td>9,295</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure from: [https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/](https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/)

IIE, 2022
Trends in International Student Enrollment


IIE, 2022
Challenges Faced by International Students
Common Challenges Faced by International Students

- **Language barriers**: communication and comprehension
- **Cultural differences**: values, norms, and expectations
- **Financial constraints**: tuition, living costs, and limited aid
- **Academic expectations**: rigorous coursework, unfamiliar teaching styles
- **Social isolation**: lack of social connection

Kwon, 2009
Mesidor & Sly, 2016
Wu et al., 2015
What else?

- Career development
  - Internship, work opportunities
- Navigating immigration regulations
  - Work authorization
- Vitriolic Sociopolitical Climate
- Mental health and well-being
Theoretical frameworks for nurturing undergraduate international students’ success
Tinto's Model of Student Integration  

- Individual and environmental differences and their interactions affect dropout intentions and behaviors
- Integration in academic and social domains
- Impact on persistence and success
- Importance of support networks

Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993
Tinto's Model of Student Integration

- Individual and environmental differences and their interactions affect dropout intentions and behaviors
- Integration in academic and social domains
- Impact on persistence and success
- Importance of support networks

Figure 2-1: A Conceptual Model of Tinto’s Theory (1975).

Figure from: https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/catalog/18632yuz553
Zhai, 2021
Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

- Stages of adaptation to new environments
  - Moving in
  - Moving through
  - Moving out
- Role of support systems in facilitating transitions
- Application to international student experience

Schlossberg, 1981
Holistic Strategies for Career Counselors and Educators to Support International Student Success
Holistic Strategies for Supporting Undergraduate International Student Success

- Addressing academic and career needs as a whole
- Promoting social and cultural integration
- Rallying support and advocating for international students amid vitriolic sociopolitical climate
- Offering financial resources
- Ensuring mental health and well-being

Kwon, 2009
Mesidor & Sly, 2016
Wu et al., 2015
Zhai, 2021
Zhai & Du, 2020
Academic and Career Support

• Collaborate with academic advisors and Office of International Students to develop tailored support programs addressing international students' specific academic and career needs:
  • Regular communication; Joint planning; Integrated advising; Collaborative assessment

• Provide tailored workshops on job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing, and interview preparation:
  • Customized content; Specialized workshops; Online resources; Feedback and review sessions

• Connect international students with alumni or professionals in their fields of interest, creating networking opportunities and potential mentorship relationships
  • Alumni networking events; Mentorship programs; Career fairs
Social and Cultural Integration

• Help organize and participate in cross-cultural events, fostering connections between international and domestic students while promoting cultural understanding:
  • Collaborate with student organizations; Integrate cross-cultural activities into career development; Facilitate conversation circles; Active participation

• Develop webinars/seminars and resources focused on building communication skills and cross-cultural competency, preparing international students for diverse workplace environments:
  • Real-world scenarios; Guest speakers; Online resources
Rallying support and advocating for international students amid vitriolic sociopolitical climate

• **Serve as advocates for international students by educating employers**
  - Employer outreach; Clear and concise resources; Partnership with companies; Internship and co-op support

• **Serve as social justice advocates for international students by promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination**
  - Campus-wide initiatives; Public awareness campaigns, Advocacy networks; Collaborate with immigration experts (e.g., Office of International Students)
Financial Resources

- Establish a centralized online database of scholarships, grants, and financial aid opportunities specifically designed for international students
- Collaborate with campus departments to create on-campus job opportunities and develop a comprehensive list of on-campus job opportunities that are suitable for international students
Mental Health and Well-being

• Recognize signs of mental health challenges in international students
• Address pressing mental health needs and/or refer students to counseling services as needed.
• Collaborate with mental health professionals to develop workshops that address the unique stressors and challenges faced by international students:
  • Partnership with mental health professionals; Host panel discussions featuring international alumni; Develop an online resource hub.
Conclusion
Conclusion

• Importance of addressing international students' unique needs through holistic strategies
• Benefits of a holistic approach to student success
• Fostering a campus climate that values diversity and inclusion
• Investing in ongoing professional development for faculty and staff
• Benefits for students, institutions, and society
THE END

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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References


