

Toward Greater Inclusion and Success

A NEW COMPACT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Chris R. Glass, Kara A. Godwin, and Robin Matross Helms





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Toward Greater Inclusion and Success: A New Compact for International Students

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Introduction



Introduction

International student enrollment in the post-World War II era of U.S. higher education appears to be a remarkable success story. In the 2018–19 academic year, 1,095,299 international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions, doubling from 547,867 in 2000–01. The rise in international student enrollment numbers has been largely driven by students from upper-middle income countries. That enrollment has increased fivefold in the last 20 years—from just under 50,000 in 2000–01 to almost 250,000 in 2012–13 (Ruiz 2014). In the same 20-year period, international students as a percentage of total U.S. student enrollment has grown steadily, rising from 3.6 percent in 2000–01 to 5.5 percent in 2018–19. The U.S. remains the leading destination for international students, who continue to rank its higher education system as the best in the world (IDP Education 2019). The presence of international students on college and university campuses has connected people, empowered individuals, brought together diverse cultural groups, and built diplomatic bridges between the U.S. and other nations (Nye 2003).

It is no secret, however, that year-to-year international student enrollment growth began to stagnate in 2014–15, and enrollment has been on a slow decline since 2016–17—a decline that would be even more dramatic if it were not for growth in the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, which surged 400 percent from 2008 to 2016, boosted by the 2012 STEM OPT extension (Ruiz and Budiman 2018). OPT accounted for just over 10 percent of total international student enrollment in 2012–13, and now accounts for over 25 percent (IIE 2020). Recent enrollment declines have been attributed to U.S. higher education being viewed as increasingly less affordable, less safe, and less welcoming, with more onerous visa requirements (IDP Education 2019).

Surveys reflect ever-deepening anxiety among higher education leaders about the future of international education and exchange in the U.S. International students account for four in 10 applicants to business schools and over one-half of doctorates in computer science and economics, yet enrollments in these programs have been flat or on a steady decline in the past few years. English-language enrollment grew eight-fold from less than 20,000 students in 2000–01 to a peak of over 160,000 in 2014–15, but has since fallen 44 percent (IIE 2020). International educators are asking, “Is the United States as competitive as it once was in attracting international students?”

Then the COVID-19 pandemic roiled U.S. higher education, and leaders scrambled to respond to temporary exemptions for nonimmigrant students taking online classes (Castiello-Gutiérrez and Li 2020). Anxious parents Skyped with international students as the U.S. led the world in the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths (Rauhala 2020). A survey by the Institute of International Education (IIE) found that the total number of international students studying at U.S. universities dropped by 16 percent in fall 2020 (IIE 2020), raising existential questions about the extent to which the pandemic—and the uncertainty and uneven policy response in the U.S.—would be a watershed for internationalization. Some leaders predict that the U.S. faces a minimum 30 percent decline in international enrollment, as surveys indicated that about one in two first-year international students intend to defer or delay the start of their academic program (QS 2020).

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

POLICY RATIONALE AND CALL TO ACTION

Reacting to the dramatic 43 percent (IIE 2020) decline in new international student enrollment, ACE President Ted Mitchell and other U.S. higher education leaders made an ardent call for President-elect Biden and the new Congress to “move quickly” to preserve the “critical role international students play in creating campus environments that facilitate global learning for *all* students—domestic and international alike” and the United States’ status as the “destination of choice for the world’s most talented international scholars and students” (ACE 2020).

The American Council on Education’s (ACE) 2012 *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* report augured the precarious and unsustainable nature of international student enrollment on U.S. campuses. It warned that “optimism about the progress of internationalization is not always grounded in reality” (ACE 2012, 23). The data showed “gains in some areas [of internationalization], but stagnation or even declines in others, and that progress varies widely by institutional sector” (ACE 2012, 1). Top-line international enrollment trends have tended to mask the underlying weakness in meaningful cultural and curricular change on U.S. campuses.

Indeed, five years later, the 2017 *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* report noted that “recruiting international students” ranked as a top priority for campus internationalization, second only to “increasing study abroad for U.S. students.” Other aspects of internationalization, such as internationalizing the curriculum and co-curriculum—practices that can produce deep intercultural learning for a far greater number of students—“take a back seat to student mobility in terms of stated priorities for internationalization” (Helms and Brajkovic 2017). Additionally, the data indicate that “the level of support international students receive once they arrive on campus, while trending upward, remains a concern.”

To frame an agenda for international student inclusion and success, we must first acknowledge that, too often, there has been a gap between rhetoric and reality in the international student experience (Glass, Gómez, and Urzúa 2014). The pervasive consumer-in-market approach to international student recruitment has treated “internationalization as a marketing and revenue-generating strategy, limited internationalization of the curriculum, and [created] gaps between internationalization policy and the experience of international students” (Guo and Guo 2017, 851; cf. Deschamps and Lee 2015). International student success is not a return to the good old days of the pre-2016–17 era. U.S. higher education institutions need a different kind of conversation about international student success—a conversation that “opens up a space in which we can admit to ourselves and each other that the problems we face are enormous, and in which we can ask earnestly how we got here” and consider fundamentally new approaches to international student inclusion and success (Stein 2019, 12).

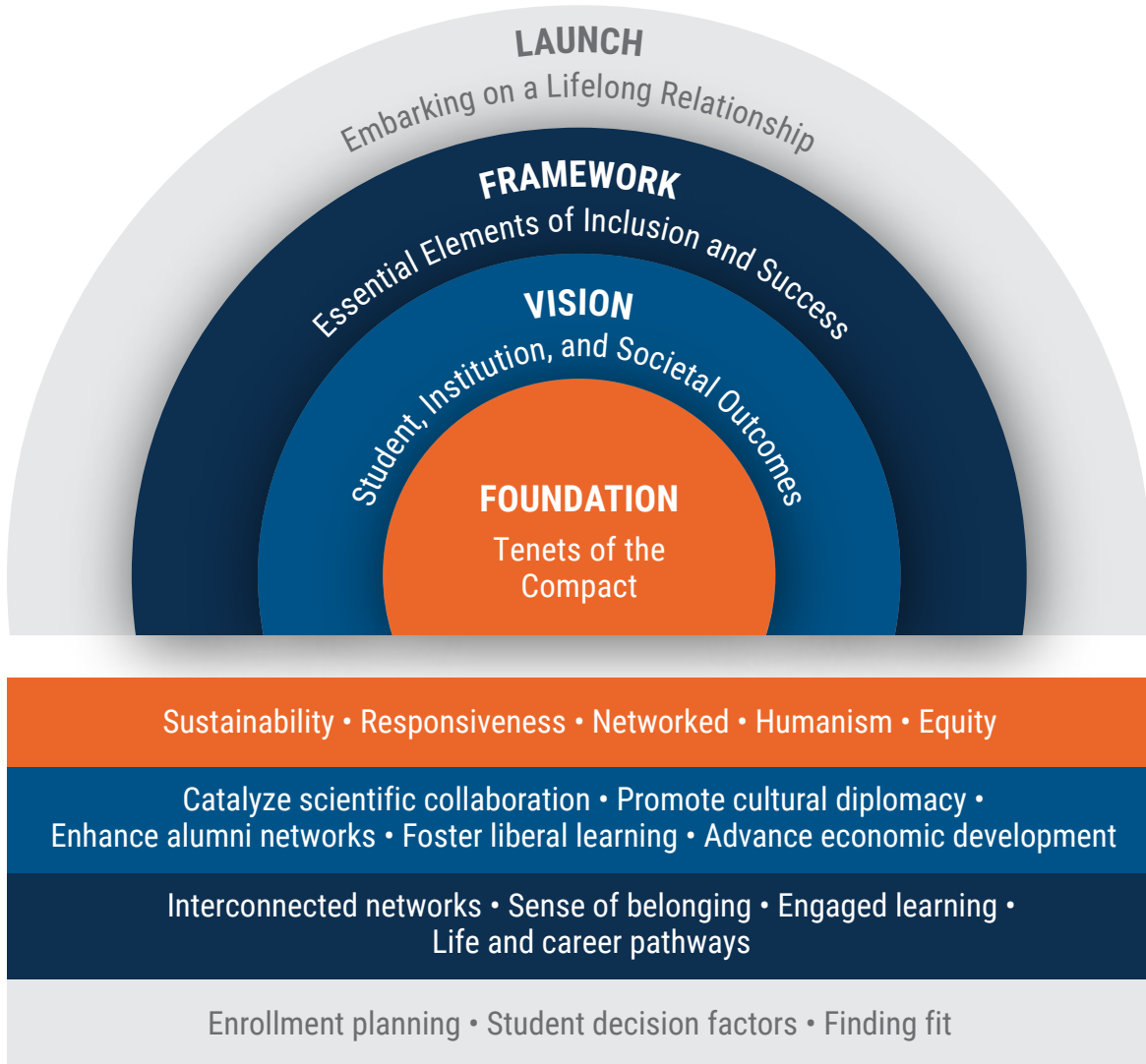
ACE welcomes and encourages this conversation because it believes the same trends heightening risks in the near term also generate opportunities to produce better outcomes for international students in the long term. Further, the conversation will benefit all students, faculty, and staff by engendering global mindsets as well as more equitable, inclusive campus communities. While the angst over international student enrollment declines is understandable, there is an opportunity in this moment to deepen our resolve and recommit to core values of comprehensive internationalization in the years to come. As Helms (2020, para. 7) argued, the COVID-19 global pandemic, “ironically enough, illustrates exactly why we need . . . students who understand global phenomena, can see xenophobic and culture-bound reactions for what they are, and are prepared to work with colleagues around the world to address global crises.”

The good news is that we know more now than ever before about international students: research on international students has experienced unprecedented growth over the last 20 years. The number of journal articles about international students has increased from roughly 25 per year in 2000 to over 350 per year today (Jing et al. 2020). While research on traditional topics such as “acculturative stress, psychological adjustment, social belonging, depression, and anxiety” remains common (Brunsting, Zachry, and Takeuchi 2018), there have also been marked efforts in the field to amplify students’ voices (Page and Chadboun 2019), develop anti-deficit perspectives on international students (Heng 2018), and spotlight new generations of middle-class and first-generation international students (Gesing and Glass 2018).

This is the time for a new compact for international students among U.S. higher education institutions, organizations, and policymakers. The compact should focus on all three phases of the international student lifecycle—before (international students come to the institution), during (their study in the institution), and after (their graduation from the institution)—for both undergraduate and graduate students. In this monograph, we adopt a meta-analysis of hundreds of research studies on international students. We propose a vision for student success; outline a model for inclusion and equity; and emphasize a more sustainable, human-centered approach to outcomes for students, institutions, and society. It begins and ends with a commitment to building *lifelong relationships* between students and institutions from the first point of contact to their postgraduate careers.

This monograph is organized first by articulating the critical *tenets of a new compact* for U.S. higher education focused on international students. A *vision* for student, institution, and societal outcomes follows. To achieve our vision and enact the new compact, the last two sections focus on the *essential elements of inclusion and success* and then a launch plan for universities to embark on a *lifelong relationship* with international students that spans their entire academic lifecycle with the institution. Throughout the monograph, colored boxes highlight perspectives from practice in the field, insights from research and other resources, and critical questions to ignite our thinking. The following model illustrates the foundation, vision, framework, and launch plan for lifelong relationship building and international student inclusion and success.

