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International Students' Confidence And Academic Success

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

by

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Nicola M. Telbis
June 4, 2013

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ABSTRACT

Research shows that the international student population is showing significant growth. Studies also show that foreign students are encountering difficulties such as social adaptability, language barriers, academic ability, and financial need. There is compelling evidence that establishes a correlation between a person's self-efficacy and his or her level of achievement. This study used quantitative analysis to determine if there is an association between international students' resources and their academic success. Analysis revealed that international students attending the University of North Dakota who scored high on their confidence levels in completing their programs of study also scored high on their confidence of their resources. Analysis also revealed that students who scored low on their confidence levels in completing their programs of study also scored low on their confidence of their resources.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

There is evidence that the difficulties international students have with academic success are associated with factors such as community acceptance, language and academic ability, and financial stability. It is not clear how these issues or resources affect students' overall success in completing their programs of study. It is important to determine if there is an association between each of the issues measured (community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability) and students' confidence in completing their studies. Knowing the effect associated with each issue can assist colleges and universities in allocating resources to the international students' areas of need. As a result, all academic institutions catering to international students can benefit from higher retention rates and student satisfaction. International students attending the University of North Dakota were surveyed in order to determine how their confidence or lack of confidence in completing their programs of study is related to each of the issues.

There are two factors motivating this study. The primary reason is to further the understanding of the international academic community. The second reason is to research the issues that I once encountered as a foreign student. In order to justify the primary reason, I used past research that provided evidence about a growing concern

among international students and their ability to complete their programs of study. This study's literature review will show that issues such as financial need, community adaptation, language, and curriculum all add to the level of stress experienced by those who come to the United States in search of higher education. It is unclear as to how much the level of concern associated with each issue is affecting students' confidence in completing their studies. Using international students' confidence in completing their academic programs, this study will attempt to measure the level of concern caused by each issue. The study will also determine if there is an association between the possible issues and students' confidence level in completing their studies. A practical outcome from the research will be to provide information on how to best serve the needs of international students.

To justify the second reason for the study, I will use my past experience as an immigrant and the hardships I faced along my journey as a foreign born student. The language, financial, academic, and social, issues are familiar obstacles I had to deal with on a daily basis.

I arrived in the United States with my father at the age of 15 in order to be reunited with my mother; I had not seen her for more than five years. Upon arrival in the United States, I lived with my mother in a strange environment away from anything familiar. The stress I faced in the subsequent years had a detrimental effect on my psychological and physical health. Language acquisition was one of the more difficult issues I faced. I did not speak a word of English and trying to adapt to a new culture without language skills was nearly impossible. Our financial circumstances were dire and that created an enormous amount of stress.

In school, academics were an issue, as well, especially since the only coursework that I understood was mathematics; mathematical calculations did not require any understanding of the English language. The only emotional support I had at that time was my mother; a parent about whom I knew very little. It took years to build myself up psychologically and function in a "normal" pattern, only later to be faced with some difficult stress-related health problems. Although my situation may differ from that of international students who come to the U.S. for their academic development, there are similarities that immigrants and other newcomers experience. Some of the commonalities are language issues, financial problems, social adaptation, and academic issues for those who are in school. The above issues are supported in this study's literature review (Chapter II).

I hope to make a positive educational contribution by analyzing the issues international students are faced with and how they interrelate. By doing so, it will make it possible for academic institutions to better identify already existing support networks or create new support associations which will better serve the needs of the international student body.

Theoretical Framework

In order to guide and study the current climate facing international students and their success in achieving a U.S. education, I have selected to use Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. This theory was chosen after extensive research to find a proven measure that could explain and analyze this study's results. Two additional theories were considered: McClusky's theory of margin and Tinto's theory on student retention. McClusky's theory of margin is grounded on the notion that adulthood is a time of

growth, change, and integration where an individual is in constant search for balance between energy available to accomplish certain tasks and the load or energy that is required to accomplish those tasks.

> This balance is conceptualized as a ratio between the load (L) of life, which dissipates energy, and the power (P) of life, which allows one to deal with the load. "Margin" in life is defined as the ratio of load to power. More power means a greater margin to participate in learning. (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 93)

Past studies were done using McClusky's theory of margin in order to determine the validity of the theory when it comes to adult learners. Not all of the research studied showed a correlation linking power and load as significant contributors in influencing adult learners' behavior (Demko, 1982; Schawo, 1995; Weiman, 1987). The theory of margin did prove effective when it came to non-learning environments. Baum (1980) used the power and load principle when investigating more than 100 widows. Load was used to determine self-identified problems in widowhood, while power was categorized as outside resources and service available to widows. The study showed that if load would go up due to negative attitudes towards widowhood, then power would also go up due to finding more resources. Baum's study proved significant and in support of McClusky's theory of margin. McClusky's theory of margin could have determined whether international students' confidence is affected by their level of power and load; however, the theory was not used as it did not appear to have a strong relationship to the academic environment.

Tinto's theory on student success and the impact of learning communities on student growth and attainment focuses on three important aspects:

> An educational career in higher education is a longitudinal process of failure and success. The structure of the institution of higher education influences students in their decision-making. Social and intellectual integration of students in the new system stimulate students during their educational career. (de Jong, Sikkema, & Dronkers, 1997, p. 2)

Tinto's theory lacked information on how relevant confidence is in determining success and therefore the theory was not used for this study. Although consideration was given to McClusky's and Tinto's theories, Bandura's theory was chosen due to the overwhelming amount of prior research on self-efficacy and academic success.

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy is grounded in the belief that self-efficacy is situation specific regarding self-confidence, a belief that one is competent to handle the task at hand (Alias & Hafir, 2009). Those who possess higher self–efficacy are believed to look at life's obstacles as challenges, leading them to increase their level of performance, and eventually overcoming any impediments. Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory is an extension of his social learning theory (Bandura, 1977b). Social learning theory argues that people's behavior is learned through observation of others. This is also called observation learning or modeling. Bandura provides a modeling process in order to explain how a person can be successful in learning a behavior. Information, retention, reproduction, and motivation are the important steps of learning a behavior (Bandura, 1977b).

Information refers to the individual's ability to stay focused and not become distracted during the learning process. Distractions can have a negative effect on the learning process. Retention is a person's ability to retain or store the information learned in order to successfully use the knowledge at a later time. Reproduction refers to a person's ability to repeat the learned behavior, as it is believed that repeating the behavior further improves a person's ability to perform the task (Bandura, 1997). Motivation is the last step in the modeling process and it states that a person has to be motivated to perform the behavior that has been observed. Two important factors that contribute to motivation are punishment and reinforcement. For example, if a person believes that by performing a learned behavior he or she will get rewarded, the person is likely to perform the behavior.

Self-efficacy is embedded within Bandura's social learning theory. According to Bandura (1997), people want to control the events that affect their lives. By having the ability to exert influence over the events encountered, people are better able to achieve the expected results. Those who are unable to exert influence over life's circumstances are frequently faced with despair and apprehension. Those who are able to exert positive influence towards their circumstances are often able to change the outcome of the situation to their liking. Having knowledge and understanding of life's events increases one's ability to achieve the desired results as "predictability fosters adaptive preparedness" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). According to Bandura (1997), a person's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are strongly influenced by what he or she believes.

Personal self-efficacy is one of the strongest contributors to peoples' psychological success when it comes to successfully completing a desired action (Bandura, 1997). Without a level of self-efficacy, people have little desire to execute challenging actions. An important part of self-efficacy is a belief in the ability to change an outcome. If people believe that they have no power to obtain a desired result, they will not attempt to take any action. Self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). As an example, a study by Collins (1982) measured intellectual performance on mathematical computations; children with high levels of perceived efficacy and those with low levels of perceived efficacy verified that efficacy contributes to individual performance (as cited in Bandura, 1997). When faced with difficult mathematical problems, the children with high self-efficacy outperformed their colleagues on all levels of mathematical ability.

Additional studies (e.g., Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991) confirmed that students with high levels of self-efficacy outperformed those with low levels of self-efficacy even if those with high levels were less prepared academically (as cited in Bandura, 1997). Multiple studies done by Schunk (1989) determined that when it comes to academic success, an individual's self–efficacy is a better predictor of intellectual accomplishment than skill alone (as cited in Bandura, 1997).

> Efficacy beliefs play an influential mediational role in academic attainment. The extent to which such factors as level of cognitive ability, prior educational preparation and attainment, gender, and attitudes towards academic activities influence academic performance is partly dependent on how much they affect

> efficacy beliefs. The more they alter efficacy beliefs, the greater the impact they have on academic attainments. (Bandura, 1997, p. 216)

There are four main contributors to a person's self-efficacy: mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses (Bandura, 1977b). Mastery experiences contribute positively to an individual's self-efficacy when the person successfully completes tasks or assignments. However, if the individual fails to positively deal with life's challenges, his or her self-efficacy is lowered. Social modeling refers to observing others accomplish their tasks. Socially, individuals' self-efficacy is raised by their belief that they, too, can successfully perform the tasks they observed others perform.

Social persuasion is important to a person's self-efficacy because other people's encouragement raises an individual's confidence in completing difficult tasks. Encouragement helps people overcome reservations about completing the task at hand, in turn giving them more energy to concentrate and complete their assignments. Psychological responses refer to a person's mood, level of stress, and state of mind. The way a person feels about performing a task can raise or lower self-efficacy. A high level of stress towards a particular task can lower the person's self-efficacy. If the person can elevate his or her mood to overcome this level of stress, then self-efficacy increases (Bandura, 1977b).

Past research concluded that a person's self-efficacy is a strong determinant of success or failure in completing tasks or goals (Bandura, 1977b). According to Bandura (1977b), people with strong self-efficacy differ from people with weak self-efficacy. Those with high self-efficacy are believed to view challenges as achievable

tasks, be more interested in the tasks they undertake, be strongly committed to their assignments, and be able to rebound from disappointments and setbacks caused by the tasks they embark upon (Bandura, 1977b). Those with a low sense of self-efficacy are believed to shy away from demanding undertakings; they tend to believe that difficult tasks are not achievable, are affected by their failures in completing their mission, and lack confidence in their abilities (Bandura, 1997b).

Self-Efficacy and Academics

As previously discussed, self-efficacy is a strong determinant of a person's success (Bandura, 1997). When it comes to academic activities, those who lack self-efficacy are often faced with lower achievement rates when compared with their high self-efficacious peers (Schunk, 1989). To add to the stress of academic performance, international students must deal with additional issues such as financial, social, and language difficulties in order to maintain academic competitiveness. The stakes are higher for international students to maintain academic equilibrium because of their educational arrangements. Due to the higher international student tuition rates, academic deficiencies have a greater financial effect on international students when compared to domestic students. International students must maintain a satisfactory academic achievement in order to maintain their immigration status.

The possibility of taking extended time off from school in order to attend to personal matters is not an option for international students. This creates more stress for those who face unforeseen circumstances. In addition to the accumulated anxiety, international students lack some of the major factors that contribute toward increasing a person's self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1977b), social persuasion and

psychological responses are used to build a person's confidence. The social support network available for domestic students is unavailable for international students. The same environment that can increase domestic students' level of confidence through the support of friends and family is unfamiliar to international students. International students' psychological responses are affected by their anxiety and stress that, in turn, can influence their level of self-efficacy.

Bandura (1997) defines perceived self-efficacy as "the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy and self-esteem differ from one another. He states that the "perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth" (p. 11). The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1967) defines confidence as "the belief in the trustworthiness or reliability of a person or thing."

Self-Efficacy and International Students

Socio-cultural environments differ depending on the part of the world in which one lives. Social environments that are individualistically oriented differ in their values and beliefs from cultures favoring collectivism (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), there is a great amount of variation on how cultures operate within their social structure. For example, in a given country, different regions might have a different outlook on individualism or collectivism. Bandura (1997) writes that even in an individualistic society such as the U.S., people's levels of individualism vary. Greater variation can be more obvious if we compare countries. European countries differ in

their level of individualism when compared to the United States. Countries in Europe also differ when compared to one another. Italy and Germany, although considered individualistic societies, have a different level of individualism. According to Bandura (1997), each culture possesses different mechanisms through which cultural influences exert their effects.

It is not surprising that students coming from collectively oriented societies such as the Eastern Asian countries, where Confucianism and Buddhism are predominant, seem to encounter difficulties adapting into a socially individualistic society. Huang (2012) states, "Studies on intercultural learning experiences of Chinese international students in Western cultures have intensively addressed the social distance between American and Chinese cultures of learning" (p. 139).

International students are faced with an environment unfamiliar to them. Students coming from individualistic societies might be better prepared psychologically to adapt to the U.S.'s social system. However, as previously mentioned, there are variations of individualism that can hinder a person's adaptation process. Those coming from collective societies are faced with greater stress and a prolonged adaptation process when trying to adapt to an individualistic culture (Lee, 2007). According to Bandura (1997), "cultural orientations must be treated as multifaceted dynamic influences in explorations of how efficacy beliefs regulate human functioning within independent and interdependent social systems" (p. 32). Bandura also points out that self-efficacy is not to be confused with individualism, since both individualistic and collective societies experience the same level of efficacy. The difference is in the way self-efficacy is directed. Collective societies use "group-directedness" to acquire

the results they seek while individualistic societies use "self-directedness" (Bandura, 1997, p. 31).

