Social and Academic Success of Chinese International Students at Michigan State University

Bristol Day, Michigan State University
Larry D Long, Michigan State University
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http://works.bepress.com/ldlong/46
Overview

- Both national and institutional demographics
- Review of related literature
- Data
- Recommendations
Demographics
National Demographics

In 2013/14
886,052 international students studied at U.S. colleges and universities

The number of international students studying in the U.S. grew by 8% over the prior year and is now at a record high.

International students constitute 4% of the total U.S. higher education population.
Places of origin of international students

- China: 31%
- India: 12%
- South Korea: 8%
- Saudi Arabia: 6%
- Vietnam: 2%
- Brazil: 2%
- Taiwan: 3%
- Canada: 3%
- Japan: 2%
- Mexico: 2%

Other: 32%

50% of international students come from China, India and South Korea.
21% Business and Engineering are the most popular Fields of Study among international students.

National Demographics data source:
International Students @ MSU

4,991 UNDERGRADUATE
2,176 GRADUATE
475 NON DEGREE
7,643 TOTAL

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLLMENT TREND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Int’l Students</th>
<th>% of Total MSU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1406</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2282</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2888</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5351</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>5898</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6599</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>7161</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7643</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

73% FROM CHINA, KOREA & INDIA
31.5% IN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
15.3% OF TOTAL MSU ENROLLMENT
130 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED
Review of Literature
Literature Breakdown

- Cultural adaptation
- Social integration
- Language confidence & academic impact

We can’t discuss academic success without also discussing social integration. #Tinto
Cultural Transitions: Inside & Outside the Classroom

International students experience substantial levels of stress when attempting to adapt to:
- Customs and traditions
- Campus life
- Community culture
- American society

In the classroom they face difficulties in:
- Understanding professors’ expectations/grading
- Knowing how to take lecture notes
- Articulating thoughts in essay exams
- Comprehending professors
- Oral presentations, asking questions, seminar discussions

As students adapt to the host culture their emotional and mental health can be affected. They may feel loneliness, confusion, frustration, anger, and potentially depression.

Language Confidence & Academic Impact

“Individuals with underdeveloped language skills report lower levels of academic and social functioning”¹

- There is a relationship between self-perceived English language proficiency and GPA
- An international student’s socio-cultural and psychological adjustment may be influenced by their English proficiency and in turn impact their academic success²
- A student’s real or perceived weakness in English language skills may impact their confidence in utilizing office hours, making friends, classroom dialogues, attending academic support programs, etc.

Social integration

Students need to succeed both academically and socially. They need to participate in student culture both inside and outside of their learning environments.¹

“…students who feel at home, who are well connected to fellow students and teachers and who take part in extra-curricular activities are more likely to graduate.”²

Students from the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, Latin American, and India face discrimination on campus and in the communities³

Social integration

International students are more likely than their American peers to feel lonely and isolated – which can lead to reduced participation in social and academic support activities/success.  

However:

“by their senior year, international students tend to be more adapted to the cultural milieu and generally do not differ from American seniors in their patterns of student engagement”  

Academic trends

Due to the struggles in social integration and the stress of cultural adaptation, international students often study more intensely during their first year and as a result have been shown to have higher GPA’s during their first year than their American peers. ¹

However, their academic success is still dependent on: language proficiency, learning strategies, classroom dynamics, and social/educational assistance ²

Social integration and cultural adaptation are directly correlated to academic success

Academic Integration (MAP-Works)

USA (n = 3,061)  China (n = 362)  Other (n = 107)
Social Integration (MAP-Works)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>USA (n = 3,061)</th>
<th>China (n = 362)</th>
<th>Other (n = 107)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>5.28</td>
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<td>Social Aspects</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>4.89</td>
</tr>
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<td>Residential Environment</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roommate Relationship</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>6.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Performance

GPA Distribution by Country of Origin

Fall 2013
USA (n=6,435)
China (n=1,086)
Other (n=252)

Fall 2014
USA (n=6,376)
China (n=910)
Other (n=315)
Fall 2014 Average First-Year Student GPA by Country of Origin

- **Domestic** (n=6376): 3.13
- **International** (n=1225): 2.79
- **China** (n=910): 2.75
- **Other** (n=315): 2.90
Fall 2014 Use of Services