FIGURE 1: ACE MODEL FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INCLUSION AND SUCCESS



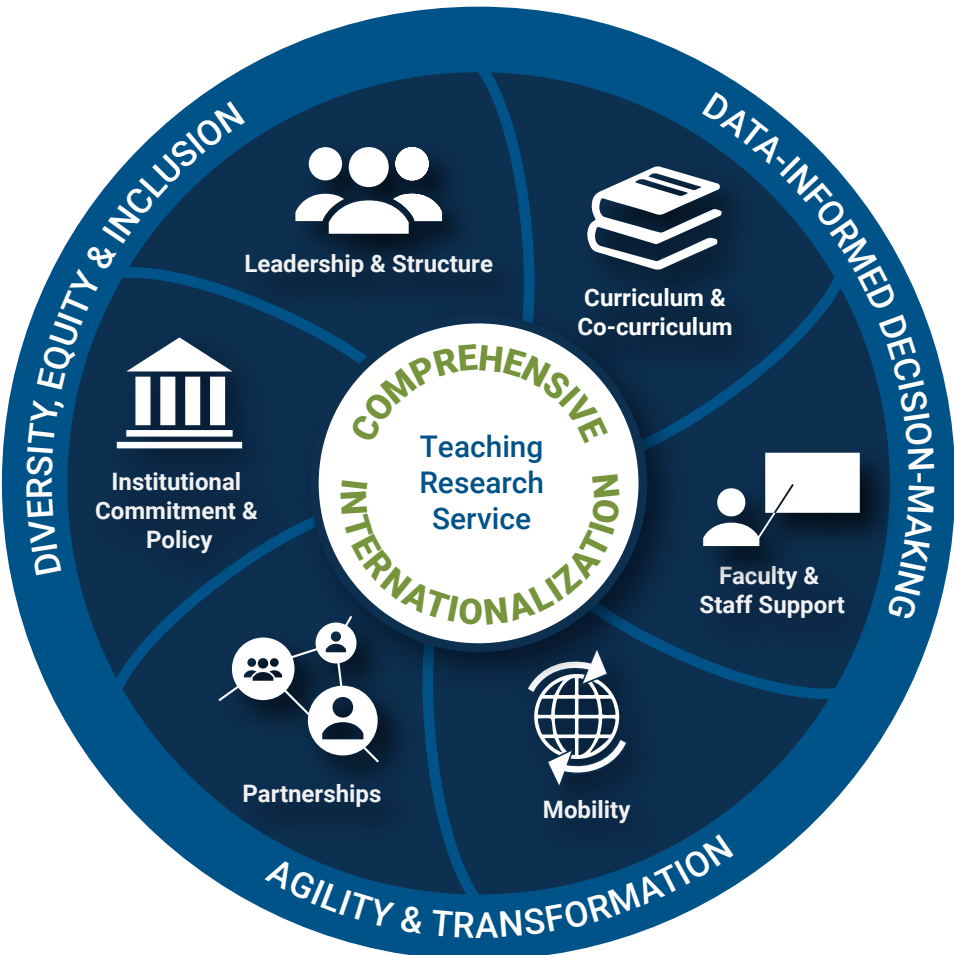
The Foundation: Tenets of a New Compact



The Foundation: Tenets of a New Compact

ACE defines comprehensive internationalization as “a strategic, coordinated framework that integrates policies, programs, initiatives, and individuals to make colleges and universities more globally oriented and internationally connected” (ACE 2021, para. 1). The model “recognizes that all constituents at a college or university—students, faculty, and staff—are learners and central to the institution’s equitable, intercultural transformation” (ACE 2021, para. 1). Comprehensive internationalization emphasizes the need for a collaborative, integrated ethos across six target areas to foster international student success.

FIGURE 2: ACE MODEL FOR COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION



The ACE Model recognizes that mobility is just one of six interconnected components of comprehensive internationalization. The compact for international student inclusion and success is grounded by the same holistic philosophy. It focuses on all phases of the international student lifecycle: before (prior to arriving at the institution), during (studying at the institution), and after (following graduation from the institution). This section outlines the compact's critical tenets that underlie all phases of the international student lifecycle, including efforts to reimagine international student mobility in a way that is more sustainable, culturally responsive, networked, human-centered, and equity-minded.

Sustainability

A model for international student success must be sustainable in protecting the planet and addressing global challenges.

Protect the planet and relationships

The United Nations defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (Blessinger, Sengupta, and Makhanya 2018, para. 1). Sustainable development serves as a contrast to views of limitless growth conceived narrowly in terms of short-term financial benefits. Like all elements of our new compact for inclusion and success, it directs focus toward building lifelong relationships with international students, not short-term financial gain. Further, it recognizes that the exponential growth of physical cross-border mobility easily ignores the planet's biophysical limits (Shields 2019).

Address global challenges

Going forward, extreme weather, sea-level rise, public health crises, water shortages, and food insecurity will disrupt societies and impact student flows and living patterns. Networks like the Climate Action Network for International Educators have formed organically due to educators' growing interest in understanding the connection between student mobility and global climate change and the role of higher education systems in sustainable development. Sustainable approaches to international student success include full recognition of the ecological impact of ever-increasing global travel on the environment and the responsibility of universities to address those impacts, which are “substantial and are rising faster than overall global emissions” (Shields 2019, 594). A sustainability-focused approach recognizes that these shared challenges also produce opportunities and the vital role of international education and exchange to address global challenges as a central part of university agendas (IAU 2014; Wright 2009). It recognizes that the benefits of student mobility extend beyond the boundaries of our campuses (Bhandari 2013) and the need to consider how “internationalization is not a goal in itself, it is also not just for ourselves: its right of existence is dependent on its ability and willingness to serve society outside the walls of higher education” (Brandenburg et al. 2020, para. 30).

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES (IAU) AIMING HIGHER

The International Association of Universities (IAU) has assembled a set of Aiming Higher case examples produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) exploring how universities are contributing to sustainable development, internationalization, and innovation. The series of video stories spans five continents and illustrates the fundamental values of higher education and the role of universities in addressing global challenges. [Click here to view the videos.](#)

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIETY (IHES)

The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) commissioned a report, *Internationalisation in Higher Education for Society (IHES): Concept, Current Research, and Examples of Good Practice*, that includes approaches and case examples of how Erasmus+ higher education partnerships are addressing global challenges (Brandenburg et al. 2020). The case examples emphasize the social responsibility of universities toward local communities and international partners. The report gives examples of refugee support projects, support for regional economic development, and projects to enhance intercultural understanding. [The full report can be accessed here.](#)

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

The Climate Action Network for International Educators asks international educators to consider:

- How can faculty address sustainability through the curriculum and co-curriculum?
- How can the internationalization of higher education more directly address issues of economic inequity resulting from global climate change?
- What are the tensions and tradeoffs between global climate change and international student and scholar mobility?

Learn more at <https://www.can-ie.org>.

Responsiveness

A model for international student inclusion and success must be culturally responsive, address discrimination and racism, and acknowledge the impact of national politics and policy.

Center culture in the student experience

A culturally responsive approach is grounded in the belief that campus culture is dynamic and that it evolves with the ever-changing composition of students and mutual adaptation of cultures (Glass, Glass, and Lynch 2016). This approach centers culture as an essential part of the student experience, viewing it as a permeating feature of campus life for all students, not just one element of successful adaptation for international students. It also requires full recognition of how our campuses fall short in creating inclusive environments. Nationalistic rhetoric echoes in the academy, for example, when domestic students view international students in terms of how “American” they are (Altbach and de Wit 2017; Perkins et al. 2020), or professors demand students only speak English outside of class (Redden 2019).

Address discrimination and racism

A culturally responsive approach is needed for a more fundamental reason: we must recognize the discrimination experienced by international students as not just a single act, but a feature of structures that imply Western supremacy framed by *noblesse oblige* (Lee and Rice 2007; Lee 2015; Stein et al. 2016). Dramatic acts of discrimination gain headlines (Redden 2012), but the most pervasive discrimination is more subtle and experienced more widely when international students are excluded or avoided, ridiculed for their accents, ignored by professors or peers, rendered invisible, or viewed in terms of racial or cultural stereotypes (Houshmand, Spanierman, and Tafarodi 2014; Loo 2019; Yeo et al. 2019).

Full recognition of neoracism experienced by international students means acknowledging the overwhelming evidence that students from the Middle East/North Africa, Southern Asia, and Eastern/Southeastern Asia are treated differently and face constraints not experienced by their European counterparts, and that this has implications for their overall well-being and academic success (Glass, Gómez, and Urzúa 2014). Furthermore, U.S. higher education institutions must reflect on whether efforts to help international students “adapt” and “adjust” actually reinforce the need for international students to “adopt” U.S.-centric approaches to thinking, relating, and interacting to be successful in the U.S. classroom (Zhao, Kuh, and Carini 2005).

Acknowledge the impact of national politics and policy

At the European-hosted Reinventing Higher Education 2020 Conference, presidents from 32 leading institutions around the world signed a joint statement on international academic mobility. Published by IE University, the statement reads:

Although the impact of political and international agendas on higher education institutions has been constant throughout time, in recent years, the sector has witnessed increasing tension around mobility resulting from increasing populism, nationalist tendencies, and strong public anti-immigration discourses.

For example, the difficulty of U.S. visa processes and tracking via the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, while a practical issue that makes it more challenging to enroll in U.S. institutions (IDP Education 2019), also contributes to a growing unease for many international students, and a feeling that they are viewed as a “security threat” (Forbes-Mewett 2018, 2020). Further, right-wing populist attitudes in the U.S., as well as the U.S. government’s moves to limit legal immigration, have led to international students feeling they are viewed as a “jobs threat” to the economic security of the U.S. Hence, many international students experience a contradiction as both “‘desired’ because of their internationalism and fee contributions, and as ‘unwanted’ because of the politics of migration control” (King and Raghuram 2013, 127, cf. Lomer 2018). In order for international student inclusion and success to be fully realized, these injustices must be acknowledged explicitly and addressed by the higher education community.

Networked

A model for international student inclusion and success must recognize the increasing role of *networks* in migration. A networked approach focuses on mobilizing new technologies, providing portable credentials, and preparing students for the future of work. Traditional models of adaptation and adjustment were developed before widespread Internet access, social media, and other technologies that have blurred the distinction of home and abroad for new generations of international students. Traditionally, migration has been framed as a binary choice for international students to stay in the U.S. or return home, but in reality, international students’ postgraduate plans reflect various conceptualizations of—and aspirations for—“home.” International students might wish to migrate to the U.S., return to their ancestral homes, or live less geographically static, more cosmopolitan lives (Wu and Wilkes 2017).

Networks affect the future of student mobility and the future in which international students will live and work. The lives of internationally mobile students, “unfold through social networks, facilitating the forming and reforming of connections people have with others, near and distant” (Urry 2012, 24). International students anticipate staying “connected to the friends they make [on campus], who may be moving on at any time to any place” (Bagnall 2015, 95). The resulting networks in which they participate impact their higher education experience during their time studying abroad and the opportunities available to them after they earn their degree. A network perspective is, therefore, essential to welcoming new international students to campus and necessary for institutions to stay connected with their international alumni.

Mobilize new technologies

Higher education enrollment worldwide is projected to increase from 120 million students in 2015 to an estimated 332 million by 2030, and international student enrollment is projected to increase from 2.3 million students in 2015 to 6.9 million in 2030. The OCED definition of international students presents a view of mobility where international students “crossed borders for the purpose of study” (OECD 2020). However, in a networked world, international study does not always require physical cross-border mobility. The coronavirus pandemic, the rise of “internationalization at a distance” (Mittelmeier et al. 2020), and evidence suggesting that international students weigh culture and family on par with economic factors when deciding where to study abroad (Kondakci, Bedenlier, and Zawacki-Richter 2018) mean U.S. higher education institutions will operate in a multipolar world where international student engagement happens at multiple sites across the globe, including branch campuses, microcampuses, or virtual environments.