Cultural beliefs affect how efficacy is developed and exercised. According to Bandura (1997), individualists are most efficacious when they can manage things on their own, while collectivists are most productive and efficacious when they manage things together or as a group. It can be concluded that those students coming from collective societies are further disadvantaged if they lack the social network they are used to. The lack of family, friends, and social support often leaves international students having to make decisions on their own. This might favor the individualistic approach, but it is contrary to the collectivist way of life. "Self-efficacy appraisals reflect the level of difficulty individuals believe they can surmount. If there are no obstacles to overcome, the activity is easily performable and everyone is highly efficacious" (Bandura, 1997, p. 311). By using Bandura's self-efficacy theory, this study will be able to determine the confidence level international students have in their ability to overcome potentially negative factors that could hinder their academic performance.

Background of the Study

International students contribute to the U.S. economy with billions of dollars yearly. Besides the economic benefit, there is also an academic gain from the influx of international students. American research universities are able to establish relationships with academic institutions outside of the U.S., which in return brings an international perspective to American academia (Davis-Wiley, Benner, & Rider, 2007). There is a great benefit to increasing domestic students' global competency that can

lead to a better understanding of different world cultures (Pandit, 2007). According to Jenny J. Lee (2007), the academic perspective and the financial benefits foreign students bring to the university is greatly appreciated. Furthermore, the education international students acquire from the U.S. and take back with them eventually materializes in a constructive and positive appeal towards our country (Lee & Rice, 2007).

In 2011-2012, the number of international students increased 5.7%, reaching a record high of 764,495 (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2012). According to IIE (2012), there were 309,342 international undergraduate students, 300,430 international graduate students, and 69,566 international students not seeking a degree, all contributing 22 billion dollars annually to the United States economy. Fischer (2011) writes that colleges and universities are increasing their recruitment process while decreasing their admission criteria in order to attract international students. Third party recruitment agencies are being hired by colleges to accommodate the growing population of foreign students looking to study abroad. In addition to the academic expense, international students and their dependents spend over 14 billion dollars a year in goods and services (IIE, 2012).

Because of the academic and economic contributions international students offer, American higher education institutions are expected to maintain an aggressive recruitment program (IIE, 2012). In order to stay competitive and appeal to international students, colleges must adapt a multicultural approach to academics and campus life in general. A guaranteed way to have a constant flow of international students is to satisfy the students that are already here.

> Satisfied international students are often heralded as the best ambassadors for their host institutions in particular, and host countries in general. An effective strategy should thus be geared toward enhancing international students' learning experience, with the expectation that others will hear about it. (Karuppan & Barari, 2010, p. 68)

It is known that Western learning environments are using a different form of learning compared to other parts of the world, and international students are faced with many questions on how to approach their studies as well as what is expected of them when it comes to learning in a new academic environment (Johnson & Kumar, 2010; Tang, 1993; Volet & Kee, 1993; Ward, 2001). Research shows that international students are having difficulties adapting to their new environment both academically and socially. Students experience stress and anxiety when faced with community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability.

This paper will analyze the common issues international students face when studying in the U.S. (community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability) in order to determine if the issues are strong enough to alter the students' confidence level in successfully completing their studies. Prior research provided the basis for identifying each of the issues and how they affect students' confidence of success. Additionally, this paper provides information on the top countries sending their students to study in the U.S., as well as data on the top universities admitting international students. This study hopes to provide the reader with information on why international students are coming to US and what are some of the main concerns facing the current foreign student population.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2007) write about factors influencing international graduate students' success and discuss some of the supports available both on university campuses and in the community. Obstacles such as financial need, cultural adaptation, living adjustment, academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, psychological adjustment, language barriers, and other factors are potential impediments for international students (Hyun et al., 2007). Hyun and her colleagues (2007) write that international students' mental health is related to their academic success and conclude that the lesser the students' impediment load the greater the potential of academic achievement. It should be the universities' primary concern to lower their students' potential level of stress as it could be the single most important factor in contributing to international students' success. Chalungsooth and Schneller (2011) state, "Although all students encounter some stressful circumstances during college, international students face many special challenges while transitioning into new academic and social roles" (p. 180).

Among some of the challenges international students are faced with when arriving to the U.S. are living adjustments. Getting familiar with their new way of life, including new surroundings, food, transportation, customs, and social norms, all become essential tasks for the newcomers' macro-environment adjustment (Lee, 2007).

Past studies provided data on international students' experiences in the U.S. by measuring students' satisfaction with their housing, personal affairs, and academics (Chow & Putney, 2009; Davis-Wiley et al., 2007; Ebinger, 2011). A study of Korean international students at the University of Tennessee reported concerns with their social adjustments. These concerns included unanticipated expenses such as paying taxes on purchases, lack of public transportation, and unavailability of Korean cuisine (Davis-Wiley et al., 2007). Language and academics were also causing difficulties as students found it difficult to keep up with their English language skills. Academic adjustment was reported to be an additional challenge as students had to learn how to use the library and other university services while trying to deal with a new approach to teaching and learning. Korean students also reported that they had no American friends at the beginning of their studies and, since they were away from home, they lacked emotional support (Davis-Wiley et al., 2007).

While all international students have social needs, academic needs, and practical needs, those whose home culture is closest to the host country's way of life have an easier time adjusting, especially when it comes to their social development (Bartram, 2008). A study done by Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) mirrored previous research concluding that some of the barriers experienced by international students were academic, financial, and social; however, discrimination was also found to be a significant worry among students of non-European background. "Non-European international students may experience discrimination which may lead to lower self-esteem, depression and other mental health problems" (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, p. 31).

Lee's (2007) study also revealed that students from the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and India are faced with discrimination, making it difficult to adjust to U.S. culture when compared to students from Canada and Europe. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) pointed towards a higher level of stress experienced by the students' initial transition after their arrival to the U.S. The transition stage includes, but it is not limited to, finding a place to live, getting a social security number and a driver's license, getting familiar with the transportation system, and registering for classes. Poyrazli and Grahame's (2007) study supports Bandura's efficacy theory suggesting that students with high levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy tend to experience lower levels of stress, directing energy toward improving their attitude of cultural adjustment.

"Since September 11, 2001, in addition to increased surveillance dictated by the Patriot Act and difficulty obtaining student visas, international students have sometimes faced an unwelcoming atmosphere at American universities" (Hyun et al., 2007, p. 109). An international student from India writes about his experiences as a graduate student right after the September 11 tragedy. In his article, "Graduate Student Life in a Post-9/11 World," Subanthore (2011) is describing his experience as trying to balance sanity while maintaining efficacy as a student. He describes how simple tasks such as getting groceries have become challenging post 9/11. South Asian students would wake up in the middle of the night to get groceries in order not to be harassed and mistaken for Muslim radicals (Subanthore, 2011). Subanthore (2011) writes that "a big part of maintaining sanity has been in navigating attacks of xenophobia yet working toward long term goals of a successful graduate life" (p. 100). Stories such as

Subanthore's are familiar in the international student community making it an important factor to consider when it comes to student safety as well as university and community involvement.

Since the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government has implemented additional security measures making international students' access to domestic higher education institutions more challenging. Prior to 9/11, the academic institutions manually processed all international student visas. Today, with the implementation of SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), numerous changes were brought to those dealing with the admission of foreign students (Starobin, 2006). SEVIS is a web-based information collection system that was implemented to monitor how colleges and universities comply with government regulations when it comes to foreign students. The system has played a negative role in the world's academic communities by providing stringent scrutiny for international students and exchange visitors (Starobin, 2006). Studies have shown a decline in the international student body after the implementation of SEVIS. Table 1 shows the increase in the international student body until the 2003-04 academic year, where SEVIS began to have a negative impact. The table shows levels of participation of several countries in American universities. Not all countries that send students to U.S. are represented. Those countries in the table are considered to be important contributors to meeting the needs of American universities.

As the visa processing measures increased for all students entering the U.S., international educators have been worried about a decline in the student visa applications. As Karuppan (2010) writes,

> Tighter visa restrictions by the U.S. government in the months after 9/11 and the ensuing perception that international students were no longer welcome put an abrupt end to decades of steady increases in international student enrollment on U.S. college campuses (p. 67).

Table 1

International Student Enrollment in the United States: 2001-2004

Rank in 2003-04	Place Of Origin	2001-02	Annual % Change	2002-03	Annual % Change	2003-04	Annual % Change
1	India	66,836	22.3	74,603	11.6	79,736	6.9
2	China	63,211	5.5	64,757	2.4	61,765	-4.6
3	Republic of Korea	49,046	7.4	51,519	5.0	52,484	1.9
4	Japan	46,810	0.7	45,960	-1.8	40,835	-11.2
5	Canada	26,514	4.9	26,513	0.0	27,017	1.9
6	Taiwan	28,930	1.3	28,017	-3.2	26,178	-6.6
7	Mexico	12,518	17.3	12,801	2.3	13,329	4.1
8	Turkey	12,091	10.1	11,601	-4.1	11,398	-1.7
9	Thailand	11,606	3.7	9,982	-14.0	8,937	-10.5
10	Indonesia	11,614	-0.01	10,432	-10.2	8,880	-14.9
World Total		582,996	6.4	586,323	0.6	572,509	-2.4

Note. Reprinted from "International Students in Transition: Changes in Access to U.S. Higher Education," by S. S. Starobin, 2006, *New Directions for Student Services, 114*, p. 65.

The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) has argued that by allowing students to enter the U.S., the country gets a chance to befriend and educate foreign nationals which will later be sympathetic to U.S.'s cause in fighting world terrorism (Starobin, 2006). Table 2 shows thirty-two years of steady increase in international student admissions, with the exception of 2003-2006. Despite the strict entry rules established by Homeland Security, international students continue to set record high enrollments at U.S. academic institutions, culminating with record high admissions for the 2011-12 academic school year (see Table 2). The recovery in

international student admissions is in part credited to the removal of some of the visa requirements set by the Department of Homeland Security (NAFSA, 2006).

Table 2

International and U.S. Higher Education Student Enrollment, 1978/79 – 2011/12

Year	International Students	Annual % Change	Total Enrollment	% International
1978/79	263,938	12.1	11,260,000	2.3
1979/80	286,343	8.5	11,570,000	2.5
1980/81	311,882	8.9	12,097,000	2.6
1981/82	326,299	4.6	12,372,000	2.6
1982/83	336,985	3.3	12,426,000	2.7
1983/84	338,894	0.6	12,465,000	2.7
1984/85	342,113	0.9	12,242,000	2.8
1985/86	343,777	0.5	12,247,000	2.8
1986/87	349,609	1.7	12,504,000	2.8
1987/88	356,187	1.9	12,767,000	2.8
1988/89	366,354	2.9	13,055,000	2.8
1989/90	386,851	5.6	13,539,000	2.9
1990/91	407,529	5.3	13,819,000	2.9
1991/92	419,585	3.0	14,359,000	2.9
1992/93	438,618	4.5	14,487,000	3.0
1993/94	449,749	2.5	14,305,000	3.1
1994/95	452,635	0.6	14,279,000	3.2
1995/96	453,787	0.3	14,262,000	3.2
1996/97	457,984	0.9	14,368,000	3.2
1997/98	481,280	5.1	14,502,000	3.3
1998/99	490,966	2.0	14,507,000	3.4
1999/00	514,723	4.8	14,791,000	3.5
2000/01	547,867	6.4	15,312,000	3.6
2001/02	582,996	6.4	15,928,000	3.7
2002/03	586,323	0.6	16,612,000	3.5
2003/04	572,509	-2.4	16,911,000	3.4
2004/05	565,039	-1.3	17,272,000	3.3
2005/06	564,766	-0.05	17,487,000	3.2
2006/07	582,984	3.2	17,759,000	3.3
2007/08	623,805	7.0	18,248,000	3.4
2008/09	671,616	7.7	19,103,000	3.5
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5
2011/12	764,495	5.7	20,625,000	3.7

Note. Data from *International Students Enrollment Trends*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Enrollment-Trends/1948-2012.

International Student Facts by Country: 2012

In order to understand the needs of the international student population, it is important to understand the international student population and their countries of origin. Using data from the Institute of International Education (IIE), below is a brief history on the top countries sending students to study in the U.S.

China

In 1975, China started sending international students to study in the U.S. By 1980, Chinese student numbers started to increase significantly. In the years to come Chinese students caught up and surpassed Taiwan, Japan, and India as leading countries sending their students to the U.S. As the primary sender of students studying in the U.S., data shows a 23.1% increase in Chinese international student enrollment in the 2011-12 academic year from the previous year (see Table 3). Table 3 provides information on the Chinese international student population. The table shows a constant increase in student enrollment in U.S. universities starting with 1995 school year. Other than a slight decline in the 2003/2004 academic school year, the number of students from China who are studying in the U.S. continues to increase.