- China (n=910):
  - None: 59%
  - Once: 19%
  - 2-5 times: 18%
  - 6 or more times: 4%

- Other (n=315):
  - None: 46%
  - Once: 16%
  - 2-5 times: 24%
  - 6 or more times: 15%

- USA (n=6,376):
  - None: 41%
  - Once: 18%
  - 2-5 times: 24%
  - 6 or more times: 17%

- Total (n=7,601):
  - None: 44%
  - Once: 18%
  - 2-5 times: 23%
  - 6 or more times: 16%
Fall 2014 GPA by Use of Services

China (n=910)
- None: 2.67
- Once: 2.73
- 2-5 times: 2.96
- 6 or more times: 3.06
- Group average: 3.00

Other (n=315)
- None: 2.75
- Once: 2.74
- 2-5 times: 2.78
- 6 or more times: 3.01
- Group average: 3.00

USA (n=6,376)
- None: 3.07
- Once: 3.12
- 2-5 times: 3.14
- 6 or more times: 3.24
- Group average: 3.13
Recommendations
Assessment

Course Analysis
- Explore which courses tend to be more challenging
- Explore which course combinations are more challenging

Use of Resources
- Do students use on-campus resources?
- Do they know they exist?

Climate
- How warm is the climate for Chinese international students?
Orientation

Pre-departure orientations
- Take place in Shanghai & Beijing
- Partners include: Office for International Students & Scholars, Residence Education & Housing Services, Career Services, and Project Explore (a student group)
- Presentations in Mandarin to families and students

International Academic Orientation Program (IAOP)
- Included interactive skits demonstrating classroom culture, residence hall floor meetings/interactions, immigration processes
- Small groups of 100 or less
Orientation

Extended IAOP

- Purpose: to assist with students post orientation as they transition to the University
- 1196 required to participate; 1128 completed
- Students report connecting with faculty, staff, and other students and learning more about MSU resources
- Type of events:
  - Academic (50%), Cultural (29%), Extracurricular (11%), Personal well-being (8%), Misc (2%)
Orientation & Move-in

In hall orientation/events

- Building/floor meetings specifically for international students focused on immediate information they may need (address/mail, getting around, dining, etc)
- Tour of building featuring academic resources
- Social event directly following meeting

Move-in celebrations

- Teams (RA’s, OISS orientation leaders, Intercultural Aides, and full-time staff) met busses with cheers and chants, pom poms, music and positivity welcoming them to their residence halls
- Printer stations where students could get copies of their academic orientation schedule
Institutional Recommendations

Policy bias
- Review current policies and practices for potential bias
- Example: RA selection process; translated housing contracts

Campus climate
- Create & administer campus climate survey
- Determine goals for cultural competence among your student population/campus

Focus groups/Assessment
- Determine what it is you want to know and start asking students
- MSU REHS hosted focus groups of various international student populations asking questions related to their in-hall experience and dining options
Peer Mentor Programs

“International students who participated in a peer mentor program demonstrated significantly higher academic achievements” and were more likely to take advantage of academic resources\(^1\)

- Provide students with community acceptance, sense of belonging, social networks
- Offered pre-entry and post-entry to the institution
- Consideration can be done on whether to pair with returning international students, with domestic students, or a mixture – dependent on needs, goals, and purposes of your program
- Create tie-ins with service learning opportunities and field trips

Programming & Partnerships

Cultural programming within the residence halls

- Chinese New Year
- Indian Holi (Festival of Color)
- Eid festival/holiday
  - Create an inclusive programming culture that assists international students in adjusting and increases domestic students cultural understanding

Partnership with cultural groups

- Meet with students from various cultural groups to collaborate on inclusive, cultural programming and/or to learn more about their needs in order to better support them
  - MSU partners with Project Explore to help build our pre-departure orientation meetings as well as other major events on campus
Programming & Partnerships

Friends of OISS meetings

 Once a month partners from across the University come together and discuss ongoing issues and trends related to international students.

 Partners include: Residence Education & Housing Services, Career Services, academic Colleges, advising, orientation, admissions, English Language Center, among others
Questions?