While technology will cause disruptions to familiar approaches to education, it will also create new opportunities. A recent study found that 13 million students are enrolled in cross-border online programs—three times the total number of globally mobile students (Choudaha and van Rest 2018). Digital-first recruiting strategies are becoming increasingly crucial to institution recruitment plans—especially those that involve networks of education intermediaries brokering international student exchange via search platforms and financial agreements. Rather than viewing face-to-face and online delivery as competing approaches, colleges and universities must employ a global delivery model that converges multiple instruction modalities and bundles microcredentials into traditional degrees (Tsiligkiris 2020).

Provide portable credentials

Institutions increasingly recognize that meeting worldwide demand for higher education also involves portable digital academic records, flexible learning pathways (UNESCO 2019), and multiple instruction modalities powered by digital technologies (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2020). In the future, traditional bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees may exist among many other types of credentials that will be valued. New technologies and credentials reflect a fundamental shift in transnational education—from the traditional cross-border, long-term degree-based migration to new forms of borderless telemigration.

Prepare students for the future of work

Trends in the workforce are reshaping the future, and the world that is emerging opens many new possibilities but also presents many perils. Schwab (2016) describes how the future of work will shape education in the years to come:

The acceleration of innovation and the velocity of disruption are hard to comprehend or anticipate and . . . these drivers constitute a source of constant surprise, even for the best connected and most well-informed.

Institutions must prepare domestic *and* international students for the types of jobs that are being created, as well as provide the skills graduates need to move between jobs at multiple points in their lifetimes. Rapid changes in industry are reshaping the future of work through automation and artificial intelligence in what some call “the fourth industrial revolution” (WEF 2018, 7). The future world of work and economic globalization brings

both opportunity and loss for those who belong in this new era of telemigration and those who are displaced by it. According to *The Future of Jobs Report 2018*, “new technologies can drive business growth, job creation and demand for specialist skills, but they can also displace entire roles when certain tasks become obsolete or automated” (WEF 2018, 6). Factory and routine office work accounted for almost 50 percent of all jobs in the United States in 1980. In 2016, that proportion had shrunk to 15 percent. The fastest type of employment growth is in so-called alternative work arrangements or the contingent workforce known as the gig economy.

The loss of these jobs has boomeranged into anti-immigrant sentiment in populist movements within the U.S. and around the world. U.S. national security depends on immigration policy that makes the U.S. an attractive destination for international students. It is estimated that by 2030, 75 percent of global STEM graduates will graduate from universities in emerging hubs like Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China, and South Africa, compared with a mere 8 percent and 4 percent from U.S. and European universities, respectively (OECD 2015). Current U.S. immigration policies leave far too many international students with no choice but to take their innovation and creativity elsewhere (Wadhwa 2012). In a model of international student inclusion and success, public policy advocacy by higher education organizations and university presidents has been and will continue to be necessary to ensure that both the public and policymakers understand the value and contributions of international students to our college campuses, local communities, and our nation.

Humanism

A model for international student inclusion and success must be human centered. A human-centered approach honors multidimensional identities and experiences, and it articulates the multifaceted value and contributions of international students. The four main rationales for internationalization have traditionally included academic, political, economic, and sociocultural orientations (Altbach and Knight 2007). However, Streitwieser et al. (2019) proposed adding a fifth rationale: humanism, as a rising chorus of educators have called for more ethical and equitable conceptions of higher education’s value beyond what can be measured in a market (de Wit 2020; Stein 2019) or as a strategy to exert soft power (Lee 2021).

Honor multidimensional identities and experiences

A human-centered approach recognizes the heterogeneity of international student experiences. Put simply: not all international students are the same (Choudaha, Orosz, and Chang 2012). It is critical to avoid monolithic views of a singular international student experience, or over-generalizations based on comparisons between U.S. and international students, as if international students—or domestic students, for that matter—are one homogenous group (Heng 2019). Equally problematic are deficit views of international students, which tend to emphasize struggles, hardships, challenges, and pressures that individual international students describe. Such views fail to fully recognize the ways international students construct meaning from their experiences or how systemic structures create these conditions in the first place (Yao, George Mwangi, and Brown 2019).

The traditional definition of international students as individuals who choose to “cross borders for the purpose of study” fails to capture that students maintain important roles in their families, as spouses, and as diaspora community members (Teshome and Osei-Kofi 2012). They may be refugees, asylum-seekers, or undocumented immigrants (Streitwieser et al. 2019). And their experience is marked by a “duality of ambition and anxiety” as they “navigate the complications and confusions of their formative years” while bridging expectations of

multiple education systems and societies (Ma 2020, 229). Popular conceptions of international students as globally mobile elites with reservoirs of academic, cultural, and social capital no longer hold. These stereotypes ignore well-documented variation in international students' experiences shaped by demographic, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and other characteristics.

Jones (2017) outlines a four-dimensional view of the international student experience that accounts for personal (race/ethnicity, gender, and religion), familial (socioeconomic status, social class, kinship networks, and migration intentions), institutional (course of study, level of study, and compositional diversity of students at host institution), and national dynamics (education systems, academic norms and practices, and language of instruction). International students draw on their diverse backgrounds in developing resilience within multicultural learning environments (Khawaja, Moisuc, and Ramirez 2014). These four dimensions are not challenges to be overcome but capacities to be leveraged as international students pursue their personal and academic goals (Pan 2011).

Articulate multifaceted value and contributions

International education is part of a larger worldwide migration industry composed of a sprawling set of educational intermediaries (e.g., agents/brokers, typically from the private sector) and educational providers (e.g., public, private, and for-profit institutions). Consequently, the recruitment of international students has become simultaneously “an industry, a source of revenue, and a means for enhanced reputation” (de Wit 2020, i). One senior international officer remarked, “There is this recognition that international students are an important component to our . . . I don't want to say financial survival . . . but in a way they are” (Deschamps and Lee 2015, 131). Public higher education institutions have recruited high-tuition-paying, out-of-state, and international students to make up for shortfalls in state funding (Macrander 2017). International students have been widely viewed as “cash cows” for institutions, “competitors” who may take well-paying jobs from qualified U.S. students, and “charity” who benefit from *noblesse oblige* of wealthy countries like the U.S. (Stein et al. 2016).

In advocating for international education and exchange, higher education leaders and policymakers cite international students' positive impact on the U.S. economy. They bring over \$40 billion to the U.S. economy and support more than 450,000 jobs (NAFSA 2019). However, a sustainable model for international student inclusion and success must recognize the need to move beyond narrow conceptions of international students as consumers in a market whereby “value has become synonymous with economic return and institutional accountability” (Tomlinson 2018, 711).

In the wake of COVID-19, it has become clear that public discussions about international education recovery have positioned international students predominantly as customers of an export industry. Numerous headlines focusing on lost revenues, shifts in market share and student recruitment diversification have continued to expose how international students' value is measured largely in economic terms. The dominant discourse focusing on revenue losses facing host universities appears to overshadow international students' enormous contributions and value to host countries' universities, culture, and society beyond financial terms. (Tran 2020a, para. 2–3)

The dangers of unsustainable business models based on transactional relationships with international students sparked Knight (2014) to portend that internationalization was at risk of “losing its way” from a process rooted in the “values of cooperation, partnership, exchange, mutual benefits, and capacity building to one that is increasingly characterized by competition, commercialization, self-interest and status building” (76). A decade ago, the International Association of Universities (2012) warned that a new set of values had crept into higher education “characterized by competition for prestige, talent, and resources” where “commercial and other interests sometimes overshadow higher education’s fundamental academic mission and values” (3). It is crucial to recognize mutual benefits—individually and collectively, market and non-market, short- and long-term, locally, and globally—bringing to the forefront that international students are interested in more than employability (Tran and Vu 2017, 572) and that the higher education community is interested in their holistic success, not just the market value of their tuition and their impact on institutional profiles.

Equity

A model for international student inclusion and success must be *equity-minded*. ACE (2020) noted that the “urgent challenge shared worldwide” is to both increase “the total number of people with a college education” and “make . . . sure marginalized and underserved populations can complete their education at an equitable rate” (3). It is essential to recognize that the “mobility process is structured around multiple heterogeneities rather than by a single one” and that “inequalities in opportunities and outcomes are intrinsically connected” (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017, 1241). Equity-minded approaches recognize financial barriers and elevate access-focused institutions.

Recognize financial barriers

The drivers of student mobility are changing (Gesing and Glass 2018; Hou and Du 2020). New generations of middle-class students are more likely to be practical and employment-focused “bargain hunters” (Fischer 2020) who carefully weigh the affordability of higher education and trade-offs between regional, culturally proximate options and more traditional destinations like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Russia, Germany, and Spain (Kondakci, Bedenlier, and Zawacki-Richter 2018).

An equity-minded approach to student success starts with the recognition that international student mobility is not an unmitigated good. It can also reproduce social (dis)advantage, and “rewards associated with formal education are unevenly distributed across space, as well as being differentiated by social class” (Waters 2012, 123). Such an approach recognizes how the cash cow financial model makes U.S. higher education simply unaffordable, and that the “lower availability of funding opportunities from universities and governments, as well as tighter immigration and visa policies for finding work opportunities, is making it harder to recover the cost of education” (Choudaha 2020, iii).

Elevate access-focused institutions

Equity-mindedness also recognizes the importance of community colleges and public regional universities in providing access to international students (Viggiano et al. 2018). It is more likely that new generations of budget-conscious, job-focused international students will consider regional public universities and community colleges, rather than just the small subset of institutions that have accounted for over 70 percent of international student enrollment growth (Fischer 2020).

In addition to cost considerations, the diversity in missions and student populations served by U.S. colleges and universities means there are opportunities for international students with a wide range of academic preparation. While reputation and perceived institutional quality remain major drivers for international students' overall decision-making, Choudaha, Orosz, and Chang (2012) found that these issues are less of a consideration for students with relatively lower levels of academic preparedness compared with their peers. A smaller-scale study conducted at two institutions that are not highly ranked or particularly academically selective found that “ease of the admission and acceptance process” was a key decision factor for enrolled international students (Tan 2015, 8). With this evidence in mind, ensuring international student inclusion and success requires higher education to elevate the options and opportunities made available through access-focused community colleges and public regional universities.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

Stein (2019) poses three questions for anti-oppressive internationalization for global solidarity:

- How can we recruit and retain more nationally, economically, and racially diverse students and faculty?
- How can we address inequity across all areas of the institution (e.g., admissions, curriculum)?
- How can we ensure that other ways of being are not simply included in the institution, but also valued, centered, and rewarded? (11)

A Vision: Student, Institution, and Societal Outcomes



A Vision: Student, Institution, and Societal Outcomes

This new compact focuses on the international student lifecycle, including what happens to students after they graduate. Student inclusion and success begins with a vision for institutions inviting international students to participate in opportunities that align with and are relevant to their future goals and aspirations. Each institution's definition of international student success will be different—grounded in its unique history, mission, and culture. Institutions do not need a monolithic vision for all international students, but a multifaceted framework that allows for various outcomes—outcomes as diverse as the international students who attend and graduate from U.S. institutions.