While most Chinese international students are graduate students, data shows an increase in undergraduate and non-degree admissions. The enrollment breakdown for the 2011-12 academic school year shows undergraduate students (38.4%), graduate students (45.6%), Optional Practical Training (OPT; 9.5%), followed by other (6.5%).

Table 3

Chinese International Student Population: 1995/96 – 2011/12 Academic School Year

Year	# of Students from China	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to China
2011/12	194,029	23.1%	n/a
2010/11	157,558	23.5%	14,596
2009/10	127,628	29.9%	13,910
2008/09	98,235	21.1%	13,674
2007/08	81,127	19.8%	13,188
2006/07	67,723	8.2%	11,064
2005/06	62,582	0.1%	8,830
2004/05	62,523	1.2%	6,391
2003/04	61,765	-4.6%	4,737
2002/03	64,757	2.4%	2,493
2001/02	63,211	5.5%	3,911
2000/01	59,939	10.0%	2,942
1999/00	54,466	6.8%	2,949
1998/99	51,001	8.6%	2,278
1997/98	46,958	10.5%	2,116
1996/97	42,503	7.3%	1,627
1995/96	39,613	-	1,396

Note. Data from *Fact Sheets by Country: 2012*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012.

India

India is the second place of origin for students who come to the U.S. to study. In the 2011-12 academic school year there were 100,270 international students from India (see Table 4). In the 2000-01 academic school year, student admissions surged 30% making India the leading place of origin for students coming to the U.S (see Table 4). Starting with the 2004-05 school year, there was a slight fluctuation of increases and decreases for Indian student admissions, eventually giving China the leading role as an international student sender (Institute of International Education, 2012). The

breakdowns of international students from India are undergraduate (13%), graduate (58.9%), Optional Practical Training (OPT; 26.7%), and other (1.5%).

Table 4

India International Student Population: 1995/96 – 2011/12 Academic School Year

Year	# of Students from India	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to India
2011/12	100,270	-3.5%	n/a
2010/11	103,895	-1.0%	4,345 (up 11.9%)
2009/10	104,897	1.6%	3,884 (up 44.4%)
2008/09	103,260	9.2%	2,690
2007/08	94,563	12.8%	3,150
2006/07	83,833	9.6%	2,627
2005/06	76,503	-4.9%	2,115
2004/05	80,466	0.9%	1,767
2003/04	79,736	6.9%	1,157
2002/03	74,603	11.6%	692
2001/02	66,836	22.3%	627
2000/01	54,664	29.1%	750
1999/00	42,337	13.0%	811
1998/99	37,482	10.8%	707
1997/98	33,818	10.4%	684
1996/97	30,641	-3.5%	601
1995/96	31,743	-	470

Note. Data from *Fact Sheets by Country: 2012*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012.

According to the Institute of International Education's (IIE) briefing paper, prepared by Chow and Putney (2009), research showed that 97% of students from India prefer to study in the U.S. to other potential destinations. When asked, students from India believed that the U.S. has a higher quality of education and a wider range of schools and programs when compared to UK, Australia, Europe, Southeast/East Asia and the Middle East (Chow & Putney, 2009). According to IIE, the six major obstacles

for students from India in making the decision to study abroad were: (a) finding accurate information, (b) gaining acceptance to the institution, (c) obtaining a visa, (d) cost of the visa and application process, (e) cost of studying abroad, (f) language barrier, (g) cultural differences, and (h) distance from home or family and other (Chow & Putney, 2009).

South Korea

As the third leading place of origin for students to study in the United States, South Korean students accounted for 72,295 international admissions in the 2011-12 academic school year (see Table 5). There was a consistent increase through the 1980s and 1990s of Korean students until the Asian financial crisis happened, when a decrease was experienced. Following the economic recovery, South Korea increased its influx of students and currently the country maintains the third place of international student origin (Institute of International Education, 2012). Unlike Chinese and Indian international students, most South Korean students study at the undergraduate level. The academic level breakdown of study for South Korean students is undergraduate (52.9%), graduate (29.4%), other (9.7%), and Optional Practical Training (OPT; 8.0%).

Table 5

South Korean International Student Population: 1997/98 – 2011/12 Academic School Year

Year	# of Students from South Korea	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to South Korea
2011/12	72,295	-1.4%	n/a
2010/11	73,351	1.7%	2,487 (up 16.4%)
2009/10	72,153	-3.9%	2,137 (up 3.6%)
2008/09	75,065	8.6%	2,062

Table 5 (continued)

Year	# of Students from South Korea	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to South Korea
2007/08	69,124	10.8%	1,597
2006/07	62,392	5.7%	1,312
2005/06	59,022	10.6%	1,267
2004/05	53,358	1.7%	941
2003/04	52,484	1.9%	881
2002/03	51,519	5.0%	739
2001/02	49,046	7.4%	631
2000/01	45,685	10.9%	522
1999/00	41,191	5.1%	444
1998/99	39,199	-8.6%	479
1997/98	42,890	-	375

Note. Data from *Fact Sheets by Country: 2012,* Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012.

Saudi Arabia

When compared to the Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia is sending the largest number of students to study in the U.S. In the 2011-12 academic school year, there were 34,139 Saudi students studying at U.S. colleges and universities (see Table 6). The increase in Saudi Arabian students coming to U.S. started in the late 1970s and continued to fluctuate until the introduction of the Saudi Scholarship Program in the 2005-06 academic school year (Institute of International Education, 2012). After the introduction of scholarship, the 2006-07 school year showed an increase of 128.7% in student enrollment (see Table 6). According to McMurtrie (2012), the effect of the scholarship program created by King Abdullah has been so effective that every family in Saudi Arabia can benefit from sending their young men and women to the U.S. The

scholarship is flexible, making it possible to extend students' stay for graduate studies, as well. Currently most Saudi Arabian students enter their academic journey through intensive English programs and continue their education towards a bachelor's degree and later graduate school (McMurtrie, 2012). Saudi Arabian student enrollment breakdown for the 2011/201 academic year was as follows: undergraduate (42%), graduate (18%), other (38.7%), and Optional Practical Training (OPT; 1.3%).

Table 6

Saudi Arabian International Student Population: 1997/98 – 2011/2012 Academic School Year

Year	# of Students from Saudi Arabia	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to Saudi Arabia
2011/12	34,139	50.4%	n/a
2010/11	22,704	43.6%	18 (up 28.6%)
2009/10	15,810	24.9%	14 (down 46.2%)
2008/09	12,661	28.2%	26
2007/08	9,873	25.2%	2
2006/07	7,886	128.7%	1
2005/06	3,448	13.6%	3
2004/05	3,035	-13.8%	1
2003/04	3,521	-15.7%	2
2002/03	4,175	-25.2%	2
2001/02	5,579	5.8%	1
2000/01	5,273	2.3%	1
1999/00	5,156	4.6%	2
1998/99	4,931	7.9%	1
1997/98	4,571	-	1

Note. Data from *Fact Sheets by Country: 2012*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012.

Canada

Canadian international student population started to increase steadily from the mid-1970s and reached a peak enrollment of 29,697 admissions in the 2008-09

academic school-year (see Table 7). In recent years, Canada remained the fifth largest sender of international students (Institute of International Education, 2012). The 2011-12 school year reported Canadian students' admissions as follows: undergraduate students (48%), graduate students (41.7%), Optional Practical Training (OPT; 8.0%), and other (2.3%).

Table 7

Canadian International Student Population: 1994/95 – 2011/12 Academic School Year

Year	# of Students from Canada	% Change from Previous Year	# of U.S. Study Abroad Students Going to Canada
2011/12	26,821	-2.6%	n/a
2010/11	27,546	-2.1%	1,426 (down 18.5%)
2009/10	28,145	-5.2%	1,750 (up 38.4%)
2008/09	29,697	2.2%	1,264
2007/08	29,051	2.7%	1,083
2006/07	28,280	0.3%	1,222
2005/06	28,202	0.2%	1,015
2004/05	28,140	4.2%	1,029
2003/04	27,017	1.9%	1,054
2002/03	26,513	0.0%	1,194
2001/02	26,514	4.9%	1,180
2000/01	25,279	7.4%	1,040
1999/00	23,544	3.5%	1,275
1998/99	22,746	3.2%	809
1997/98	22,051	-4.1%	962
1996/97	22,984	-0.1%	682
1995/96	23,005	1.1%	653
1994/95	22,747	-	573

Note. Data from *Fact Sheets by Country: 2012*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/Fact-Sheets-by-Country/2012.

Table 8

International Student Enrollments by Institutional Type: 2004/05 – 2011/12 Academic School Year

Institutional Type	2004/05 Total	2005/06 Total	2006/07 Total	2007/08 Total	2008/09 Total	2009/10 Total	2010/11 Total	2011/12 Total
Doctorate-granting Universities	333,041	330,665	344,141	371,233	394,614	420,292	451,122	486,906
Research Universities (very high research activity)	210,021	209,863	218,923	235,427	246,111	279,589	301,438	324,843
Research Universities (high research activity)	96,372	93,372	96,718	103,370	113.030	109,889	117,534	127,169
Doctoral Universities	26,648	27,430	28,500	32,436	35,473	30,814	32,150	34,894
Master's Colleges and Universities	100,422	103,012	105,257	114,449	123,079	123,713	127,686	131,943
Master's L (larger programs)	78,518	79,152	81,370	90,281	95,445	102,441	105,110	107,864
Master's M (medium programs)	15,065	15,836	16,000	16,096	17,800	14,796	15,835	17,302
Master's S (smaller programs)	6,839	8,024	7,887	8,072	9,834	6,476	6,741	6,777
Baccalaureate Colleges	27,597	26,408	25,425	27,261	29,659	27,913	28,670	30,334
Baccalaureate Colleges--Arts & Sciences	14,713	13,828	14,043	15,089	16,105	15,072	15,454	16,378
Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	9,529	9,328	8,185	8,967	10,004	11,436	11,901	12,670
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	3,355	3,252	3,197	3,205	3,550	1,405	1,315	1,286
Associate's	81,869	80,851	84,061	86,683	95,785	92,838	89,853	87,997

Table 8 (continued)

Institutional Type	2004/05 Total	2005/06 Total	2006/07 Total	2007/08 Total	2008/09 Total	2009/10 Total	2010/11 Total	2011/12 Total
Special Focus Institutions	21,703	24,458	23,725	24,179	27,549	26,167	25,946	27,315
Faith-related Institutions	3,757	3,968	3,781	3,506	3,504	2,699	2,464	2,577
Medical Schools and Medical Centers	3,937	4,040	3,936	4,020	4,326	4,274	4,056	4,383
Health Professions Schools	1,092	1,586	1,235	1,147	1,545	1,333	1,466	1,517
Schools of Engineering	453	497	516	452	617	204	245	259
Other Technology-related Schools	561	526	568	511	271	9	17	16
Schools of Business and Management	3,234	3,155	3,473	3,311	4,255	11,678	11,609	11,845
Schools of Art, music, and Design	8,235	8,984	9,311	10,341	12,008	4,562	4,756	5,299
Schools of Law	315	385	396	412	499	1,226	1,162	1,252
Other Special-Focus Institutions	114	311	507	477	522	180	169	165
Tribal Colleges	5	6	2	2	2	2	2	2
Unclassified	407	372	375	0	930	0	0	0
ALL INSTITUTIONS	565,039	564,766	582,984	623,805	671,616	690,923	723,277	764,495

Note. Data from *International Students: Leading Institutions by Institutional Type*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Leading-Institutions-By-Institutional-Type/2011-12.

Table 8 above shows international student enrollment by institutional type over an eight-year period. This data is important because it provides information on which universities are most sought by foreign students. The data shows that universities with very high research activity offering doctorate degrees have the highest number of students enrolled (324,843), followed by high research activity universities (127,169). International students seeking a master's degree are more apt to attend a college that offers a wider variety of master's programs (107,864) versus medium to small programs (24,079). Doctorate granting institutions with high research activities are most popular among international students due to the high demand for skilled researchers in the growing economies. The fields of study coincide with the level of need generated by the growth in the emerging economies.

Table 9 shows international student data on academic fields of study. International students are choosing to study business and management, followed by engineering and math and computer science. These students are seeking education in those high paying positions which are in demand in the emerging economies.

Table 9

Fields of Study of International Students: 2010/11 – 2011/12

Field of Study	2010/11 Int'l Students	2011/12 Int'l Students	2011/12 % of Total	% Change
Business & Management	155,769	166,733	21.8	7.0
Engineering	135,592	141,285	18.5	4.2
Math & Computer Science	64,588	71,364	9.3	10.5
Social Sciences	63,347	66,163	8.7	4.4
Physical & Life Sciences	63,471	66,007	8.6	4.0

Table 9 (continued)

Field of Study	2010/11 Int'l Students	2011/12 Int'l Students	2011/12 % of Total	% Change
Fine and Applied Arts	37,237	41,710	5.5	12.0
Intensive English	32,306	38,887	5.1	20.4
Health Professions	32,526	29,535	3.9	-9.2
Education	16,933	17,200	2.2	1.6
Humanities	16,263	16,294	2.1	0.2
Agriculture	9,888	9,750	1.3	-1.4
Other Fields of Study	75,459	77,252	10.1	2.4
Undeclared	19,898	22,315	2.9	12.1
Total Int'l Students	723,277	764,495	100.0	5.7

Note. Data from *International Students: Field of Study*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data.

