

## **Who are International Students? Enrollment Trends and Recent Research**

We are pleased to welcome you to our spring 2016 edition of the *Journal of International Students*, a quarterly publication on international higher education! This edition of the Journal has included a variety of topics related to international students' social and academic experiences, study abroad trends, student engagement and academic success, cross-cultural experiences, and learning practices in higher education in the United States and around the world.

In this volume, **33** authors, who represented several institutions of higher education, have shared their perspectives and research findings (both quantitative and qualitative) based on their experiences in Canada, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Each article is rich in term of cross cultural perspectives of mobile students, their learning experiences, and campus diversity.

### **Who are International Students?**

A general definition of an international student, as Shapiro, Farrelly and Tomas (2014) acknowledged, is “a student who moves to another country (the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education e.g., college or university” (p.2). The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines international student as: “Anyone who is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, an immigrant (permanent resident) or a refugee.”

However, the definition and other inclusion/exclusion criteria for international students may be different in many countries. The term “international student” is a new temporary identity for all mobile students. Once international students complete their studies or go back to their home country, or start working overseas on a different visa status, the temporary identity as an international student goes away (Bista & Foster, 2016). In the

context of US higher education, there are many terminologies that are in practice to classify international students such as foreign students, non-immigrant students, mobile students, transnational students, inbound/outbound students, guest students, and so on.

### **International Student Enrollment**

The number of international students at US colleges and universities increased to 974,926 students in the 2014/2015 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2015). Students from India and Brazil showed the largest increases whereas Latin America is the fastest growing region. China, India, and South Korea are top three countries sending international students to US colleges and universities. According to the Open Doors 2015, international students constituted almost five percent of 20 million students enrolled in US higher education. A majority of international students study business, engineering, math/computer science, and physical/life sciences in the US. According to new report, top US institutions hosting more than 10,000 international students are New York University (13,178), the University of Southern California (12,334), Columbia University (11,510), Arizona State University (11,330), the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (11,223), Northeastern University (10,559), Purdue University, West Lafayette (10,230), and the University of California, Los Angeles (10,209). Among all international students, there were 40.9 % undergraduate students, 37.2 % graduate students, and 9.6% non-degree students in 2014/2015 academic year.

### **Synopsis of Articles Included in the Volume**

Susannah McFaul addresses the importance of international student engagement on campus and creating friendships with host-country nationals during their time abroad. She focuses on developing student programming that encourages friendship making, cross-cultural workshops, and offering support systems for international students. Eun Jeong (Esther) Lee investigated international and American students' perceptions of informal English conversations with each other. In Lee's study, international students reported that informal English conversations increased their linguistic and cultural competence, whereas Americans students identified it as cultural exchange to expand their own cultures and experiences

In their study, Zi Yan and Patricia Sendall found a First Year Experience (FYE) course being beneficial to familiarize international students with academic resources and expectations, to understand American culture and to improve their English language skills. Heather J. Carmack, Shireen Bedi, and Sarah N. Heiss studied international students' experiences

of using campus health centers. Authors found that international students first encountered the US health system through their experiences with university health centers. In their study, international students reported that information related to US insurance policy, health knowledge, and required test (e.g. TB) as valuable resource. They also shared that such new information created confusion because of ambiguity and assumption of previous knowledge.

Hiroyoshi Hiratsuka, Hanako Suzuki and Alexis Pusina focused on the effectiveness of the Contrast Culture Method (CCM) as an intercultural education method for managing interpersonal interactions across cultures between graduate international students and their local counterparts in an academic program in Japan. Jieru Bai examined the acculturative stress of international students. Based on 186 students, Bai's results showed that 22.4% of the students exceeded the normal stress level and might need counseling or psychological intervention. Bai reported that international students from the Middle East had a significantly higher level of acculturative stress than students from other areas.