Student success means many things and is often viewed narrowly as completing a formal degree program. Choudaha (2011) argues the need to move from a focus on inputs—increasing the number of students—to outcomes—ensuring student success in line with institutional mission:

By only focusing on input metrics like recruitment goals rather than student success, institutions run the risk of damaging their reputation and competitive positioning. Institutions cannot take the academic and career success of their international students for granted. (para. 18)

This section outlines a *vision* for student, institution, and societal outcomes. Student success is often framed as a “what” question: *what* outcomes do we want to see? But a *vision* for international student success starts with a “why” question: *why* does our institution need international students? (Sierra 2020). If the answer to why is driven by revenue, then the focus will be on customer satisfaction. However, if the set of commitments outlined in the last section—sustainability, responsiveness, networked, humanism, and equity—drives the answer as to why, then the focus will be on inclusion and success.

International student success requires both *vision* and *commitment*. *Vision* is important because it focuses on a possible reality not yet realized. It recognizes and elevates the gap between what is envisioned and the current reality. *Commitment* is the dedication essential to making that vision a reality. A commitment to inclusion and success begins and ends with a focus on building *lifelong relationships* between students and institutions from the first point of contact to their postgraduate careers. It synergizes the strategies for recruitment, the resources institutions invest in encouraging international students' active participation in campus life, and the approaches used to build lifelong relationships with international alumni.

We believe higher education institutions can meet this moment with a more expansive vision for *why* they want to invest in international student inclusion and success. To capture a more holistic vision, we outline a multi-faceted framework of inclusion and success that includes the benefits of international education for both

individuals and communities, a vision that consists of both market and non-market outcomes, and one that focuses on short- and long-term benefits. A lifecycle approach recognizes the need to continuously redirect focus from counting inputs (increasing the number of international students) to equitable outcomes (creating multiple pathways for international student success). A vision for international student success encompasses bringing these outcomes to scale through scientific collaboration, cultural diplomacy, alumni engagement, liberal learning, and economic development.

Catalyze scientific collaboration

International student success furthers scientific collaboration. This occurs when international students stay in the U.S. to work in research labs with OPT or H1-B visas, return abroad and continue to partner with their graduate adviser doing research, return to their home country to develop its national scientific capacity, or seek a more advanced degree in a field that advances scientific knowledge on global challenges like those outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Science and engineering fields accounted for nearly half (46 percent) of the bachelor's degrees earned by international students, the majority of master's degrees (56 percent in 2017, up from 46 percent in 2012), and the majority of doctoral degrees (50 percent+) in engineering, computer science, economics, mathematics, and statistics (National Science Foundation 2020).

A recent study showed that “over the past five years, U.S. research article publications would have declined without co-authorship with China, whereas China's publication rate would have risen without the USA” (Lee and Haupt 2020, 57). And, as mentioned earlier, it is estimated that by 2030, 75 percent of global STEM graduates will graduate from universities in Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China, and South Africa (OECD 2015). As research spending grows in other countries, domestic and international graduates are likely to encounter cross-cultural research collaborations in their future work. The presence of international students on U.S. campuses creates multicultural communities in which both international and domestic students can work together on scientific research, therein developing intercultural skills for work in scientific fields after they graduate.

As our world collaborates across borders on urgent problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, food insecurity, and human rights, scientific collaboration is a global public good (Marginson 2018). Catalyzing scientific collaboration and centering internationally mobile students as part of that effort needs to be an intentional, thoughtful strategy at institutions and across U.S. higher education.

Promote cultural diplomacy

Institutions do not merely build relationships with individual international students; they build relationships with those individuals' families, cultures, and countries that create new community-to-community connections. International educational exchanges are a form of person-to-person diplomacy that leads to long-term relationships. In the post-World War II era, higher education internationalization has been integral to cultural diplomacy as the U.S. Department of State invested in programs to enhance U.S. soft power and its status with strategic partners worldwide.

As an extension of that phenomenon, many international students feel a sense of social responsibility to represent their homeland in the U.S. and, if they feel welcomed and integrated into the U.S., they may feel a responsibility to contribute to the local community (Tran and Vu 2017). On a local level, international students on U.S. campuses bring money to the local economy that creates incentives to open new restaurants, businesses, and community organizations that serve students and diversify the cultural activities and opportunities accessible to local citizens. Promoting cultural diplomacy is not only within the purview of U.S. institutions, but it is also an opportunity to contribute to both international student inclusivity and success and the cultural and economic prosperity of the local community.

Enhance alumni networks

Many international students engage with uniquely American traditions that include college and university sports, mascots, and merchandise (gear) that show pride and membership in the university community long after graduation. This engagement builds a deep sense of commitment to graduate alma maters and can shape lives and careers beyond students' time at the institution (Glass and Gesing 2018). Alumni development is widely viewed for its value in word-of-mouth recruitment through brand ambassadors, career networking and professional development, and, to a growing extent, fundraising.

Large-scale surveys of international postgraduates indicate that only one in three international students have alumni career support; only one in three have access to some type of alumni association in their home country; and only 36 percent would recommend their university to future students (Dillon 2019). Most institutions do not track international alumni after graduation and permanently lose contact with international graduates. Alumni development does not need to be viewed solely in terms of how international students give back to institutions through recruitment and fundraising, but should be enhanced as a global network that can provide social support and connectivity to its members—including international graduates—over their lifetimes.

Foster liberal learning

Colleges and universities have a vital role in a democratic society as social institutions that promote the open and free exchange of ideas (Murray 2018). Liberal education has the potential to develop habits of mind, engage with diverse perspectives and ideas, and expand a person's sense of freedom (Nussbaum 1997). Higher education cultivates the values of critical self-examination and reasoned argument that protect society against charlatans and despots. Deep and profound learning results from well-designed international and intercultural curricula and programs that further engagement with otherness, promote cultural understanding, and fight radicalization and xenophobia. International students—and all students—benefit from the free exchange of ideas, engagement with complex inquiry, and interaction with diverse perspectives.

In a global and contemporary context, liberal education is commonly viewed as a distinctly U.S. construct (Nussbaum 1997). Requiring (especially undergraduate, but often graduate as well) students to engage with disciplines outside their major is nearly ubiquitous across traditional two- and four-year institutions. This contrasts with the more specialized, utilitarian curricula that are largely the norm outside the U.S. As such, the

U.S. is uniquely positioned to provide international students with opportunities to engage in at least multidisciplinary perspectives, and at best, interdisciplinary curricula that wrestle with real-world concerns that cannot be addressed without critical perspective, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative thinking.

Advance economic development

Employment is often the highest priority consideration for international students, especially those from the middle class who expect a good return on investment (Lu and Schulmann 2015). Multiple surveys illustrate that international students rate employment and career opportunities as the number one reason they choose to study abroad, followed by the opportunity to live in another country. Employment outcomes vary by course, level of study, and an institution's rank among prestige hierarchies (Van Mol, Caarls, and Souto-Otero 2020), but four in five international students do not have access to internships, less than half were satisfied with their university's career support, and two in three received no career guidance after graduation (Dillon 2019). A large-scale analysis of employment outcomes of international alumni from ASEAN nations found that, on average, students who had graduated from universities in Asia earned more (\$2,865 per month) than their counterparts who had studied in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., the U.S., and Europe (\$2,075 per month) within three years of graduation (Dillon 2019).

Employment is intricately linked to health and well-being. It is not just financially beneficial to individuals; employment benefits the larger society through longer life expectancies and improvements in quality of life. Popular rhetoric claims that international students take jobs from Americans, but there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. International students who remain in the U.S. do not harm Americans' wages or job opportunities (World Bank 2018).

A report from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2020) indicated that two in three recipients of H-1B visas work in technology and innovation. Major economic studies have found that for every highly skilled foreign worker added to a city, three or four related jobs are created (Moretti 2010); immigrants have been responsible for 30 percent of high-quality patents since 1976 with spillover effects to the rest of the economy (Bernstein et al. 2018); and immigrants have accounted for one-third of U.S. aggregate productivity growth and significant wage gains for college-educated U.S. residents (Peri, Shih, and Sparber 2016).

Opposition to immigration is based on the simplistic idea that adding highly skilled workers to the economy increases the labor supply and supersedes Americans' employment opportunities. The opposite is true: college-educated immigrants have a multiplier effect on the U.S. economy. They create more job opportunities for Americans and contribute to the growth of the U.S. economy, particularly in states facing a shortage of workers due to population declines and an aging workforce. International STEM graduates foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth in three major sectors: computer systems design, higher education, and the medical professions (National Science Foundation 2020). International students create jobs because they participate in the economy not just as workers, but also as consumers. Further, they sometimes launch business ventures that stimulate international trade and investment. To truly embrace a new compact for international student inclusion and success, U.S. higher education needs to take a leading role in reorienting the narrative—and opportunity—for economic development and the positive role international students and alumni play in the U.S.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF H-1B VISA HOLDERS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND BEYOND

On October 30, 2020, ACE and 23 other higher education associations filed an amicus brief supporting a pair of legal challenges to Trump administration rules that would have restricted H-1B visas for highly skilled workers and drastically increased the wage levels required for hiring H-1B employees. The proposed Departments of Labor and Homeland Security rules were eventually struck down by the U.S. District Court in California. In detail, the brief delineates the importance of H-1B visa holders to U.S. higher education institutions and students, as well as the economy and healthcare systems. It notes that the proposed rules would “inflict significant harm, immediately,” and that harm would “be felt by faculty, researchers, students, and healthcare patients, and it will hurt the critical work—and global standing and reputation—of the country’s colleges and universities. It will affect existing programs and research projects that can no longer be adequately staffed, lead to limitations in or the discontinuance of certain courses of study, narrow the pipeline for continued growth in high- and emerging-technology fields, and deter foreign students from coming to study in the United States.”¹

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PERSONA DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE

Rather than crafting an abstract vision statement or drafting a list of success metrics, we recommend using the five outcomes envisioned in this new compact to develop several student profiles that capture authentic stories of what success looks like for different international students who have taken a variety of desirable postgraduate pathways. The profiles might start as exemplar cases that can be used to explore the gap between what makes these cases exceptional and the commitment required to foster similar outcomes for all international students.

1 Brief of the American Council on Education and 23 Other Higher Education Organizations as Amici Curiae in Support of the Plaintiff’s Motion for Preliminary Injunction, *Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America v. United States Department of Homeland Security*, Case No. 4:20-CV-7331, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Amicus-brief-2-NDCa-H1B-visas.pdf>.

A Framework: Essential Elements of Inclusion and Success



A Framework: Essential Elements of Inclusion and Success

ACE developed a lifecycle model for international student inclusion and success based on *lifelong relationships* between students and institutions from the first point of contact to their postgraduate careers. For the lifecycle period during which international students are on campus, colleges and universities are not merely sites where students acquire knowledge; they are dynamic social environments teeming with possibilities and opportunities for personal, interpersonal, and academic exploration.

This section outlines the essential elements of international student inclusion and success. We focus on these key requirements with a robust base of empirical research. These include interconnected networks (on and beyond the campus), a sense of belonging, engaged learning, and life and career pathways.

Interconnected networks

Universities are “thickly” networked institutions” (Marginson 2018, 20) where students encounter people they might not otherwise meet—from peers in their courses from across the globe, to CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, to world-renowned professors. Colleges and universities are as much a physical place as they are a nexus of overlapping relationships and interconnected networks (Tran and Soejatminah 2017). They are first and foremost cultural institutions that have accumulated valuable social resources over an extended period of time. International student success requires access to those social resources to ensure that engagement with U.S. higher education is an inclusive, life-enriching opportunity (Arthur 2017).