Language

Perhaps the first and foremost area a foreign person encounters is the language barrier. "Language difficulties are a major source of stress for international students. As a result, individuals with underdeveloped language skills report lower levels of academic success and social functioning" (Chalungsooth & Schneller, 2011, p. 180). International students believe that there should be more effective ways to respond to language barriers (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2009). Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, and Lu (2007) write about the language barrier creating further difficulties for the international newcomers if they are expected to play a professional role, such as meeting with teachers and professors in their non-native language. Research shows

that learners with weak English language skills do not only have a limited ability to convey their thoughts in English, but they also lack ability to complete tasks such as classroom presentations (Kim, 2011). As the academic demands increase, language difficulties become more pronounced.

In some instances international students are clearly disadvantaged, as some academic programs such as the ones in the medical sciences are making it more difficult for international students to be admitted when compared to the general student body (Datta & Miller, 2012). Current medical, scientific, and mathematical terminologies are of Greek and Latin origin and those students coming from Asian countries have a significant disadvantage when compared to those whose first language was English or another European language. Studies have confirmed that students who studied Latin obtained greater test results than those whose first language was English but did not study Latin (Long et al., 2008). Language difficulties for non-native English speakers extend further than terminology problems and into listening and comprehension difficulties, as well (Mann, Canny, Lindley, & Rajan, 2010). "Total Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores and cumulative, science, and non-science grade point averages (GPA) are significantly higher for matriculating international students compared with their U.S. citizen peers" (Datta & Miller, 2012, p. 2).

Many institutions require that overseas students meet stringent language standards via validated assessments such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS; Mann et al., 2010). Some studies argue that the English language tests do not adequately evaluate the necessary skills to succeed in the program as academic

language skills differ from the skills taught to second-language learners (Cummins, 1979). Therefore, despite their fulfillment of the language requirements, international students may be at a considerable disadvantage when compared with native speakers (Mann et al., 2010).

It can further be determined that tests on language standards are keeping those students with a lesser chance of success out of the rigorous programs of medical schools. However, as Datta and Miller (2012) write, "the issue still serves as a stressful barrier for those who have already completed their premedical requirements and are well adjusted with the U.S.'s academic environment" (p. 2). Research conducted by Mann et al. (2010) concludes that international students generally tend to do poorer academically than native English-speaking students; however, results also suggest that acculturation plays a significant role in acquiring language skills.

Preparing for the English language tests can be done in the student's home country as well as in U.S. by attending English as a Second Language (ESL) program. By completing the ESL program, students can improve their English language skills while experiencing and getting accustomed to the American way of life (Chang, 2011).

Private ESL companies as well as university programs are available for international students to assist with their language problems. The American English and Culture Program (AECP) is an ESL program based at Arizona State University on the Tempe campus. The program offers non-degree, non-credit courses in English writing and comprehension (Chang, 2011). A similar program is available at the University of North Dakota where English Language Services (ELS), a privately owned company, offers multiple programs to assist students in improving their English language

(http://www.els.edu/en/ELSCenters/Detail?locid=ND). The ELS center works with the University of North Dakota by providing instruction to students who have been conditionally admitted to their academic program of study but lack the necessary language skills to be successful in their studies. The Language Center runs multiple levels of English proficiency courses throughout the year combining English, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation, grammar, and communication. Exams are given to evaluate students' progress, and those who complete the program are provided with a letter of achievement that, in turn, grants them the opportunity to fulfill their university studies.

To further lessen the language barrier between domestic and international students, the University of California San Diego (UCSD) provides an English-In-Action (EIA) tutor program where students and spouses can register for a small annual fee to improve their language skills and help them acquire a better understanding of the American culture (http://icenter.ucsd.edu/ispo/programs/eia_main). UCSD also offers international students writing assistance through the Writing Center. The center offers special appointment times reserved for international students and gives academic support for all undergraduate students' writing needs. UCSD provides international students with free services designed to assist in strengthening public speaking, interpersonal communication, and leadership skills.

For those who prefer learning through media, the language laboratory at UCSD offers a variety of forms through which students can improve listening comprehension and pronunciation. In addition to the university's language services, there is the option of enrolling in English courses through the English Language Institute (ELI) for a

tuition fee. These courses are made available during the day as well as in the evening, and UCSD is offering partial tuition vouchers for those who decide to take the course. UCSD is not the only campus offering language services, as most universities provide their international students with some sort of English language assistance.

Financial Need

Although finding a method to pay for education is difficult enough for domestic students, who have the ability to apply for student loans and grants, the financial course of action becomes extremely stressful for international students because student loans are unavailable and grants are limited. For example, when looking at medical school programs, there is only a 13% rate of matriculation among international students and less than half of U.S. medical schools will entertain international student admission applications due to financial reasons (Datta & Miller, 2012). "Since most state-funded medical schools are mandated to serve the citizens and healthcare needs of the states in which they exist, nearly all refuse foreign applications" (Datta & Miller, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, those medical schools that do admit international students require that students place their 4-year tuition fee in escrow—this can be anywhere up to $250,000 (Datta & Miller, 2012).

Medical schools are not an exception when it comes to financial guarantees for educational expenses. The U.S. government requires schools to determine whether individuals can meet their expenses without resorting to unlawful employment or public funds (University Office of Global Programs, 2012). For those international students already in their programs of study, financial stress is a significant success barrier. Hyun's et al. (2007) study shows that, "when comparing students, there is an

18% higher rate among international students of seeing an advisor for financial issues" (p. 113). This rate might not show the entire complexity of financial difficulty because, as earlier stated, international students tend to shy away from communicating with their advisors due to language complications. This supports the idea that the difference in the rate of financial need between international and domestic students could be significantly higher than that reported in Hyun's study.

International students do not have the ability to work outside the college campus. The unavailability of jobs for international students, in conjunction with high tuition rates and lack of financial assistance, can make academic life a struggle (Sherry et al., 2010). International students are having difficulties with the most basic needs taken for granted by most local citizens. When international students live outside university grounds, providers require a social security number in order to receive services such as electrical power, water, and telephone. International students do not have a social security number nor have they established consumer credit, leaving them victims for high deposit rates or having to search for a co-signer.

Some colleges and universities offer limited financial support to international students. According to Penn State University's global education programs website, "International students with a creditworthy U.S. citizen or permanent resident as a co-signer, may be eligible for a private alternative loan through a U.S. lending institution" (University Office of Global Programs, 2012). They also suggest that students contact The Paras Education Foundation which offers loans to international students. For those students coming from India, Global Student Loan Corporation (GSLC) is offering loans without a co-signer in the host country (http://www.globalslc.com/). "There are a

number of assistantships, fellowships and grants offered by Penn State for which any graduate student, including international students, are eligible" (University Office of Global Programs, 2012). Although the above-mentioned financial assistance avenues do offer some relief, the majority of incoming international students do not qualify, leaving their options limited to grants and employment offered by their academic institution.

Academics

> In a Japanese classroom there are students and there is knowledge and the teacher serves as a mediator between them. In a German classroom there are also knowledge and students, but teachers perceive this knowledge as their property and dispense it to students as they think best. In the American classroom there are teachers and there are students, but the status of knowledge is uncertain. (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003, p. 1)

Western learning environments use a different style of instruction and testing compared to other parts of the world, and international students are faced with many questions on how to approach their studies as well as what is expected of them when it comes to learning in a new academic environment (Johnson & Kumar, 2010; Tang, 1993; Volet & Kee, 1993; Ward, 2001). An Australian study writes about "a mismatch between the international students' learning backgrounds and the style, ethos and task demands of British and Australian universities (Johnson & Kumar, 2010). A point of significance is that Asian students combine the processes of memorizing and understanding in ways not commonly found with Western students (Watkins, 1996). In order to successfully approach a multicultural curriculum, the university must be aware

of all facets of international approaches to education as the students' success is determined by the nature of the curriculum as well as the environment where the studies take place (Kember & Gow, 1991).

U.S. curriculum does not always provide students with a multicultural perspective. Keith (2005) writes about U.S.'s professional educators and their lack of global consideration. The educational system in the U.S. does not demand a high level of international understanding from their students. This becomes obvious as applicants for Foreign Service positions lack basic knowledge of world political, geographical, and cultural systems (Keith, 2005). "New Brazilian foreign service candidates, for example, have to be fluent in two other languages before they can sit for the examination, and they are then tested rigorously in geography, world history, international affairs, and world culture" (Keith, 2005, p. 6). The standards of international education are much lower in the U.S., where a student can graduate from a higher education institution without an understanding of the world system. It is likely for those who end up teaching without international understanding to have relaxed expectations of their students when it comes to world knowledge. Without knowledge of multiculturalism it is difficult for educators to shape or adapt an international curriculum, making it increasingly difficult to understand students from different parts of the world (Keith, 2005).

There is a lack of attention towards an international curriculum and "most efforts to internationalize the curriculum refer to inducting international students into the expectations of western teaching methods, classroom behavior and assessment practices" (Clifford, 2009, p. 134). Clifford (2009) writes about the concept of

"internationalized curriculum" and that universities often try to educate foreign students based on the western approach rather than using internationally accepted norms. In order to adapt a global approach, universities need to revise their curriculum by using broader, more inclusive conceptions when creating an internationalized program of study (Clifford, 2009).

"Colleges and universities are typically organized around clusters of like disciplines that have some cognitive rationale for being grouped together" (http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1723/Academic-Disciplines.html). Each university is influenced by the strength of its academic programs. Departments choose the disciplines that will take part of the program of study based on classification systems using codification, paradigm development, and consensus. The paradigm development, which was first initiated by Thomas S. Kuhn, deals with the discipline's social structure and clearly defined academic knowledge (Clifford, 2009). Disciplines such as physics are regarded to have a clear order of investigative knowledge, while disciplines such as sociology or other subjects that are part of the humanities are regarded to have a high level of disagreement as to what theories are proven to work. Consensus is used to determine the level of agreement among different minds as to what theory works, what method should be used, and the technique used to solve the problem at hand. The high levels of consensus are offered to physical sciences while the lowest level is given to the humanities.

> Clifford (2009) defines internationalization of the curriculum as,
>
> pedagogies and assessments that foster understanding of global perspectives and how these intersect and interact with the local and the personal; inter-cultural

> capabilities in terms of actively engaging with other cultures; and responsible citizenship in terms of addressing differing value systems and subsequent actions. (p. 135)

When creating a program of study, the level of multiculturalism will depend on the discipline encompassed. By using Clifford's article and Kuhn's classification, it is obvious that an international curriculum in the area of humanities is the most challenging, since humanities have the highest level of disagreement and the lowest level of consensus. Creating the right curriculum will depend on the skills and knowledge the students are expecting to achieve. International curriculum will also have to take into consideration a global approach. Important elements to keep in mind when designing an international student program are global citizenship, global learning, and global competency (Academic Impressions, 2012).

In order to internationalize an institution's curriculum there must be a clear understanding of the universities' goals and the goals of their students. By understanding its international student body, an academic institution can customize its curriculum based on students' prior academic knowledge and ways of learning. For example, students coming from Asian countries, where memorization is a skill learned at an early age, could benefit from a transition course before they adapt to a pragmatic approach to teaching and learning. Students coming from collective societies can also benefit from a course that teaches about the norms and expectations of individualistic societies.

Understanding the culture of the host country is an important factor when it comes to academic success, especially because there are social skills involved in

completing a program of study. As previous research suggests, there are many factors influencing international students' success and just as many factors that could hinder their accomplishments. It is a collective effort on the part of universities' staff and faculty to guide students toward their ultimate academic goals. A great effort is also credited to the individuals, as they are able to accomplish the requirements set by their schools. It is overall a combined endeavor that makes success possible and the credit belongs to all who took part in it.

It is my experience that a country's social environment dictates the country's academic environment. Therefore, it is important for students to understand the host country's culture. It should be just as important for the academic institution to understand its students in order to retain and serve them successfully.

Community

Changes in the curriculum can improve the way international students are encompassed in the domestic academic life; however, just as important are the cultural perceptions towards foreign students (Lee, 2007). Studies show that international students who participate in leadership programs, community service, and campus-organized diversity discussions report greater levels of learning and development (Glass, 2012). Every culture has its unique presentation of one's self and therefore it is imperative that both the students coming to U.S. for their studies, as well as the community welcoming the students, keep an open door to multiculturalism (de Araujo, 2011).

Studies report that international students are often lonely due to missing their families, as well as dealing with social acceptance (Adelman, 1988). International

students have the added stress related to living in an unfamiliar cultural environment and studying in a different educational system and language (Campbell, 2012). Seggie and Sanford (2010) bring out the importance of cultural acceptance as the authors write about the university climate towards Middle Eastern women who veil. According to Seggie and Sanford (2010), there is a negative outlook on university campuses when it comes to a student's choice to practice such dress code. Other factors such as safety are extremely important to international students. Studies have shown that the U.S. is viewed as an unsafe place to study, especially due to the monitoring of international students that started after the 9/11 attack (Nyland, Forbes-Mewett, Marginson, 2010).