In another article, Novella O'Sullivan and Farzad Amirabdollahian studied the dietary experiences of international students in a British university and how these occurrences differed from what they experienced in their home country. Their study presented three main themes: changes in diet, new dietary experiences, and factors affecting dietary practices. Anh T. Le, Barbara Y. LaCost and Michael Wismer explored the phenomenon of being an international female graduate student in the U.S. They interviewed seven female students from different backgrounds. Their findings indicated that the participants perceived being international female graduate students at the university as a positive, life-changing, and transformative experience.

Ewa Urban and Louann Bierlein Palmer examined international students' perceptions of the personal and professional value they receive from higher education in the United States. Their results indicated that students' professional outcomes were significantly lower than their expectations related to their professional development, while students benefited personally to a much greater extent than they had anticipated. In another study, Yi (Leaf) Zhang focused on academic and sociocultural experiences of international Chinese doctoral students in the U.S. Her findings indicated that these students encountered unique challenges in transition. She suggests there is a need for programs, and policies to improve international students' transition and success.

In their paper, Linda K. Newsome and Paul Cooper examined international students' cultural and social experiences in a British university. Based on the interviews with Asian and Far Eastern students, they found

that these international students have gone through a three-stage process that moves from high initial expectations, through culture shock, to various eventual patterns of accommodation. The study also suggested that geopolitical and social-emotional factors shaped students' personal experience and self-concepts. As a student to scholar, Yolanda Michelle Palmer discussed the learning experiences and processes of international graduate students within a Canadian university. Palmer presented traditional views of learning as occurring solely through classroom engagements and offered that international graduate students learn and achieve "scholar" status through situated practice, professor mentoring, and triple learning.

Next, Abdul Waheed Mughal investigated the impact of the Tier 4 policy on international students at private colleges in the UK. Mughal reported that according to this policy, any institution recruiting international students must be a highly trusted sponsor - a status determined by the UK Border Agency. Mughal found that the Tier 4 policy had negatively impacted the ambitions of studying in the UK at private colleges. In his study, the majority of international students reported that they would not recommend private colleges to similar prospective students because of this policy.

Jean Kesnold Mesidor and Kaye F. Sly provided a systemic evaluation of the existing literature on the factors that contribute to cultural adjustment of international students in the US. In another article, Gene Vasilopoulos reviewed recent literature on international student language and adjustment to Western Anglophone universities through the lenses of Deleuzian ontology of becoming. Matthew E. Bergman and Barry Fass-Holmes investigated whether international students (undergraduate) attending an American West Coast public university maximized their grade point averages (GPA) through their choice of major field. Their results indicated that major field's effect size was small for academic marks in mandatory English writing classes and their term GPAs in the five most recent academic years.

In his article, David Starr-Glass describes a sense of strangerhood (different from social isolation or cultural alienation) which is common among many of the international students. He suggests that strangerhood is a critical element that may provide significant short and long-term benefits for international students in their personal and transformative journeys. Keri Dutkiewicz reviewed Stephen Bailey's *Academic Writing for International Students of Business*. Bailey's book can be utilized both as a classroom text and as a self-study guide. Similarly, Paige E. Butler evaluated Darla Deardorff's new book *Demystifying Outcomes Assessment for International*

*Educators*. Butler reports that materials presented throughout the book are beneficial for faculty and practitioners across international education programs and services. Finally, Karen Johnson and Lisa Wells reviewed *International Student Dictionary*. This resource, as Johnson and Wells assessed, may help international students with the unique terminology used in universities and colleges in the United States.

### **Final Thought**

As in our previous volumes, this current edition also includes a wide variety of articles written by faculty members and doctoral students from various institutions and countries. We believe that educators, policy makers, administrators, teachers, students and individuals interested in mobile student affairs, study abroad, cross-cultural studies and international education, from across the globe, can take advantages of reading these articles published in this volume!

Altogether, we believe that scholarly articles of this volume from various disciplines will contribute positively to the field of international student studies. As in the past, we have continued our tradition of sharing free digital copies with students, faculty members and libraries in the United States and abroad. Finally, I would like to thank the reviewers, copy editors, assistant editors, and editors for their voluntary contributions to the Journal.

Happy reading!

Dr. Krishna Bista, Founder/Editor-in-Chief

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