Research about international students has emphasized the need for students to build social capital (Brunsting, Zachry, and Takeuchi 2018; Glass and Gesing 2018; Jones 2017). Although the term “social capital” is widely used, it is also widely misunderstood. Social capital is more than a “heartwarming network of social connections”; it is also the “cold reality of social inequality” (Gauntlett 2018, 128). It is a force that binds groups together (inclusion) and creates boundaries (exclusion), which can reproduce social stratification for some and facilitate social mobility for others (Naidoo 2004; Youkhana 2015).

Popular conceptions of international students as globally mobile elites with reservoirs of social capital no longer hold. Such stereotypes ignore well-documented variation in international students’ experiences shaped by demographic, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and other characteristics (Bilecen and Van Mol 2017). International students acquire social capital through full participation in university life. Full participation and inclusion allow

them to develop long-lasting knowledge, skills, and relationships aligned with the social status they hope to achieve. The more high-quality connections international students have, the easier it is for them to broaden their network and ultimately improve their social position after graduation (Pham, Tomlinson, and Thompson 2019).

Interconnected networks on campus

A new compact requires that international students have access to interconnected networks on campus. The need to be immersed in vibrant on-campus networks is not unique to international students; indeed, developing a constellation of relationships is important for all students. Domestic students, however, typically arrive on campus with a greater number of existing ties and more of an inherent, culturally based understanding of how to go about building relationships in the U.S. context. International students, however, arrive in a host country without access to many of the relationships and social networks that may have contributed to the academic success they experienced in their home country.

International students may also need a different configuration of network members, serving different purposes than their domestic counterparts. They adjust not only to the institution and college life, but to an entirely new country, culture, and infrastructure. Network members—many of whom also are included in domestic students' networks—need to be aware of international students' particular needs and be well-equipped to fulfill their role.

The development of social support networks needs to begin early—during the recruiting stage when prospective international students meet with staff, current students, alumni, or other ambassadors of the institution. Early connections form the first strands in students' networks and serve as a gateway to more connections and relationships. Our model focuses on three key relationships on campus that are important throughout the entire international student lifecycle: administrative support staff, faculty and academic administrators, and peers.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT STAFF

The international student and scholar services (ISSS) office has always been the first and most trusted point of contact for international students. ISSS professionals provide critical advice about immigration compliance and are usually equipped with cultural competencies for working with students of different nationalities. The ISSS office is typically international students' first stop and is charged with ensuring students' safe arrival and initial support.

Throughout the student lifecycle, ISSS staff continue to play a critical role, particularly in ensuring that students remain in compliance with visa regulations and procedures, are up to date on financial aid paperwork, and complete other enrollment administrative tasks. As the go-to contact for international students, and often the network members with the most holistic view of their experiences, international office staff also may be best positioned to recognize imbalances between available support and challenges that students face. This might include, for example, identifying when a student is struggling and needs more direction and resources, or when she or he is too dependent on others' assistance and needs encouragement to develop additional skills and independence.

A robust support network, however, extends far beyond the programs and services of any single office. As students settle in, connections to other resources—including student affairs, residence life, the registrar, and the health center, among others—are needed to help students manage housing issues and other day-to-day logistical concerns as well as to fine-tune and adapt their routines to fit their individual needs and preferences. Career

services staff are also important network members who provide information about career options; facilitate connections with alumni and other contacts; and host networking events, mock interviews, and other opportunities.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

PERCENTAGE OF U.S. INSTITUTIONS OFFERING CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES (2017)

ACE's *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* study (Helms and Brajkovic 2017) found that a number of activities designed specifically to facilitate international and domestic student interaction—such as buddy programs and language partner programs—had notably increased across U.S. campuses over the preceding five years. Furthermore, the study found that a considerable number of institutions offer meeting places for students interested in international topics, as well as residence hall programs that facilitate the integration of U.S. and international students. These offerings designed to facilitate leisure-time student interactions can provide opportunities for more relaxed and informal interactions between international and domestic students, leading to increased social connectedness and successful campus integration.

FACULTY AND ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS

More than any other constituent, research points to the critical role faculty play in international student inclusion and success, both as individual course instructors and as academic advisers and mentors. International students who participate in classroom dialogue, multicultural coursework, leadership programs, and discussions of current events are more likely to report more frequent interactions with faculty members (Glass, Buus, and Braskamp 2013). And because faculty are in contact with students on a weekly or daily basis, they are well-positioned to see when students are struggling (academically, personally, or otherwise) and connect them with appropriate resources and support on campus.

As they support international students navigating their coursework and academic challenges, faculty are also vital in establishing network connections. They facilitate peer networking, for example, through classroom collaborative exercises. As faculty build relationships with international students, they can introduce them to academic and industry colleagues who may be able to provide career advice and perspective in the student's field of interest. As members of the nearby community, faculty who are either from or have knowledge of similar geographic and cultural backgrounds can connect international students to resources in the local community, such as grocery stores, places of worship, and cultural events that might enrich and support an international students' daily living and sense of belonging.

Closely related to faculty, academic administrators also play an important role—indirectly and directly—in international student inclusion and success. Faculty efficacy working with international students is often dependent on their own intercultural and pedagogical skills. Indirectly, academic administrators often lead faculty development programs and are responsible for policies that reward and require faculty to prioritize their connec-

tions with international students. Directly, academic administrators are key network members for international students through their roles in writing centers, English language programs, and tutoring services. They assist international students as they acquire academic skills and learn to navigate U.S.-specific academic expectations, including academic integrity policies and conventions.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

THE WORLD STUDIES HERE

The University of Cincinnati International Services has recently launched a comprehensive professional development program for staff and faculty who work with international students called The World Studies Here. Faculty, advisers, and staff of other student services offices connect with international students throughout the year. Making sure that those professionals have opportunities to gain a comfortable level of intercultural competence and have access to up-to-date information is vital for international student success.

This program offers two workshop tracks: one for faculty and educators and a second for academic advisers and other staff who work with international students. The training covers topics like immigration basics, building cross-cultural understanding and skills, classroom strategies, and best advising practices. This program is a way for staff and faculty to develop a global perspective, to gain experience and comfort in assisting international students, and to be aware of the network of support they have in their work.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

RUTGERS ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Rutgers Academic Support program focuses primarily on first-year international students based on the belief that it provides the foundation of future academic success. The program has two phases. The first phase is a pre-arrival orientation, where university representatives travel to students' home countries to meet with incoming international students and their parents. Families learn about Rutgers' different schools, the concept of major and minors, campus facilities, and academic integrity. In the second phase, when students arrive on campus, they receive academic coaching from peer mentors. They learn how to use Blackboard, understand syllabi, develop study skills, and plan for assignments and exams. They learn about university services and facilities and meet staff from front offices to assist with their transition.

PEERS

When it comes to social connectedness and identification with an institutional community, fellow students are front and center in terms of their impact on international students. No one has more credibility with students than their peers. Peers are a fundamental source of information about campus life as well as support and encouragement throughout the student lifecycle. Connection with both host country counterparts and fellow international students—from their own country and others—is essential to international students' success.

Research underscores the relationship between a sense of belonging and international and domestic student cross-cultural interaction. Shu et al. (2020, 136) found that the presence of U.S. peers in an international student's socio-emotional support network was a significant predictor of cross-cultural adjustment. A strong U.S. peer network can be particularly useful in helping international students navigate the nuances of institutional policies, identify resources and support structures beyond the formal channels provided by administrators, and gain fluency in U.S. academic culture.

The formation of friendships with other international students has a paradoxical effect—deepening students' ethnic and national identity while simultaneously opening them to a global identity that is not exclusively connected to a specific nation-state. International students from all countries provide insights and advice on the international student experience overall, and peers from the same country are well positioned to assist with culture-specific issues that arise.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

SUPPORTING NETWORK-BUILDING

When students leave home to study abroad, they leave behind family and social networks that offer personal, emotional, and academic support. While students may stay connected to their previous networks through electronic communication, they need different or expanded networks to support them through their higher education studies and career planning.

Developing a new network is a daunting task for students living in a foreign environment. Nevertheless, they should be empowered to create an individual network—built on personal interests, needs, and relationships—and exercise their choices. The role of campus leadership can be to create a structure in which international students have exposure to potential network members, and to provide opportunities for developing networking skills that will serve students throughout their academic and professional lives. Rather than singling out international students or any group, networking programs should facilitate interaction between international and domestic students and potential network members.

Providing clear and consistent information about networking opportunities organized by the institution or community can help students put their networking skills to use. Institutions can also introduce students to faculty, alumni, board members, parents, community leaders, and other potential network members.

Students can connect with members of their campus networks through brown bag lunches, receptions, and other dedicated venues or social activities throughout the academic year. This allows students to draw in new network members from time to time and as new issues and support needs arise.

Alumni relations offices typically organize frequent networking events, both on campus and in other locations in the United States and abroad, and should be attuned to the need to include international students. Alumni can be a valuable resource at each step in developing and expanding international student support networks. They can inform decisions about academic programs and alignment with career goals and personal and financial planning throughout their long-term engagement with the institution and life experiences.

Interconnected networks beyond the campus

A new compact also requires international students' access to interconnected networks beyond the campus. Colleges and universities are communities that have built a reputation with other communities—local, national, and global. Each university is unique in this regard, and no two universities have the same histories or sets of external relationships. To ensure inclusion and success, our model focuses on five key relationships to which international students need access: city and community networks, academic and research networks, kinship and diasporic networks, alumni networks, and employer networks.

CITY AND COMMUNITY NETWORKS

International students have relationships not just with their institutions, but with the local communities that surround their campuses. A student's decision to study in the U.S. is often influenced by their image of the cultural opportunities available in an institution's city or region—its beauty, its scenery, and its diversity; the people they expect to meet; and the experiences they hope to have while abroad (Cubillo, Sánchez, and Cervio 2006). A college or university's location is a practical consideration as it defines the cost of living, the availability of familiar linguistic and ethnic communities, and personal safety and security (Forbes-Mewett 2018).

Universities, too, have relationships with cities around the world where they have alumni, recruit at local high schools, send students to study abroad, or have branch or microcampuses. The significant points of exchange for the global economy are not necessarily countries but cosmopolitan cities that make up a vast network of economic, social, and cultural reciprocity (Trujillo and Parilla 2016). Many universities are situated at the heart of these cities, fostering innovation that contributes to economic and cultural vitality (Marginson 2018). Because cities are often hubs of global economic activity that foster a highly skilled workforce, cultural diversity and tolerance, and employers offering in-demand jobs in science and technology (Hales et al. 2019), they are crucial resources for institutions to not only attract international students, but also to nurture their success.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

ONE TO WORLD IN NEW YORK CITY

One to World is a nonprofit membership organization in New York City dedicated to intercultural understanding by creating face-to-face experiences among local communities, international students, and Fulbright scholars. More than 100,000 international students and scholars come to study at New York-area institutions from more than 180 countries each year. One to World members are educational institutions in the New York area and individuals interested in taking part in cultural exchange.

One to World organizes various opportunities for New York-area residents and international students and scholars to come together to share a Thanksgiving meal, take a walk in Central Park, or attend a cultural event. The Global Classrooms program brings international students and scholars into New York City public schools to discuss their home countries and cultures. One to World also provides career counseling to international students and assists with internships and job placement.