While students have their concerns, local population is also apprehensive about bringing foreign students into the U.S. due to a possible repeat of the 9/11 attacks of 2001. In order to keep the U.S. attractive to higher education international students, the government is playing the role of a mediator assuring the international students of less security monitoring while providing safety and comfort to the local population (Nyland et al., 2010).

The learning environment that both undergraduate and graduate international students experience can be stressful due to the difference between local culture and a student's ethnicity (Tavakoli, Lumley, Hijazi, Slavin-Spenny, & Parris, 2009). "Unlike native students, international students need to develop bicultural competence, or second-culture acquisition, as they maintain their own values while adjusting to the practical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges encountered in the host country" (Tavakoli et al., 2009, p. 590).

One explanation of the accumulated stress among many international students is based on the idea that most international students are coming from nations such as China and India, where members of society are more interdependent on one another. The idea of individualism varies among cultures (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2005). Individualism and collectivism are used as the focus point in cross-cultural psychology to explain cultural differences and could be regarded as significant obstacles when it comes to a person's ease of acculturation or assimilation. A person's cultural background also dictates the type of communication he or she is comfortable with. Assertive communication may be against some of the values carried by international students and this may cause a cultural conflict (Tavakoli et al., 2009).

When it comes to social acceptance there are multiple approaches that contribute to the way international students are welcomed into their new academic life. Student safety, community acceptance, and universities' and communities' ability to cater to international students by offering multicultural outlets, prayer rooms, a variety of international cuisine, and other welcoming services is exceedingly important in creating a multicultural environment. In order to maintain and benefit from international students' cultural and financial attributes, studies suggest that further efforts should be made to increase diversity awareness on campus as well as in the community (Greene & Greene, 2010).

Opposing Views

There are concerns that international students pose a threat to the economy of the U.S. (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2012). Some believe that, after the completion of their studies, most international students hope to stay in the U.S. and

benefit from higher paying jobs rather than returning to their country and work for lower wages. As a result, foreign students are taking away the jobs of U.S. citizens (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2012). Multiple studies are questioning the financial benefit that the U.S. is getting from the international student body, claiming that the numbers reported by the Institute of International Education are overly inflated. The Center for Immigration Studies claims international students are not contributing to the economy as reported and most of their education funding is coming from universities and other sources (North, 2008).

An annual study sponsored by six major federal agencies (The National Science Foundation, The National Institute of Health, The National Endowment for the Humanities, The U.S. Department of Education, The U.S. Department of Agriculture, and The National Aeronautics and Space Administration) reports survey information collected from PhD students. "The Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report" asks PhD students directly about their primary source of funding (http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/ pubseri.cfm?seri_id=11). This differs from the survey created by the Institute of International Education which collects data based on the answers it receives from foreign student advisors' estimations. Table 10 shows the sources of funding between student advisers and respondents reporting. The table shows a significant difference in the numbers reported by the two sources. Although North's (2008) research is based on two different time periods, the author claims that there was no significant change in the way data was collected in 1991-1992 school year and that of 2007 school year.

Table 10

Primary Source of Funding: Open Doors 1991-1992 and Open Doors 2007

Sources on IIE survey 1991-1992	Sources as Estimated by Foreign Foreign Student Advisors 1991-1992	Sources as Estimates by Respondents 2007
Personal and family	66.2%	61.5%
U.S. college university (Grants, TAs, RAs, etc.)	19.0%	26.1%
Home gov./university	5.2%	3.2%
Private (U.S.) sponsor	2.8%	1.4%
Private (foreign) sponsor	2.0%	1.1%
International organization	0.5%	0.3%
Current employment	2.3%	5.0%
Other	0.6%	0.8%

Note. Reprinted from "Who Pays? Foreign students do not help with the balance of payments." By D. North, 2008, Center for Immigration Studies, p. 3. Retrieved from http://www.cis.org/foreign_students.html.

After a review of the original report by the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago, there is concerning evidence toward a significant reporting error. It is unclear why the Institute of International Education is reporting 55.2% of the international doctoral students to be using their own resources as primary financial support when the data from the National Opinion Research Center in Chicago reports 5.3% on the same question. According to North (2008), the remarkable difference is created by the way the data is collected. The Institute of International Education does not collect data directly from international students and instead it relies on university advisors' estimations, which could alter the results significantly.

In support of North's findings, studies show that, when compared to domestic students who tend to average $19,564 in doctoral degree school debt, international students average $7,543 in school debt for the same degree (Hoffer, Hess, Welch, &

Williams, 2007). The difference in student debt between the domestic and international doctoral students supports North's study. However, it should be noted that undergraduate and master's students do not benefit from the same stipends that PhD students do, resulting in a higher rate of primary financial contribution by the students (North, 2008). Although further research should be done on the primary source of international students' funding, there is significant evidence showing that the actual economic benefit estimated by the Institute of International Education is questionable.

In addition to the data discrepancy there are questions worthy of further research. Multiple studies report that the average monthly salary in China, the top sender of international students studying in U.S., is $656 (International Labor Organization, 2012). One cannot but wonder how families can afford to pay for international tuition fees in the U.S. while making under $700 a month. This could further support the idea that most Chinese international students must not be paying for all or a majority of their tuition using their own funds.

Educational Demand in Emerging Economies

Emerging economies are in high demand of highly educated people. Depending on the country's economic system, people's income caps out at different times of their life. This is in part due to the education and experience required by the high paying jobs. In the U.S., income peaks between the ages of 45 to 54 (Farrell, Gersch, & Stephenson, 2006). The Chinese government is investing into higher education in order to produce wealthy consumers by the age of 25 to 44 (Farrell et al., 2006). By shifting the consumer buying power, China is aiming to strengthen its already robust economic growth. In order to maintain its current global economic role, the demand for highly

skilled, well-trained, English speaking professionals is elevated (Luhby, 2012). The rapid economic growth is creating high paying jobs for those who possess the necessary skills. Because the window of opportunity is limited and China's economic growth will eventually come to an end, those who are able to train for the highly skilled positions are doing everything they can to get the education needed in order to benefit from the current economic period.

> Chinese students who study in the United States return home with valued language skills, something that can help them land a higher-paying job in their home country. And many Chinese families, responsible for only one child, have more resources to pay for a costly American degree. (McMurtrie, 2012, para. 12)

Those individuals who are not able to acquire a higher level of education and instead attend vocational schools are destined to end up in the lower middle class level. Currently, China's middle class is estimated to be more than 300 million people strong and it is expected to reach over 800 million, which is 50% to 60% of the country's population (Luhby, 2012). Figure 1 captures China's enrollment growth over the past five years, which indicates China's commitment to attaining global leadership. The figure makes it clear to see how China's economic growth increased the enrollment of Chinese international students in U.S. Furthermore the figure shows China becoming the top sender of students.

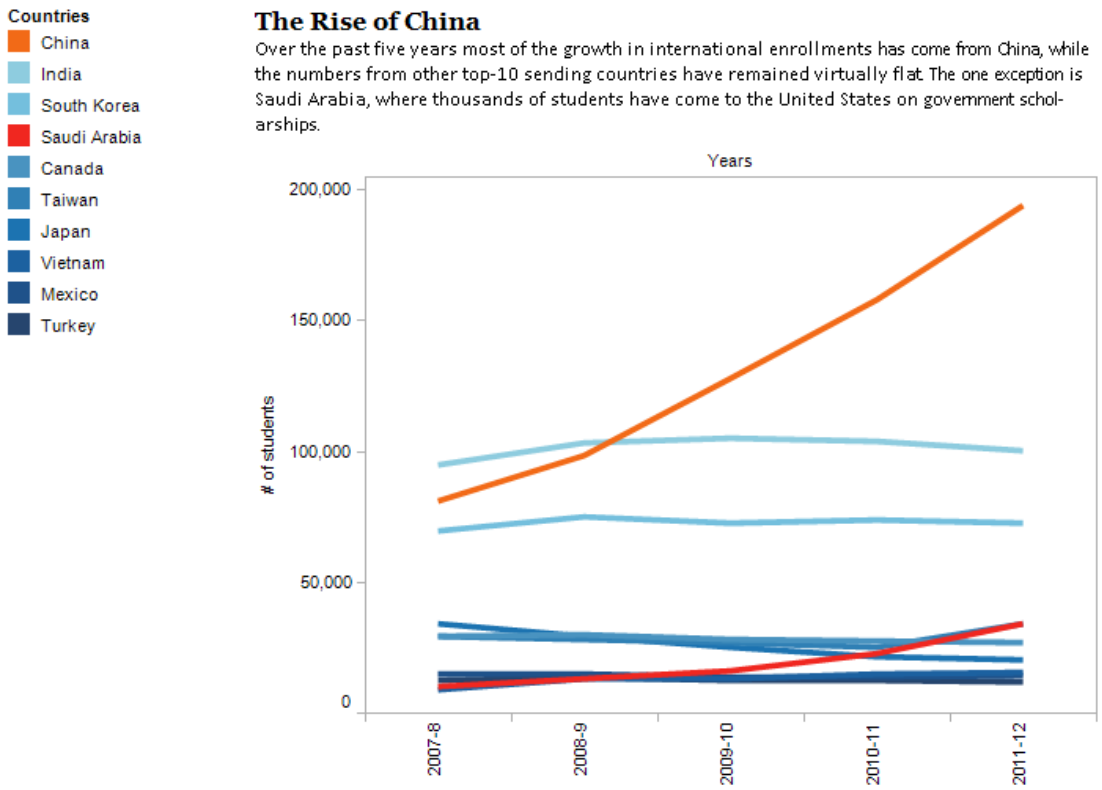

Figure 1. Reprinted from "China Continues to Drive Foreign-Student Growth in the United States," by B. McMurtrie, 2012, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* http://chronicle.com/article/China-Continues-to-Drive/135700/

In order to benefit from the growing economy many students are trying to get their education abroad, which guarantees them a highly paid job when they return home. The growth in emerging economies is providing the U.S. with endless investment opportunities as well as a high influx of international students. In order to benefit from the funding that comes along with the international student body, it is important for colleges and universities to understand the phenomenon that drives the students to the universities in the first place. It can be determined that those regions that possess the highest economic growth will also be the leading senders of students (see Table 12).

This is an important trend to research, as U.S. schools need to adjust to the needs of the growing international student population. As previously written, people coming from different parts of the world have different expectations and ideas that can only be met through the knowledge of those regions' cultures. This study emphasizes the importance of basic cultural understanding that should be common knowledge for every school administrator and educator. In order to properly serve the incoming students, higher education faculty and staff must know which countries are the top senders of international students and understand their needs and cultural values.

Top U.S. Institutions Receiving International Students

Table 11 shows the top 20 U.S. institutions with the highest number of international students. Currently, the University of Southern California is the top U.S. doctoral granting institution, catering to 9,269 international students. The University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign comes in 2nd with 8,997 international students, New York University has 8,660 international students, Purdue University-Main Campus serves 8,563 international students, and Columbia University has an international student body of 8,024 students.

Table 11

Top 20 U.S. Institutions Offering Doctoral Degrees to International Students: 2011-2012

Rank	Institution	City	State	Number of Students
1	University of South California	Los Angeles	CA	9,269
2	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Champaign	IL	8,997
3	New York University	New York	NY	8,660
4	Purdue University-Main Campus	West Lafayette	IN	8,563
5	Columbia University	New York	NY	8,024

Table 11 (continued)

Rank	Institution	City	State	Number of Students
6	University of California-Los Angeles	Los Angeles	CA	6,703
7	Northeastern University	Boston	MA	6,486
8	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor	MI	6,382
9	Michigan State University	East Lansing	MI	6,209
10	Ohio State University-Main Campus	Columbus	OH	6,142
11	Indiana University-Bloomington	Bloomington	IN	6,123
12	Penn State University-University Park	University Park	PA	6,075
13	Boston University	Boston	MA	6,041
14	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	Minneapolis	MN	5,661
15	Arizona State University	Tempe	AZ	5,616
16	University of Florida	Gainesville	FL	5,588
17	Harvard University	Cambridge	MA	5,453
18	University of Washington	Seattle	WA	5,372
19	SUNY University of Buffalo	Buffalo	NY	5,357
20	University of Texas-Austin	Austin	TX	5,324

Note. Data from *International Students: Leading Institutions*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/DataInternational-Students/Leading-Institutions/2011-12.

Table 12 provides further information on the top U.S. institutions by categorizing schools by institutional type. As seen, doctoral universities are the top recipients of international students, followed by Master's Institutions, Baccalaureate Institutions, and Associate Institutions. This trend mirrors the previously-mentioned demand for skilled professionals in the emerging global economies.