When the organization was founded in 1977 by a group of international student services professionals at several New York-area universities, the original idea was to create a bridge between their isolated campuses and the broader community—in other words, to help international students expand their academic, cultural, and professional networks.

ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH NETWORKS

International students have relationships not just with universities, but the academic fields in which they choose to engage—another important consideration when selecting a study destination. Prospective students compare programs between institutions to find the best fit. They consider program quality, international recognition, financial support, and entry requirements (Cubillo, Sánchez, and Cervio 2006). The reputation of university faculty has a significant influence on international students' future possibilities. Academic fields are a way for international students to make global connections. Students consider whether faculty members are involved in cross-border research collaborations or have colleagues at universities worldwide where they might pursue further study through graduate programs or postdoctoral positions. In this way, faculty serve as connectors for building international research networks, either in the U.S. or other countries after graduation.

Faculty-student interactions are one of the most important aspects of international students' experience (Glass et al. 2015), and the relationships among faculty within particular fields of study serve as catalysts and sources of information about professional opportunities as well as valuable sources for graduate school and research center recommendation letters as students build academic networks beyond the campus.

KINSHIP AND DIASPORIC NETWORKS

Family members have fundamental roles in international students' lives before, during, and after their study in the U.S. International students often make choices with obligations to families in mind. Friend and family networks have a considerable influence on a student's decision to study abroad (Beech 2014, 2015). Extended family networks—both local and virtual—offer practical and emotional support once students arrive on campus. They may be particularly influential when it comes to students' academic and career decision-making. Family members provide connections and advice—and both material and moral support.

Many students may be the first in their family to attend college, where higher education is undertaken to secure social mobility for the whole family, not just the individual student. Middle-class parents and their extended families often contribute many years of financial investment—through private tutors, international school primary or secondary education tuition, and test preparation services—to send their child abroad. For many students, significant sacrifices have been made for them to study abroad to fulfill a family dream (Brooks and Waters 2015). Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of kinship relations in the lives of international students:

Below the surface, immigration's enduring root is the family. Immigration is an ethical act of, and for, the family. Immigration typically starts with the family and family bonds sustain it. Immigration will profoundly change families as well as the societies in which immigrants settle. (313)

In other words, it is essential to underscore that universities have a relationship, not only with international students but also with international students' families. Visa restrictions impact family members' ability to visit them in the U.S. and impede re-entry if they travel home. If the international student has a spouse residing with them in the U.S., government policies also influence their work status and ability to travel to/from their home country. International students' parents and families may be key influencers in their decision-making about where to attend college and obtain postgraduate opportunities. Further, families can be critical to network international students with diaspora communities in their local community and connect them with jobs in their home country after graduation.

ALUMNI NETWORKS

Colleges and universities have relationships with alumni scattered across the globe. Those relationships include both international students who have returned home or to a third country, and U.S. students who have relocated to other countries as part of their postgraduate careers, as well as increasing numbers of transnational alumni who may live in one country but work remotely in another.

Most institutions recognize they need to do more when it comes to international alumni relations, and more than half of institutions believe their approach is “not well-organized, well-resourced, well-planned, or consistent” (Academic Assembly and International Education Advantage 2017, 5). It is essential to recognize that international students' U.S. peers will also be alumni one day, so the connections that international students make while studying abroad may continue to be a postgraduation source of potential opportunities throughout their careers.

It is important for institutions to incorporate international student alumni in the recruitment process. Alumni can serve as ambassadors to connect with prospective international students and provide role models of what graduates from the university do after graduation. They also serve as critical gateways in university-to-work transitions for international students (Popadiuk and Arthur 2014). As students graduate and transition to the workforce, international alumni can be instrumental advisers on navigating visas and regulatory issues required if they choose to stay in the U.S. International alumni peers may serve as local contacts for students returning to their home countries.

Prospective students, seeking trusted information about potential universities, increasingly use websites that aggregate alumni reviews and post data about alumni job placement rates (Gai, Xu, and Pelton 2016). They use measures such as Net Promoter Score that look at alumni loyalty based on organic word-of-mouth recommendations to friends, family, and colleagues about their experience at the university (van Aart 2011). As former students who have experienced all phases of the international student lifecycle, alumni can play an essential role in providing in-depth information about the institution to prospective students.

EMPLOYER NETWORKS

Most colleges and universities have long-standing relationships with employers—locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. These relationships can serve as an important bridge between an international student’s university education and future employment. They can be leveraged to ensure that international students are directly visible to potential employers through career fairs, civic engagement, internships, and online employment platforms. Beyond businesses themselves, other organizations and members of the local community can be an essential source of employment-related support and information. For example, a chamber of commerce can provide connections to globally oriented local businesses looking to employ international students—as interns or for the longer term.

It is in everyone’s interests to maintain and strengthen these relationships. Institutions build strong reputations with employers by preparing students with the knowledge, mindset, skills, and social acumen necessary for success. Students inherit the record of success (or dissatisfaction) established by their peers who came before them. Ensuring that international students are well prepared for the work environment when they arrive will further cement institution-employer relationships and create employment pathways for future graduates—domestic and international alike.

Sense of belonging

As the total number of international migrants grew from 153 to 258 million people between 1990 and 2017, the OECD’s *Trends Shaping Education 2019* executive summary emphasized the *need to belong* as fundamental to education in a networked society:

We seem to live in a more individualistic world, with a declining sense of belonging to the traditional reference points of community, church, or workplace. At the same time, the notion of a ‘network society’ suggests that the sense of belonging is changing, not disappearing.

Belonging may be frequently discussed, but it is also frequently misunderstood. In our model, we emphasize both the “soft” (relational) and “hard” (political) aspects of belonging, which together have a serious impact on international student success and well-being.

Soft belonging

The soft aspects of belonging are relational and include feeling at home or feeling socially connected. Belonging, in this sense, is often defined simply as “a sense of ease with oneself and one’s surroundings” (May 2011, 368). At the heart of belonging is connectivity and the extent to which international students can establish ties—to a variety of constituents, within and beyond the institution. These ties provide an essential sense of community, attachment, and affiliation.

The soft aspects of belonging also include various forms of identity and experience that shape the international student, including citizenship, nationhood, ethnicity, and gender (Moreno 2006), as well as the intersections among these identities that shape how international students are perceived by U.S. peers, how they adjust to campus life, and how they are treated by administrators within campus life (George Mwangi, Changamire, and Mosselson 2019; Yao, George Mwangi, and Brown 2019). Belonging is intimately linked to a student’s evolving identity and broad range of experiences. As a result, international students do not belong to one group, culture, or place; they experience belonging across multiple contexts as they maintain social connections and negotiate identities as they move from place to place. Institutions must be attuned to these multifaceted, intersectional aspects of soft belonging. In doing so, they can elevate the wider community as a source of “social support from family, local friends, and non-local friends” that would enhance the positive effects of integration and buffer the negative effects of marginalization experienced by many international students (Ng, Wang, and Chan 2017, 22).

Hard belonging

Belonging is more than just feeling socially connected. The hard aspects of belonging are political and can have a grave impact on student well-being. These aspects are shaped by the dynamics of identity power and the ability of a student to participate in and shape the living traditions of a place (Yao, George Mwangi, and Brown 2019). Belonging becomes politicized when it is threatened in some way. The subtext of the question “where are you from?” for example, is often “why are you here?” (Selasi 2014).

Belonging is not merely international students feeling welcomed or connected to an institution (Wang et al. 2014). It is more than being tolerated or feeling accepted. It requires international students’ *voice* and *participation* in campus life (Straker 2016). It necessitates full participation in—and recognition of—the vital role of international students in shaping the university’s living tradition (May 2011; Page and Chahboun 2019). Cvetkovska, Verkuyten, and Adelman (2020) argue that “being tolerated is different from experiencing discrimination against and being accepted, and its relation to well-being and group belonging often fall[s] between those of discrimination and acceptance” (161). Tolerance may foster well-being, but it masks a lack of full acceptance and participation in university life.

Hard belonging enhances the ability of international students to mobilize and collectively articulate and advance their interests. May (2011) suggests “a sense of belonging is not built merely on the existence of a collectively shared culture but requires also the right to participate in the development of the ‘living tradition’” (368).

One mechanism for this is through an international student advisory board composed entirely of international students or occasionally with some domestic student representation. International student advisory boards give

international students a voice, create a meaningful campus leadership opportunity, and deliver valuable information to guide campus services and programs. To be effective, however, campus leadership must respond to these boards' recommendations and show how their voices are informing programmatic decisions.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

CONTESTED BELONGING: SPACES, PRACTICES, BIOGRAPHIES

Buckner and Stein (2020, 163) pose the following questions related to international student inclusion that are valuable for international student advisory boards and task forces to consider:

Voices

Who is at the table? Whose voices and experiences are represented and whose are not (and who decides this)? Whose voices might be present and represented, but still remain unheard?

Benefits

Who is presumed to benefit from internationalization? Who is the presumed subject of internationalization efforts? In particular, is the assumed target for internationalization on North American campuses a white, citizen, middle-class individual who needs (and is entitled to) exposure to the "rest of the world" for their personal and political development?

Power

Who has the power, authority, and resources to shape the direction of internationalization efforts?

Positionality

To what extent are the outcomes of internationalization framed in terms of acquiring/consuming knowledge about places and peoples, rather than questioning/deconstructing assumed knowledge, and opening up new possibilities for relating to ourselves and the world?

Legacies

What larger systems and histories is internationalization embedded within?

Engaged learning

International students place significant value on their academic experience while participating in U.S. higher education. Academic program quality is a key driver of institution choice. International students arrive on campus with high expectations for what they will learn and accomplish in the classroom, which may be magnified by pressure—real or perceived—from family, friends, and others to succeed. In this section, we explore the role of culturally engaging campus environments, learning goals, classroom practices, and support from professors and advisers.

Culturally engaging campus environments

Emphasis on *culturally engaging campus environments* highlights two critical aspects of the academic experience. First, learning is profoundly shaped by culture—through educational socialization that occurs in the formative primary and secondary years, but also through the norms of particular disciplines and fields. Second, valuable learning happens as international students integrate knowledge from multiple experiences and contexts—including internships, service-learning, the classroom, leadership programs, professional organizations, and their engagement in everyday interactions with members of their neighborhoods, houses of worship, and local communities. This is essential because we know that interdisciplinary, integrative, and internationalized experiences across multiple contexts develop long-lasting skills, thoughts, perspectives, dispositions, habits of mind, mental health, etc. (Sabic, Downey, and van Zoonen 2019).

There are many approaches to understanding cultures of learning. Museus, Zhang, and Kim (2016) outlined one framework, Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE), that highlights two interrelated aspects of creating a campus culture for international students: *relevance* and *responsiveness*. Museus, Yi, and Saelua (2017) describe *cultural relevance* as “the degree to which students’ campus environments are relevant to their cultural backgrounds and identities” and *cultural responsiveness* as “the extent to which campus programs and practices effectively respond to the needs of culturally diverse student populations” (192). The cultural relevance and responsiveness of campus environments have a profound effect on international students’ sense of belonging, persistence, and academic success (Glass and Westmont 2014).

CULTURALLY RELEVANT

Relevance focuses on the degree to which international students’ cultural backgrounds and identities are incorporated into the academic and social environment. International students’ motivations for studying abroad are not easily reducible to economic rationales; it is often about pursuing new experiences and a process of self-discovery. To aid in this discovery process, providing opportunities for international students to engage in meaningful cultural exchange and culture-focused discussions—in and outside the classroom—is critical.