Table 12

International Students: Top 15 Institutions by Institutional Type

Rank	Institution	Total International Students
Doctoral Institutions		
1	University of South California	9,269
2	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	8,997
3	New York University	8,660
4	Purdue University-Main Campus	8,563

Table 12 (continued)

Rank	Institution	Total International Students
5	Columbia University	8,024
6	University of California-Los Angeles	6,703
7	Northeastern University	6,486
8	University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	6,382
9	Michigan State University	6,209
10	Ohio State University-Main Campus	6,142
11	Indiana University-Bloomington	6,123
12	Penn State University-University Park	6,075
13	Boston University	6,041
14	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	5,661
15	Arizona State University	5,616
Master's Institutions		
1	California State University at Northridge	2,803
2	California State University at Long Beach	2,563
3	San Francisco State University	2,469
4	San Jose State University	2,177
5	Rochester Institute of Technology	2,131
6	California State University at Fullerton	2,109
7	Johnson & Wales University	2,093
8	CUNY Baruch College	1,834
9	University of Bridgeport	1,813
10	California State University-East Bay	1,536
11	New York Institute of Technology	1,495
12	Suffolk University	1,362
13	St. Cloud State University	1,250
14	Fairleigh Dickinson University	1,212
15	University of Central Oklahoma	1,195
Baccalaureate Institutions		
1	Brigham Young University, Hawaii Campus	121
2	Brigham Young University, Idaho Campus	797
3	Mount Holyoke College	646
4	Utah Valley State College	461
5	Calvin College	392
6	Dickinson State University	368
7	University of Richmond	328
8	Smith College	327

Table 12 continued

Rank	Institution	Total International Students
9	Middlebury College	312
10	CUNY New York City College of Technology	296
11	Wesleyan University	287
12	Wellesley College	286
13	DePauw University	275
14	College of St. Benedict/St. John's University	268
15	Macalester College	268
Associate's Institutions		
1	Houston Community College	5,829
2	Santa Monica College	3,296
3	De Anza College	2,551
4	Lone Star College	1,957
5	Montgomery College	1,787
6	Miami Dade College	1,649
7	Diablo Valley College	1,556
8	Northern Virginia Community College	1,446
9	City College of San Francisco	1,433
10	Green River Community College	1,407
11	CUNY LaGuardia Community College	1,374
12	Seattle Central Community College	1,347
13	Foothill College	1,304
14	Edmonds Community College	1,299
15	CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College	1,287

Note. Data from *International Students: Leading Institutions by Institutional Type*, Institute of International Education (IIE), 2012. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org /Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Leading-Institutions-By-Institutional-Type/2011-12.

Facts on the University of North Dakota, followed by the top three U.S. institutions with the most international students are further discussed below.

University of North Dakota

At the time of this research, international student data for the 2012 spring semester has not yet been released (conversation with the UND International Student

Senior Advisor, April 2013). Although no major changes were reported when merging into spring 2013, the data shown in Table 13 below is representative of UND's fall 2012 semester.

Table 13

Fall 2012 International Student Data: University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND

Distribution by Degree Level	Number of Students
Undergraduate	282
Master's	96
Doctoral	100
Professional (e.g., JD, MD, DDS, DVM, etc.)	21
Non-Degree: Certificates, Exchange Students, Intensive English	403
Optional Practical Training (OPT): Post-Completion	55
Total	957

The University of North Dakota's international student body consists of 713 males and 244 females making up a total of 957 students represented by 55 countries. The top six countries sending students to UND are Canada (128), Saudi Arabia (90), Norway (73), Taiwan (67), Japan (63), and India (53). The 55 countries represented are reported in Table 14.

It is important to mention that University of North Dakota (UND) has a student-exchange agreement with Norway. This explains the higher than normal Norwegian student enrollment, usually not seen in other parts of the country. The University's close proximity to Canada also brings in Canadian international students, which currently make up the highest foreign student population at UND. The second highest enrollment is that of Saudi Arabian students, who tend to favor aviation as their program of study. Some international students start their academic journey by first attending the English Language Services (ELS) Center located on the campus grounds

and, as their English skills improve, they are able to enroll in their programs of study.

Table 14 shows UND's international students and the countries they represent.

Table 14

University of North Dakota International Students' Countries of Origin: 2012 Academic School Year

Country of Origin	Number of Students
Australia	1
Bangladesh	18
Brazil	3
Bulgaria	2
Burkina Faso	1
Cameroon	18
Canada	128
Congo	2
Croatia	1
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	2
Egypt	3
France	3
Germany	3
Ghana	14
Grenada	1
Guyana	1
Honduras	1
India	53
Indonesia	1
Iran	9
Jamaica	8
Japan	63
Jordan	1
Kenya	2
South Korea	24
Kuwait	2
Malawi	2
Malaysia	1
Myanmar/Burma	2
Nepal	12
Netherlands	1
Nigeria	11

Table 14 continued

Country of Origin	Number of Students
Norway	73
Pakistan	7
Philippines	4
Russia	5
Saudi Arabia	90
Singapore	1
South Africa	2
Sri Lanka	19
Swaziland	1
Sweden	3
Switzerland	1
Syria	1
Taiwan	67
Tanzania	2
Thailand	2
Togo	1
Turkey	1
Turkmenistan	1
Ukraine	2
United Kingdom	1
Venezuela	3
Zimbabwe	1
Total Countries Represented	55

University of Southern California

The University of Southern California (USC) is the highest attended school by international students. It is ranked first for having the highest international student population (9,269) and ranked sixth in the nation for the total number of U.S. students studying abroad in the 2010-11 academic year (2,340; http://sait.usc.edu/ois/Upload/Publications/EnrollmentReport/2010-2011%20ER.pdf). USC regards itself as a global university with programs and research that span throughout the globe. USC is taking

international education to a new level with their bachelor in business degree in partnership with The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the Bocconi University in Milan. The university calls the program "The World Bachelor in Business" (WBB). This new program will start in the fall of 2013 and will have a cohort of 45 students who will be studying across three continents. Professors around the world will teach the classes for the program and students will travel to each of the three campuses in order to complete their studies. The knowledge gained by the students is believed to be unique, priceless, and with a solid global perspective.

USC is in partnership and has active agreements with over 162 universities throughout the world. The university model is to "create a significant global presence that will increase international visibility through research, scholarship, art, education, and service" (http://globalization.usc.edu/international/). USC's International Student Services are second to none as they offer support for every service imaginable. The staff is available to assist students with both academic and personal concerns. The university provides religious services, English language services, entertainment services, match-up services with host families for holidays, international student assemblies, career assistance services, and many more.

As mentioned in Table 12, during the 2011-12 academic year, USC leads the nation with 9,269 international students from 115 countries. The largest represented group was Chinese students with a count of 2,515, followed by 1,265 students from India. The university credits its record high enrollment of Chinese and Indian students to the reputation it has along the Pacific Rim as well as effective recruitment (Good & Balassone, 2012). As quoted in the USC News, Associate Dean of Student Affairs,

Tony Tambascia said, “The university’s leadership is dedicated to helping international students have a great Trojan experience, and I think this is part of why so many students from around the world enroll each year” (Good & Balassone, 2012).

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

For the 2011-12 academic year, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) has reported an international student population of 8,683, which is slightly lower than what the Institute of International Education reported on Table 12. According to Julie Misa (2012), Director of International Student and Scholar Services, the all-time high enrollment is credited to a record high 2,678 admissions in the Fall 2012 semester. The university accepted 1,259 students from China, 291 students from South Korea, and 268 students from India. Overall, UIUC experienced a 7.8% increase in international student enrollment from Fall 2011 (Misa, 2012). Graduate students account for 48.3% of the total international student population and it comprises 43% of the entire student body (including domestic students; Misa, 2012). There are 4,058 undergraduate international students, which make up 14% of the overall UIUC total undergraduate enrolment (Misa, 2012).

With 114 countries represented, the university’s total international student body comprises 20.3% of their entire student population (Misa, 2012). UIUC’s top five countries sending students are China (3,846), South Korea (1,394), India (923), Taiwan (398), and Iran (128; Misa, 2012). According to Misa (2012), the university also welcomed 1,947 faculty and staff to their campus. Nearly 26% of the faculty and staff were involved in Engineering research, 10.4% in Biomedical Sciences, and 10.4% in

Physical Sciences. The faculty and staff represented China with 707 scholars, South Korea (204), India (185), Brazil (75), and Germany (58; Misa, 2012).

New York University

With 8,660 international students, New York University ranks third in international student enrollment (IIE, 2012). It is "the largest independent research university in the United States" (http://www.nyu.edu/global.html#below). The university has a portal campus in Abu Dhabi and 10 international academic centers in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. The locations beyond their NYU campus include the campus in NYU Abu Dhabi, Tisch Asia in Singapore, NYU Law in Singapore, and academic sites in Accra, Ghana; Berlin, Germany; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Florence, Italy; London, England; Madrid, Spain; Paris, France; Prague, the Czech Republic; Shanghai, China; and Tel Aviv, Israel. New York is aiming to become a Global Network University, an institution that operates throughout the world and is not dependent on its main campus. NYU has direct exchange programs with 12 partner institutions and it offers numerous study abroad programs, as well as the ability to interchange throughout world campuses and centers.

Purpose

Using international students' confidence towards completing their academic program, this study examines how community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability are associated with students' academic success.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1

What is the impact of community acceptance on students' confidence of academic success?

Hypothesis: Research Question 1

International students with different levels of self-efficacy in their community acceptance will be associated with high or low levels of confidence toward successfully completing their academic programs of study.

Research Question 2

What is the impact of language ability on students' confidence of academic success?

Hypothesis: Research Question 2

International students with different levels of self-efficacy in their language ability will be associated with high or low levels of confidence toward successfully completing their academic programs of study.

Research Question 3

What is the impact of academic ability on students' confidence of academic success?

Hypothesis: Research Question 3

International students with different levels of self-efficacy in their academic ability will be associated with high or low levels of confidence toward successfully completing their academic programs of study.

Research Question 4

What is the impact of financial stability on students' confidence of academic success?

Hypothesis: Research Question 4

International students with different levels of self-efficacy in their financial stability will be associated with high or low levels of confidence toward successfully completing their academic programs of study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants

International students attending the University of North Dakota were invited to respond to a quantitative survey that assesses their confidence toward completion of their programs of study. Using Qualtrics, an online data collection software program, the survey was distributed electronically through the university's International Student Center. At the time the survey was administered, there were 957 international students (713 males and 244 females) representing 55 countries attending the University of North Dakota (S. Jolly, personal communication, April 2013). The breakdown of UND's international student population can be seen in Table 15 below.

Of the 957 international students who received the survey electronically via email, there were 152 respondents for a 15.8% response rate. Table 15 shows the gender, age, and academic level of the participants who responded to the survey.

Table 15

International Students Attending the University of North Dakota Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	94	62
Female	58	38
Age		

Table 15 (continued)

Demographic Variables	*n*	%
18 – 25 years old	73	48
26 – 30 years old	42	28
31 – 35 years old	25	16
36 – 40 years old	4	3
41 and above	8	5
Academic Level		
Undergraduate	58	38
Masters	50	33
PhD	36	24
Professional	8	5

Note: N = 152.

Instrument

A quantitative survey was created using Bandura's "Guide for Constructing Self Efficacy Scales." Past research was used to obtain information on issues affecting international students' success. Using community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability as the main sources of concern for international students, the survey was tailored toward collecting data on each issue. To determine face validity, international student advisors, statistical analysis professionals, and committee members critiqued the survey questions. The experts were asked to assess their understanding of the questions. After necessary adjustments were made the survey was finalized and distributed.

The current study utilized a 6-point Likert-type scale with 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each statement. The study has one independent variable and four dependent variables. The

independent variable is students' confidence level. The dependent variables are students' community acceptance, academic ability, language ability, and financial stability. The study utilizes four constructs. Construct 1 (C1) utilizes four items (questions 1, 2, 3, and 4) and measures community acceptance. Construct 2 (C2) uses four items (questions 6, 7, 8 and 9) to measure participants' confidence in their language ability. Construct 3 (C3) uses four items (questions 11, 12, 13, and 14) to measure students' confidence in their academic ability. Construct 4 (C4) utilizes four items (questions 16, 17, 18, and 19) and measures participants' confidence in their financial stability.

The level of confidence in completing participants' studies is asked by questions 5, 10, 15, and 20. The independent variable (confidence) was grouped into two samples. Those who are confident about completing their program of study constitute one group (*high confidence of academic success*), while those who are not confident constitute the second group (*low confidence of academic success*). After researching the use of midpoints on the Likert scale, the split between the two groups was set at 3.5, the midpoint of the scale. Tsang (2012) examines the implications for educational research on the use of midpoints on Likert scales, reviewing the debate around the issue of whether midpoints affect the reliability and validity of measurements. The methodological debate concludes that the use of midpoints may not affect the reliability and validity of the scale.

An epistemological concern on the use of midpoints on Likert scales deals with theoretical justification for a midpoint split line (Tsang, 2012). The epistemological issue provides suggestions on the construction of a Likert scale debating how many

points should be used and whether there should be a neutral (*neither agree nor disagree*) point that would determine the midpoint of the scale. According to Tsang (2012), the respondents may view a clearly defined midpoint such as "neutral" as a way not to answer the question. In addition, midpoints may not represent the respondent's opinion of being neutral (Tsang, 2012). Although the epistemological debate failed to provide clear evidence on whether midpoints on Likert scales are desirable, Tsang's extensive research suggests that the use of a midpoint is appropriate for educational research because it is not harmful to the measurements' reliability or validity.