Of course, international students appreciate learning about American holidays such as Thanksgiving, but they are also interested in understanding how celebrations like Diwali are expressed in local diasporic communities adjacent to their college or university. Involvement in campus organizations, community-based service, and social events in local neighborhoods presents opportunities for students to learn about the cultural communities

with which they identify, their history, and the various expressions and practices of those communities (Museus, Zhang, and Kim 2016). Inviting members of these communities into the classroom to share experiences and facilitate discussion benefits both international and domestic students.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

To be dynamic, learning environments must be *responsive* to students and reflect culturally valued knowledge, skills, and sensibilities of the rapidly changing world of work. In this view, the curriculum is more than a way of organizing information for international students to acquire. It is a sequence of experiences that allows students to build social capital and long-lasting knowledge, skills, and sensibilities that are aligned with the social status they seek to achieve and the workplaces they seek to enter (Tomlinson 2017). International education and exchange, furthermore, emphasize a form of cosmopolitanism that enables people to relate and act across national and cultural boundaries (Landorf, Doscher, and Hardrick 2018; Marginson 2018). This is an education that the American educational philosopher, author, and social activist Maxine Greene called for in *The Dialectic of Freedom* over 30 years ago—an education built upon dialogue and that requires “a special form of critical thinking . . . a powerful vision and reflection born of an awareness of a world lived in common with others” (2018, 4).

Responsiveness is not merely professors, advisers, staff, and peers responding to international students when problems arise. It also involves proactive communication from faculty to students, and students to their peers, encouraging international students to take advantage of learning opportunities and to regularly participate in campus life (Museus, Yi, and Saelua 2017). It matters if international students have a person on campus who can help answer a question, solve a problem, or assist with any challenges that might impede their academic progress.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN CULTURE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Mary Baldwin University (VA)

Course content in any discipline can be laden with assumptions about students' cultural experiences and prior knowledge. Most U.S. college students can quickly call to mind culturally embedded terms such as Bill of Rights, Social Security, or even Ben & Jerry's. For international students, these and other terms may be brand new and require some explanation. To help level these disparities in the learning environment for new international students, Mary Baldwin University developed a course covering various topics related to American history and culture. They invited faculty from business, sociology, history, women's studies, and other departments to deliver guest lectures on issues such as the U.S. census, gender, media, and civil rights. They discussed core national values and characteristics, such as Manifest Destiny, individualism, and American exceptionalism. While no single class could entirely replace an early lifetime of cultural immersion, the course provided a conceptual frame for helping international students interpret their American experience.

Classroom practices

It is important to recognize that there are significant differences between what international students may have experienced in their home academic culture—classroom practices, expectations for independent learning, and interaction between students and instructors, for example—and the academic customs, norms, and expectations in the host country. The U.S. education system values problem-solving, analytical, and critical-thinking skills; student participation; group work; and questioning, informality, equality, and even challenging what a professor presents in class (Adrian-Taylor, Noels and Tischler 2007). Students are expected to compare knowledge, synthesize information, develop essential questions, and work collaboratively with others (Lin and Scherz 2014). Instructors encourage students to articulate their own learning goals and be actively engaged in the learning process.

In contrast, some non-U.S. education systems may value tradition, authority, and hierarchy. Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) describe, for example, a Korean international student who was surprised to learn she could ask questions and express her opinions during her U.S. professor's lesson. This is not commonly seen in Korea because it is considered rude behavior if a student interrupts a professor while they are speaking. International students also often report that American society and classrooms are more “individualistic” than their home cultures (Glass, Gómez, and Urzúa 2014). Individualistic cultures tend to promote an individual's self-interest, personal autonomy, privacy, independence, and individual decision-making, while more collectivistic cultures emphasize loyalty to the group, emotional dependence on groups and organizations, less personal privacy, and the belief that group decisions are superior to individual decisions (Darwish and Huber 2003).

International student success requires that *relevant classroom practices* recognize these cultural contrasts. Inclusive instructors accommodate diverse learning styles and adapt their own expectations and behaviors as a result of diverse student populations. With this in mind, Tran (2020b) outlines a framework for teaching and learning for international students with three areas of emphasis:

- *Reciprocating*: “extending beyond mutual understanding and respect for diversity, to validate and reciprocally learn from diverse resources, experiences, and encounters of differences that international classrooms can offer” (p. xv);
- *Inclusivity*: “teaching and learning content and pedagogies are closely connected with de-Westernizing the curriculum and moving away from Euro-centric content” (p. xv); and
- *Empathy*: “sense of belonging to the classroom and university community significantly depends on the empathy local teachers and students display toward them” (p. xvi).

Support from professors

Faculty mindset about international students matters. At one end, some faculty members may perceive international students to be an unwelcome challenge—perhaps because of students' language abilities, different learning styles, or cultural norms. At the other end, faculty may welcome the diverse perspectives and life experiences that international students bring to the classroom.

Even if classroom interactions with faculty members are reported to be positive, a high percentage of international students do not feel that they have enough interactions with faculty during office hours or outside of class (Roy, Lu, and Loo 2016). To solve this problem, Heng (2018) suggests that faculty and institutions should encourage open-door policies for international students and engage them in additional office hour meetings.

By doing this, students could be better prepared for class and assignments, instructors could create a more welcoming environment, and together they could revisit the classroom expectations that best facilitate learning in the U.S. academic environment. In addition, ACE's 2017 *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* data suggest some faculty take advantage of development opportunities, such as workshops on teaching and integrating international students, to better work with and support students from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Glass et al. (2017) add an emphasis on the importance of interactions with professors as “bridges of belonging” to out-of-class co-curricular engagement, especially for first-generation international students. Research suggests that satisfaction declines as the proportion of international students from families where no parent has an earned college degree increases due to the lack of support services commensurate with the needs of first-generation international students (Garrett 2015).

Promoting an institution-wide sense of shared responsibility to help international students succeed will reinforce the sense of connection, belonging, and opportunities for success. Incentives (e.g., stipends for faculty to participate in professional development opportunities focused on supporting international students or developing their own intercultural competence); awards (e.g., International Student Mentor of the Year); and policies that promote campus inclusivity are useful mechanisms to acknowledge and celebrate meaningful contributions to international student success.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

EAIE PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE: SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Key information to be included in a partnership agreement with international graduate student advisees:

- Length of contract and benefits
- Rights and responsibilities of the doctoral student, supervisor(s), and the institution
- Expected student workload and quality standards
- Milestone plan and timeline (research proposal, data collection, draft chapters, etc.)
- Feedback style and frequency
- Research ethics and integrity
- Intellectual property ownership
- Conference and workshop attendance and funding
- Publication arrangements, co-authoring practices, and publication costs
- Options for potential conflict mediation

(EAIE 2020)

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ONLINE EDUCATION

COVID-19 and long-term trends in online education mean universities will have to adapt to new virtual mobilities with innovative approaches to education (Choudaha and van Rest 2018). Universities need to not just focus on how to bring back international students after the pandemic, but also how to reach out to new generations of students through a seamless and well-designed combination of online and face-to-face education. Tran (2020a) posed these and other critical questions as universities pursue new forms of online education:

- “How do we integrate and capitalize on international students’ diverse transnational knowledge, cultural, professional, and language resources in enriching the curriculum and pedagogy in online delivery?” (para. 29)
- “To what extent has international education become more inclusive for non-mobile students and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds in an increasingly virtual world?” (para. 32)

Life and career pathways

A focus on *life and career pathways* highlights that belonging is about the *routes* students take through the university, not just the *roots* they plant at the university (Youkhana 2015). This subtle, but significant emphasis reframes notions that belonging is just about helping international students adjust to campus life or build friendships with host students. Indeed, this might be true if universities were a destination, but they are, in fact, gateways to future opportunities.

The challenge, however, is that higher education worldwide stratifies the opportunities afforded to globally mobile students (Glass, Streitwieser, and Gopal 2019; Marginson 2018), which results in stratified private economic benefits for graduates. The hierarchy of opportunity is codified in increasing reliance on and the influence of university rankings for elite student mobility (Hazelkorn 2018). The evidence of this hierarchy is clear in the persistent access gap between students in the top and bottom family income quartiles at the world’s most prestigious institutions.

Bilecen and Van Mol (2017) state the issue clearly: “inequalities in opportunities and outcomes are intrinsically connected” (1241). Higher education scholars assert that the worldwide university system is structured to produce and reproduce inequality, not just in *outcome*, but also and more importantly, in *opportunity*. Too often, international students do not have the same *opportunities* as U.S. students, so colleges and universities must offer a well-organized sequence of experiences that create ever-deepening knowledge, effective information delivery throughout the student lifecycle, and culturally relevant and responsive career planning that helps international students improve their social position after graduation.

Sequenced experiences

There are multiple routes to cross-cultural adaptation and goal attainment (Yang, Noels, and Saumure 2006). The word *opportunity* is defined as “a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something” (Oxford University Press 2020). Like the well-worn footpaths on campus, pathways of opportunities are how international students get to where they are going; they offer a sense of purpose and progression. International students are interested in programs that offer a strong promise of employability, and a digital academic record that is portable, reflective of their achievements, and instantly verifiable. Pathways may include qualifications, credentials, portfolios, awards, memberships, résumé achievements, connections, and experiences that contribute to those ends.

A large-scale analysis of International Student Barometer (ISB) data indicate the five elements for pathways of opportunity that are most strongly associated with postgraduate goal achievement:

- Making good contacts for the future (social connections)
- Learning what will help me to get a good job (employability)
- Organized and smooth-running courses (course organization)
- Accommodation features and amenities (social facilities)
- Design and quality of the campus buildings (campus buildings) (*ICEF Monitor* 2019)

The top three elements highlight the importance of employability skills, future job prospects, and the learning experience. However, no two international students will follow the same pathway. International students should be provided resources to map their individual trajectories to fulfill their *educational purposes* and *life transformation* (Tran 2016).

Effective information delivery

Institutions must provide information and resources that allow international students to navigate complex institutions and make informed choices about opportunities that affect their future. They also need markers to help them know when they have reached milestones, whether it be through awards, specialized credentials, or other means. A comprehensive approach ensures that academic, career, and financial planning are part of the same process to help students achieve their international study goals. Multiple forms of delivery are needed—from websites, printed information sheets, social media, personalized emails, information sessions, and in-person conversations. At all stages of the international student lifecycle, clear and easily accessible information is key to students’ adaptation, success, and decision-making.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

FOUR TYPES OF INFORMATION

Four types of information provide a well-rounded foundation for international students as they gain a foothold on life on a U.S. campus:

Type 1: Facts, lists, rules, and procedures.

Typically, these are presented in written documents and manuals and serve as useful points of reference—initially and on an as-needed basis.

Type 2: Instructions and “how-tos” (i.e., what to do with the facts, lists, rules, and procedures).

How-tos might be presented in concert with the relevant Type 1 information in written documents, but may also be complex enough to require discussion and multiple contact points.

Type 3: Insights on culture.

When it comes to their application, concrete facts and information are often embedded in a web of culturally specific nuances that are key to international students gaining a full understanding of their implications. Group conversations around these issues, involving both international and domestic students, can provide learning opportunities for everyone involved.

Type 4: Sources of support.

Students need to know where to turn when information of Types 1–3 is not enough to provide clarity, or when they encounter roadblocks or challenges. Making students aware of the availability of support through various venues—printed, online, and in-person—will help ensure that it is readily available when students need it. More is better, and repetition and reinforcement are beneficial.