Based on Hall, Hladkyj, Perry, and Ruthig, this study used a median split point (2004). All respondents scoring 3.5 or below on the 6-point Likert scale were considered and coded *not confident* while the respondents scoring above 3.5 were placed into the *confident* group. The scale measuring participants' levels of confidence in completing their studies (questions 5, 10, 15, 20) achieved high internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of .97.

Table 16

Correlation of Subscale Constructs and Measures of Internal Consistency

Construct Number	Subscale Constructs	C1.	C2.	C3.	α
C1.	Community Acceptance Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4				.88
C2.	Language Ability Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9	.67*			.90
C3.	Academic Ability Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14	.25*	.50*		.50
C4.	Financial Stability Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19	.22*	.17*	.09	.60

*$p < .05$

The correlation of subscale constructs in Table 17 shows language ability (C2) and community acceptance (C1) are statistically significant, having the strongest correlation of .67. Financial stability (C4) and academic ability (C3) are not statistically significant and have the weakest correlation of .09. In addition, Table 17 shows the consistency of each construct. The highest internal consistency was achieved by the language ability (C2) with a Cronbach's Alpha of .90 while the lowest internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of .50 belonged to the academic ability construct (C3). After further analyzing the internal consistency of the weaker constructs (C3 and C4) it was determined that question 9 in the C3 construct (academic ability) and question 19 in the C4 construct (financial stability) significantly lowered the construct's internal consistency.

Procedure

Prior to initiating data collection, the survey questions were presented to UND's International Student Center Director, the Senior International Student Advisor, committee members, and statistical analysis professionals. Suggestions and changes were made to the original questions and, after it was determined that the questions are measuring what the research intends to measure, the survey was finalized. Before the data collection, the survey was reviewed and approved by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB-201301-190). After obtaining IRB approval, the survey was entered into Qualtrics and access for the purpose of distributing was given to the UND's International Student Senior Advisor.

Administration of Surveys

The survey was distributed electronically via email using Qualtrics. All subjects were advised that the survey is voluntary and confidential with no possibility of identification. Furthermore, the participants were advised that if they become uncomfortable answering the survey questions, they could stop the process at any time.

The international student center senior advisor distributed the survey to all international students attending UND. Two weeks after the survey was distributed there were a total of 68 responses. A reminder email was sent out and, after an additional two weeks, the total number of respondents reached 157. At the time the survey was sent out there were 957 international students enrolled at the University of North Dakota. There were 157 respondents, for a 15% response rate. Data was collected and coded into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for analysis.

Analysis

This study uses both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to characterize respondents and summarize the spread of data while inferential statistics are used to make generalizations about the population studied. Demographic questions were asked about students' gender, age, academic level, department of study, and country of origin.

To test the research questions, a series of two-tailed independent *t*-tests were calculated to compare responses of low confidence of academic success respondents with responses of respondents with high confidence of academic success. This study's theory could not predict the direction high confidence or low confidence groups would score on their self-efficacy in each of the four constructs; therefore, a two-tailed *t*-test

was chosen over a one-tailed *t*-test. By using a two-tailed *t*-test, regardless of the direction a relationship is hypothesized, the results of the test will provide information on possible association in either direction.

The two-tailed *t*-test tested this study's hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) for a possible relationship in both directions. Therefore, the *t*-test aimed to determine if there is a relationship between international students with high or low levels of self-efficacy in the study's perceived issues, and their high or low levels of confidence toward completing their programs of study. Four *t*-tests compared responses about each of the potential impediments–community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability. The analysis for each research question is shown below.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of community acceptance on students' confidence of academic success?

In order to determine whether community acceptance is a concern for international students, an independent t-test was performed between students' confidence in completing their programs of study and their community acceptance. The dependent variable was community adaptability while the independent variable was students' confidence level. Type I error rate was set at 0.05 for this question.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of language ability on students' confidence of academic success?

In order to determine whether language is a concern for international students, an independent *t*-test was performed between students' confidence in completing their programs of study and their language ability. The dependent variable is students' language skills while the independent variable is students' confidence level. Type I error rate was set at 0.05 for this question.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of academic ability on students' confidence of academic success?

In order to determine whether academics are a concern for international students, an independent *t*-test was performed between students' confidence in completing their programs of study and their academic ability. The dependent variable is students' academic skills while the independent variable is students' confidence level. Type I error rate was set at 0.05 for this question.

Research Question 4: What is the impact of financial stability on students' confidence of academic success?

In order to determine whether financial stress is a concern for international students, an independent *t*-test was performed between students' confidence in completing their programs of study and their financial ability. The dependent variable is students' financial stability while the independent variable is students' confidence level. Type I error rate was set at 0.05.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A series of independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to compare high confidence vs. low confidence participants for each of the four subscale constructs. The results obtained revealed statistical significant differences between participants' confidence levels in each of the perceived issues (community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability) and their overall confidence in completing their programs of study. The collective results of confidence for each perceived issue for both groups are discussed.

Research Question 1: What is the impact of community acceptance on students' confidence of academic success?

Table 17 shows the mean and standard deviation for each question measuring community acceptance. There were 141 participants who answered all four questions that measured international students' confidence in their community acceptance. Participants that failed to answer all questions were not included. The internal consistency (the way the items relate as a group) for the Community Acceptance construct resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .882 (high consistency). Community Acceptance (high confidence group; $n = 129$) resulted in a mean of 5.06 with standard deviation of .66, while Community Acceptance (low confidence group, $n = 21$) resulted in a mean of 3.04 with a standard deviation of 1.36.

Group statistics show that when looking at the means, those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) have higher confidence in their community acceptance while those with low confidence in completing their programs of study display lower confidence in their community acceptance. A comparison of perception of community acceptance among participants with high confidence and low confidence revealed statistically significant differences, $t(148) = 10.86$, $p < .05$.

It can be concluded that those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) are also confident in their community acceptance and those less confident in their ability to complete their programs of study (low confidence group) are also less confident in their community acceptance.

Table 17

Community Acceptance Results: Mean and Standard Deviation

	Questions	*M*	*SD*
Q1.	As an international student I feel comfortable the way I was welcomed into my new academic life by the community	4.9	1.2
Q2.	The university makes it comfortable for me to practice my cultural beliefs	4.8	1.2
Q3.	I feel safe in my surroundings.	5.1	1.1
Q4.	There are plenty of social activities I can take part of without feeling out of place.	4.2	1.5

Note: N = 141

Research Question 2: What is the impact of language ability on students' confidence of academic success?

Table 18 shows the mean and standard deviation for each question measuring language ability. There were 150 participants who answered all four questions that

measured international students' confidence in their language ability. Participants that failed to answer all questions were not included. The internal consistency for the Language Ability construct (C2) resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .900 (high consistency). Language Ability (high confidence group; $n = 129$) resulted in a mean of 5.12 with a standard deviation of .73, while Language Ability (low confidence group; $n = 21$) resulted in a mean of 3.01 with a standard deviation of 1.39.

Group statistics show that when looking at the means, those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) have high confidence in their language ability while those with low confidence in completing their programs of study display low confidence in their language ability. A comparison of perception of language ability among participants with high confidence and low confidence revealed statistically significant differences, $t(148) = 10.61$, $p < .05$.

It can be concluded that those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) are also confident in their language ability and those less confident in their ability to complete their programs of study (low confidence group) are also less confident in their language ability.

Table 18

Language Ability Results: Mean and Standard Deviation

	Question	*M*	*SD*
Q6.	I feel good about my ability to participate in class discussion.	4.8	1.3
Q7.	I understand my professors in my classes.	5.1	1.1
Q8.	I have good English conversational skills.	4.8	1.4
Q9.	I feel good about my ability to write academic papers.	4.6	1.4

Note: N = 150

Research Question 3: What is the impact of academic ability on students' confidence of academic success?

Table 19 shows the mean and standard deviation for each question measuring academic ability. There were 146 participants who answered all four questions that measured international students' confidence in their academic ability. Participants that failed to answer all questions were not included. The internal consistency for the Academic Ability construct (C3) resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .500 (low consistency). Academic Ability (high confidence group; $n = 129$) resulted in a mean of 4.53 with a standard deviation of .81, while Academic Ability (low confidence group; $n = 21$) has a mean of 3.90 with a standard deviation of 0.57.

Group statistics show that when looking at the means, those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) have higher confidence in their academic ability while those with low confidence in completing their programs of study display lower confidence in their academic ability. A comparison of perception of academic ability among participants with high confidence and low confidence revealed statistically significant differences, $t(148) = 3.43$, $p < .05$.

It can be concluded that those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) are also confident in their academic ability and those less confident in their ability to complete their programs of study (low confidence group) are also less confident in their academic ability.

Table 19

Academic Ability Results: Mean and Standard Deviation

	Question	*M*	*SD*
Q11.	I feel overwhelmed by my studies.	3.8	1.5
Q12.	Based on my academic background I have good understanding of skills and concepts.	5.0	1.1
Q13.	I find it difficult to keep up with my academic requirements.	4.4	1.4
Q14.	I have access to academic assistance should I need it.	4.6	1.2

Note: $N = 146$

Research Question 4: What is the impact of financial stability on students' confidence of academic success?

Table 20 shows the mean and standard deviation for each question measuring financial stability. There were 146 participants who answered all four questions that measured international students' confidence in their financial stability. Participants that failed to answer all questions were not included. The internal consistency for the financial stability construct (C4) resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of .604.

Financial stability (high confidence group; $n = 129$) has a mean of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 1.05, while financial stability (low confidence group; $n = 21$) has a mean of 2.55 with a standard deviation of 0.69.

Group statistics show that when looking at the means, those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) have higher confidence in their financial stability while those with low confidence in completing their programs of study display lower confidence in their financial stability. A comparison of perception of financial stability among participants with high confidence and low confidence revealed statistically significant differences, $t(148) = 3.53$, $p < .05$.

It can be concluded that those confident in completing their programs of study (high confidence group) are also confident in their financial stability and those less confident in their ability to complete their programs of study (low confidence group) are also less confident in their financial stability.

Table 20

Financial Stability Results: Mean and Standard Deviation

	Question	*M*	*SD*
Q16.	My financial status is strong and I do not anticipate any future financial need.	3.5	1.6
Q17.	I am worried that financially I might not be able to support my future academic progress.	3.9	1.6
Q18.	I have the ability to gain access to emergency funds should I need them.	3.4	1.6
Q19.	I feel that financial aid will allow me to be more successful.	2.2	1.4

Note: N = 146

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine how students' perceptions of their resources affect their overall confidence level in completing their programs of study. As per this study's literature review, there is vast amount of research determining the main issues international students face while trying to adapt to their new academic environments. Referencing prior research, this study used international students' main areas of concern (community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability) in order to determine how the level of stress toward the four issues affects individuals' confidence in completing their studies. Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy has not been applied as it has in this dissertation, i.e., evaluating a set of four specific criteria to determine a relationship between confidence and academic success.

Based on the results, there are multiple conclusions that are drawn. First, the four issues determined in prior studies to be main factors of concern have been demonstrated to be valid impediments for international students at the University of North Dakota.

The first question this study attempted to answer was, "What is the impact of community acceptance on students' confidence of academic success." The results obtained in this study reflect the conclusions drawn by prior research on the same

issues, concluding that community acceptance can affect students' academic achievement (Adelman, 1988; Campbell, 2012; Schimmack et al., 2005; Tavakoli et al, 2009). Issues concerning community acceptance have been well communicated in this study's literature review and coincide with research done at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (Herlevi, 2000). In her qualitative study, Herlevi (2000) reported similar results on the level of stress caused by community and academics.

According to Poyrazli and Grahame (2007), there are multiple avenues that can be used to address social support. Student mentoring or peer network can provide international students with community acceptance and a sense of belonging. The avenues suggested by Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) could be offered before and after the student arrives in the U.S. e.g., before arriving, the student could be matched with another international student, preferably from the same country, in order to exchange information on how to handle the community stresses. The results of my research affirm that this form of community social modeling could provide the new students with information on living arrangements, transportation, campus life, and other issues associated with the community.

Social interactions with American students are also beneficial to international students. Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) suggest that after a student arrives, a peer program that matches international students with American students can assist in narrowing the community stress the newcomers experience. The social interaction between international and domestic students will provide psychological support for the new students as well as increase domestic students' knowledge of other cultures. Working on campus is another social support option. This option is often exercised as

the universities tend to give employment priorities to international students in order to assist them with their financial difficulties (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

Based on this study's results, international students at UND may benefit from programs that have been implemented, for example, at the University of Southern California (USC), such as, field trips to surrounding communities and tourist sites. Further example of social events that University of Sand Diego and USC offer include student cook-outs, coffee shop meetings, and events that promote discussion and interaction within the international community. Currently UND offers "Thursday night Culture Series" which is one of six events offered between January to May, whereas at USC events that bring international students together are offered daily. At UND the events tend to educate students on different cultures and, for a small fee, students are provided with food and information about other countries. At the time of this writing the Office of International Programs at UND had an announcement on their webpage for one event for the upcoming fall semester. The research data indicates that international students at UND would benefit from a more active social calendar at UND and thereby build their confidence levels related to community issues and language.

Considering the weather in North Dakota some events may not always be possible, but with proper planning a designated shuttle can operate on the weekends. North Dakota is known for its friendly communities. The towns surrounding Grand Forks can provide a unique experience for international students as well as for their community members. Starting in Grand Forks and spending the night in a nearby farming town will offer an unforgettable experience for all involved and can provide a positive form of community acceptance.

This study's second research question deals with the impact of language ability on students' confidence of academic success. Research indicates that students' language ability can determine their level of academic success (Cummins 1979; Datta & Miller, 2012). It is suggested that all students coming from non-English speaking countries should improve their language skills before their arrival to U.S. (Chang, 2011). Many universities use International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to evaluate students' necessary language skills to successfully complete their studies. Cummins (1979) argues that the test alone should not be used to determine students' language abilities, and individuals from non-English speaking countries are considerably disadvantaged when compared to native speakers.

This study's results are in agreement with prior research, determining that there is a probability that language is a barrier for academic success despite a student's ability to achieve a passing score on the university's assessment of his or her language skills. A recent quantitative study done at the University of Kentucky determined that perceived English skills are critical in determining acculturations stress, a determination consistent with this study's findings (Lee & Bradley, 2005).

This study's literature review provides information on language assistance used by colleges and universities. The availability of university writing centers and language assistance programs give international students the possibility to improve their English writing, listening, and comprehension skills (Chang, 2011). Most of the language assistance skills offered by higher education institutions come at no charge to the student, while more intensive programs are available by registering for English

courses or by signing up with private companies such as ELS (English Language Services) specializing in teaching language courses to international students.

Looking at the Office of International Program's website (http://und.edu/academics/international-programs/intensive-english-program.cfm), there is one link to English language assistance which is provided by English Language Services (ELS), a private, for profit, company that is not part of UND. Compare this to USC where the university offers three levels of English language programs weekly. UND provides a writing center available for all students. Some universities, such as University of California San Diego, the University of Southern California, University of Illinois, New York University, provide examples and awareness of the fact that English conversation classes can greatly improve international students' confidence in their language abilities. Language confidence according to this research is shown to be an impediment to international students when it comes to socializing. The issue of language can be addressed by providing language services. One recommendation might be that UND creates an English as a Second Language (ESL) course that will be offered to new international students and family members, as is done at USC.

The third research question of this study deals with the impact of academic ability on students' confidence of academic success. The results obtained were similar to prior research determining that students' academic ability influences their academic success (Johnson & Kumar, 2010; Kember & Grow, 1991; Tang, 1993; Volet & Kee, 1993; Ward, 2001). The difference in curriculum development between the host country and the international student's country of origin may require significant adjustment to teaching and learning (Keith, 2005). Clifford (2009) writes about the

importance of internationalized curriculum that uses broader, more inclusive conceptions, and it adapts a global approach to education. Internationalizing the curriculum can decrease the level of stress experienced by international students with their academics; however, it will take additional effort to coach educators on how to handle multicultural issues (Keith, 2005). The implementation of academic change might cause difficulties due in part by U.S.'s professional educators and their lack of global knowledge and consideration (Keith, 2005).

This study's results suggest that there is an issue with international students' academic ability. On this study's survey some students responded that they do not feel comfortable writing academic papers. In my opinion the curriculum or course of study for new international students should address the writing issues. Since UND offers free of charge writing assistance, International students should be encouraged to utilize the Writing Center. Perhaps the free writing service might be advertised on the Office of International Programs website. Furthermore, international students' curriculum might be analyzed to include multicultural awareness, remedial course work, and proper course sequence. International students might complete a survey on how to better improve the curriculum in order to encompass a wider approach to teaching and learning. Effective assessment plans may determine if the curriculum needs to be updated or if the faculty requires additional multicultural training in order to be more sensitive to international students' needs.

The fourth and final question this study attempted to answer is how financial stability impacts students' confidence of academic success. The results obtained were similar to previous research concluding that financial stress can influence academic

achievement (Datta & Miller, 2012; Hyun et al., 2007; Sherry et al., 2009). Studies conclude that one of the main reasons financial stability is an issue among international students is the unavailability of jobs outside the university grounds. As previously discussed, international students are not given the right to work in the U.S. while they study and are only allowed employment at the institution they attend (Sherry et al., 2010). Evidence points towards the lack of financial resources available for international students, and this study's literature review provides information on alternative forms of funding.

Opposing views argue that foreign students' funding comes from universities and other sources, and that as a result international students pay less for school when compared to domestic students (North, 2008). Convincing evidence exists that, when compared to domestic students who tend to average $19,564 in doctoral degree school debt, international students average $7,543 in school debt for the same degree (Hoffer et al., 2007). However, this study is concerned with the amount of stress caused by the lack of financial resources and not by the amount of debt accumulated. Further results on community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability can be obtained from this study's literature review.

The financial issues experienced by the international students attending the University of North Dakota may be ameliorated by identifying sources of additional funding or financial aid. Based on this study's previous example of Korean international students at the University of Tennessee, it is the author's opinion that the most effective solution to the financial crises is making sure that students get detailed information on all of the costs involved for attendance. This information should be

provided to the student before they arrive to the U.S. The information should include the cost of enrollment, books, ID cards, transportation, clothing, rent, food, and all the other necessities involved when living in Grand Forks or any city where the students live. To a foreign student everything is new and challenging.

It may be concluded that the issues measured pose significant stress for some international students. Based on this study's analysis, it can be further determined that the stress caused by community, language, academics, and financial factors can alter students' perceptions of completing their programs of study. This study's results are significant because a person's confidence in his or her ability is a clear indicator of success or failure. As previously mentioned, prior research has analyzed the stress caused by community acceptance, language ability, academic ability, and financial stability; however, no studies have been found that tried to understand the effect these factors have on students' perceptions of their overall academic success. Based on the results obtained, it can be determined that academic success is dependent on a student's confidence in his or her abilities. Those who scored high on their confidence in completing their studies also scored high on their level of confidence in each of the four perceived issues, while those who scored low on their confidence of overall academic success also scored low on their level of confidence in each of the four issues.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory played a significant role in explaining the results obtained. The self-efficacy theory is grounded in the belief that self-efficacy is situation specific regarding self-confidence (Alias & Hafir, 2009). Chapter one discusses how having knowledge and understanding of life's events increases a person's ability to achieve desired results, there by increasing his or her confidence

level. It could be argued that international students with low confidence levels are less informed about their resources. Becoming aware of community events can give international students an opportunity to socialize. Socializing increases their level of community acceptance, knowledge of language, and it may provide information related to academic assistance.

Universities organize community events in order to integrate international students in the local culture. Studies show that international students who participate in leadership programs, community service, and campus-organized diversity discussions report greater levels of learning and development (Glass, 2012). According to Bandura, social modeling is important in raising a person's confidence level. Social persuasion is important to a person's self-efficacy because other people's encouragement raises an individual's confidence in completing difficult tasks. Encouragement helps people overcome reservations about completing the task at hand, in turn giving them more energy to concentrate and complete their assignments.

International students who take part in social gatherings have the possibility to increase their confidence levels by observing and modeling their peers. Community events will give international students a chance to meet other foreign students who deal with similar issues. By getting the proper support from their peers, international students can lower their levels of stress and increase their confidence. According to Bandura, psychological responses can alter a person's self-efficacy, in turn increasing or decreasing confidence.

The results reached by this study are supported by Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Students who lack confidence in completing their programs of study also lack

confidence in their resources. Subsequently they are less likely to succeed in completing their studies. Those who scored high on their confidence in completing their programs of study also scored high on their confidence in their resources. Since confidence can be gained or lost through mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses, it could be argued that those with low confidence will be vulnerable to failure unless they make an effort to integrate socially.

Bandura's self-efficacy theory indicates that social activities play a major role in increasing individuals' confidence. It could be concluded that by socializing with community members and other international students, those who are facing challenges with their new way of life will gain the necessary information on how to effectively deal their issues.

Limitations of the Study

This study has a number of limitations. First, the data collected from the international students is based on the perception that the students have of their current demographics. Second, the respondents are UND international students and their responses may not represent the U.S. international student body. The results are based on students' backgrounds and their prior academic, financial, social, and language capital, which in part might be predetermined by their home countries. As an example, those from English speaking countries are not expected to have the same language difficulties when compared to those coming from non-English speaking regions.

Further studies should be done on this topic, and some of the recommendations include revising the instrument used. Although the instrument proved successful, this research did not utilize a pilot study; therefore, it depended on the results obtained

without having the ability to correct the construct items for improved internal consistency. As a result, constructs C3 and C4 suffered from a lower Cronbach's Alpha. A longitudinal study could assist in determining if academic success can be predicted using this research's test variables. It is further recommended that measures should be taken in order to assist the international student population with their language and academic need, community relationships, and financial status. These issues should not be taken lightly because, as per this study's analysis, they are significant contributors to academic achievement and success.

Practical Implications

International students who have scored low on their confidence levels to complete their programs of study also scored low in their social confidence (community acceptance). As previously discussed, it is important for international students to meet amongst each other in order to benefit from group support and learn how others are dealing with perceived obstacles. Prior research shows that international students lacking family support are often lonely and are dealing with social acceptance issues (Adelman, 1988). Studies have determined that international students would like to be better informed before and after their arrival to the U.S. (Davis-Wiley et al., 2007). Basic information on where to buy groceries and clothing can assist foreign students with their adaptation process. Colleges and universities have a responsibility to better inform their students. Based on this study's results it could be concluded that some international students are unaware of their resources, leading to a decrease in their confidence levels.

The International Student Center at the University of North Dakota should continue to make sure that all international students are aware of the university's resources. UND offers multiple services that can positively influence international students' academic life. The university offers writing assistance through the Writing Center and language assistance through ELS. Financial assistance is also available for those who qualify for tuition waivers or are able to work as a graduate research assistant (GRA) or graduate teaching assistant (GTA). An attempt should be made to motivate international students to attend community events since social modeling and social persuasion play a significant role in increasing a person's confidence.

As previously discussed it is the researcher's opinion that providing additional community experiences may enhance international students' success. A lack of social events may create a spiral effect that negatively influences international students' ability to get much needed information. The information shared at community events can assist students with their community, language, academic, and financial issues. Language plays a significant role when socializing in the community. Academic issues require significant attention and it could take time for the curriculum to be adjusted in order to encompass an international perspective. When it comes to financial need, detailed information on attendance cost can empower potential international students when making their decision to study at the University of North Dakota. In addition to this study's findings on UND's international students' success, the results obtained determined that the issues measured are significant and can affect students' overall completion of their programs of study. Furthermore the data in this study reveals that confidence impacts academic achievement.

In the future, to identify potential new areas of study, a qualitative investigation involving a small number of international students would be valuable. They would respond to open ended questions about their experiences upon coming to a university in the U.S. The new study would be a beneficial addition to this quantitative exploration of issues.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY

SURVEY						
This study intends to measure which issues/impediments are significant to international students' success. The perceived impediments are students' perception of their community adaptability as well as their academic, financial and language ability.						
Academic achievement						
Age 18-25 __ 26-30 __ 30-35 __ 36-40__ 40+___ **M__ F__ Married__ Single__** **Undergrad__ Masters __ PhD__ Professional___**		**Department of study** _____ **Country of Origin** _____				
		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Some what Disagree**	**Some what Agree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.	**As an international student I feel comfortable the way I was welcomed into my new academic life by the community.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
2.	**The university makes it comfortable for me to practice my cultural beliefs.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
3.	**I feel safe in my surroundings.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
4.	**There are plenty of social activities I can take part of without feeling out of place.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
5.	**I am confident I can complete my program of study.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

6.	**I feel good about my ability to participate in class discussion.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
7.	**I understand my professors in my classes.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
8.	**I have good English conversational skills.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
9.	**I feel good about my ability to write academic papers.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
10	**I am certain about my ability to complete my studies.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
11	**I feel overwhelmed by my studies.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
12	**Based on my academic background I have a good understanding of skills and concepts.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
13	**I find it difficult to keep up with my academic requirements.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
14	**I have access to academic assistance if I should need it**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
15	**I am positive about my ability to complete my studies.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
16	**My financial status is strong and I do not anticipate any future financial need.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
17	**I am worried that financially I might not be able to support my future academic progress.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
18	**I have the ability to gain access to emergency funds should I need them.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
19	**I feel that financial aid will allow me to be more successful.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
20	**I know I will be successful in completing my studies.**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**

APPENDIX B

STATICAL ABBREVIATIONS

The APA statistical abbreviations used in this study are listed below.

α	=	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
DV	=	Dependent variable
df	=	Degrees of freedom
IV	=	Independent variable
M	=	Mean
N	=	Population
n	=	Sample
$p < .05$	=	Statistically significant
$p > .05$	=	Not statistically significant
p-value	=	The attained level of significance
SD	=	Standard deviation
t	=	Student's t-test

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