An integrated approach means attending to the international student lifecycle before, during, and after enrollment—including active engagement as alumni. It matters not just what information is provided but also when it is provided, how it is provided, and who is involved in the process. Online connections through social media and sites dedicated to matriculating students are an increasingly important source of information for prospective international students (Sin and Kim 2013). Just-in-time information is delivered when students are likely to be dealing with issues. Providing information in multiple communication channels—websites, webinars, print, live presentations—ensures that students can access it when and how they need it. A single repository of information is especially helpful for students to reference on demand. Finally, institutions should consider *involving* international students in developing and designing orientation materials, providing online orientation sessions, or delivering on-campus workshops about special topics they feel are essential.

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Institutional characteristics and statistics

- Location characteristics (e.g., urban/rural/suburban)
- Accessibility
- Facilities
- Ranking
- Graduation rates
- Alumni employment rates

Admissions procedures

- Required information
- Minimum test scores
- Acceptance rates
- Application deadlines
- When notification of application status will be received
- Whom to contact with questions

Visas

- How to apply for a visa
- What needs to be done to maintain visa status

Academics

- What academic programs are available?
- Do academic programs require a special application?
- How grades are determined and GPAs are calculated
- How to declare a major and minor
- Prerequisites, general education requirements and how to fulfill them
- Research opportunities
- Faculty profiles and qualifications
- Role of academic advisers
- How to access support (e.g., English language instruction, writing help, presentations, and public speaking)

In the classroom

- Active learning, (e.g., how to contribute effectively to class discussions, use of Socratic method)
- Attendance expectations
- Expectations for out-of-class preparation (e.g., how thoroughly to read material versus skimming)
- Student-faculty relationships (e.g., level of formality)
- How to contest a grade

Student life

- Co-curricular programs
- Student organizations
- How to participate and join co-curricular programs and student organizations
- Cultural expectations and guidelines for peer interactions (e.g., dating, sexual harassment, hate speech, discrimination)
- Role of student affairs professionals
- Where to report problems and incidents (e.g., with discrimination, sexual harassment)

Financing

- Tuition
- Room and board
- Other fees
- When fees need to be paid
- Other expected expenses (e.g., books, living expenses, insurance)
- Financial aid policies and availability
- How to apply for financial aid
- Availability of external grants
- Possibility of working (on and off campus)
- Tax requirements and how to pay taxes, if applicable

Health and safety

- Crime information for the surrounding area
- Where to report an incident
- Where to obtain medical care (mental and physical)
- How to purchase and use insurance
- How to fill a prescription
- Cultural expectations for the doctor/patient relationship

Logistics and procedures

- Housing options and what to consider in choosing where to live
- Transportation
- Options for food
- Where to shop (on and off campus)
- Registering for classes
- How to obtain a transcript
- Setting up a bank account
- Where to purchase or borrow textbooks

Work and career

- Visa requirements and application process in the U.S. and other countries
- How to decide on a career path (e.g., use of interest inventories)
- Opportunities for internships and how to apply for them
- Academic requirements for particular professions
- When and how to apply to graduate school
- How to apply for a job (e.g., cover letter and resume format, interview process, negotiating salary)
- Workplace culture and expectations
- Community resources and relationships
- Cultural organizations
- Faith communities
- How to access or join faith communities
- Institutionally sponsored programs (e.g., homestay programs)
- Opportunities for community service
- Key characteristics of U.S./local culture

Alumni engagement

- How to access the alumni database and how to engage with alumni (e.g., for informational interviews)
- Role of the alumni and development offices
- How to provide updated contact information to the institution after graduation
- Opportunities to engage with the institution and other alumni (e.g., local alumni association chapters and events, on-campus events, reunions)
- How to contribute to annual giving and other fundraising campaigns

Career planning

International students' decision to study abroad is often viewed as a financial investment to improve career prospects (Choudaha and Hu 2017). The up-front investment in higher education is significant for international students and their families, and the return-on-investment matters. But employment is just one part of an ongoing life project shaped by international students' aspirations, social responsibilities, and ethical commitments (Pham 2020; Tran 2016). Therefore, career planning is about more than finding a job; it is a process for "international students to realize their aspiration to become more advanced in their profession and enhance their future social and economic positioning" as a "designer of their own professional life" (Tran 2016, 14).

International students often need significant on-campus career and professional development support. The career decision-making process, in general, is often more complicated for international students than for their U.S. peers. It can involve weighing and comparing career and lifestyle opportunities in both home and host, or third, countries and cultures—and potentially making difficult trade-offs (Arthur and Flynn 2011). Family members and a sense of family obligation add insight and complexity to international students' career trajectory (Singaravelu, White, and Bringaze 2005), and the desire to contribute to one's community often factors heavily in students' decisions (Wu and Wilkes 2017).

Career services can help international students identify professional interests and life design goals, weigh decision factors, explore undergraduate majors/minors and graduate specialties or research opportunities, develop skills needed for job and graduate school applications, and connect them to career pathways. Institutions must invest in career advising to assist international students in securing employment or researching opportunities after graduation—recognizing that the skills and knowledge career advising professionals need may extend beyond their training to support domestic students.

Faculty and academic mentors are also vital for facilitating contact with potential employers, graduate schools, and research centers. Faculty provide information and connections to professionals in their disciplines, while academic advisers can help students map out a course plan that positions them to pursue desired professions. Both faculty and advisers can help students reflect on and frame their curricular and co-curricular experiences for interviews, applications, and life design.

The job search process itself presents an array of challenges, including managing expectations, a need for purposeful planning, and navigating country-specific immigration policies. Clear goals and a road map for achieving them can help international students take advantage of available opportunities and resources, maximize the benefit of their time on campus, ensure they are devoting energy to the activities that will help them reach their goals, and make anxieties and future unknowns feel more manageable.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

International students often arrive with high hopes of obtaining on- or off-campus jobs and accessing internships through curricular practical training (CPT) during their studies, or optional practical training (OPT) and academic training programs after graduation. Success, or lack thereof, in this area can color a student's entire educational experience; indeed, international students consistently cite the lack of access to jobs and internships as the number one reason for dissatisfaction with their institutions (Schulte and Choudaha 2014). Yet career services professionals report that international students often have unrealistic assumptions about how enrolling in a U.S. institution will affect their access to jobs and internships (Loo 2016). To manage expectations for all parties, institutions need to be transparent and consistent in communicating requirements and goals among international students, faculty, academic advisers, international advisers, and career counselors.

PURPOSEFUL PLANNING

It is important to proactively plan a course of study that fosters international students' success. However, a defining characteristic—and strength—of U.S. higher education is the opportunity for students to explore academic, co-curricular, and career interests. In some cases, international students may arrive on campus with very set plans about what they intend to study, and career paths that may have been dictated by family or previous experiences. Over-planning may cause them to miss opportunities to explore other interests—whether alternatives to what they expected to focus on academically or professionally, or co-curricular activities and personal interests before and after graduation.

Overall, a balance is needed between planning that sets students on a path to achieve their long-term goals and allowing for flexibility to explore other areas and interests that may contribute to their process of self-discovery and identity formation. Adaptability is also essential, helping students learn to re-calibrate when things do not go as planned, e.g., a course is full, or a schedule conflict occurs.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT IN THE U.S. AND BEYOND

Multiple layers of knowledge and skills are required to obtain employment in different countries successfully. In a study of international postgraduate employment, Pham, Tomlinson, and Thompson (2019) found that, “graduate migrants faced various challenges in the target labor market, and to successfully secure employment it was important for them to develop key forms of capital—i.e., excellent technical knowledge, relationships with ‘significant others,’ strong career identity and psychological resilience, and exercise agency in interlinking these capitals so that they could make use of their strengths and weaknesses” (394).

Research shows that (1) working in the U.S. using OPT or academic training and then returning home, (2) pursuing further education in the U.S., and (3) staying and working in the U.S. as long as possible are the top three options international students pursue after graduation (Loo, Lu, and Ye 2017). International students considering careers in the U.S. need to develop an understanding of overall labor market dynamics, the types of internships and opportunities available in their fields, how to establish professional connections and networks, what to include on a résumé, how interviews are conducted, and a variety of other aspects of the application process.

Institutions also need to prepare international students for inclusion-related challenges they may face. U.S. employers may be reticent about hiring international graduates because of legal complexities. U.S.-based

employers also cited work authorization and visa regulations as significant barriers to hiring international students for either internships or full-time jobs. Although international students are lauded as exemplars of entrepreneurial success, they also need to be prepared to enter a U.S. corporate world where they may encounter racial and ethnic inequalities that inhibit upward mobility (Chin 2020).

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

ADVOCACY FOR IMMIGRATION POLICY

College and university presidents were critical to advocacy successes during the Trump administration, and will continue to be important in the Biden administration and with the 117th Congress. One example is the public statements and advocacy carried out by presidents and chancellors with congressional delegations in response to the July 6, 2020 Immigration and Customs Enforcement guidance regarding international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, which ultimately helped prompt the withdrawal of that guidance.² Statements, letters, and advocacy activities by national higher education associations such as ACE and NAFSA: Association of International Educators can provide a resource for presidents and chancellors seeking to amplify and advance national advocacy efforts around international students and policies. Presidential and institutional statements are critical ways universities can advocate for international student success.

ACE launched the **Remember the Dreamers** website in early 2020 to help amplify campus stories of Dreamers, share resources with campuses, and advance higher education community advocacy efforts on behalf of Dreamers. The #YouAreWelcomeHere campaign, which began in 2016 at Temple University, has drawn participation from more than 300 U.S. higher education institutions. These are just two examples of public awareness initiatives that demonstrate association and institutional advocacy and cross-campus collaboration in action.

2 ACE community letter to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security regarding July 6 Immigration and Customs Enforcement guidance on international students and the 2020–21 academic year, July 10, 2020 (<https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-DHS-ICE-Fall-2020-Guidance-071020.pdf>).

PRACTICE PERSPECTIVES

ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI

As international students graduate and pursue careers in the U.S. and other parts of the world, they carry with them the institution's core values and often a sense of institutional loyalty. The alumni office can create opportunities for them to engage with one another, and with current students and faculty at the home campus, in order to form a robust network for their own and the institution's lifelong advancement.

Tracking Alumni: University of California, Irvine (UCI)

In 2016–18, the UCI Alumni Association focused on three core strategies that it believes will be crucial to impacting the alumni community's desire to share their time, talent, and treasure. Strategy 1 is to bridge local, national, and international alumni with the UCI community. Strategy 2 is to build a culture of alumni engagement across UCI that begins before a student's first days on campus. Strategy 3 is to support the careers of UCI alumni and students.

Volunteers: University of Michigan Ann Arbor

International alumni work for the Alumni Association as volunteers. They play a vital role in connecting with prospective and admitted international students in their countries. Alumni volunteers provide guidance on what to expect from the campus culture, help students get answers to their questions quickly, and address students' concerns about moving to—and living in—the United States.

New Student Send-Offs: New York University (NYU)

New Student Send-Offs are a series of casual gatherings held in students' home countries to make friends and build community before international students arrive on campus. Send-Offs are hosted by local NYU families and alumni. Parents and new students hear about the NYU experiences of alumni and have a chance to ask questions.

Ambassadors: The University of Rhode Island (URI)

Global Alumni Ambassadors serve as contacts for URI alumni, faculty, and students who are traveling or living in their regions. Ambassadors plan networking events, exhibit at college fairs, and communicate with prospective students and their families.

University of Minnesota

The Office of International Student and Scholar Services provides current international students with [international alumni job search stories](#). A list of suggestions for things international students and graduates should do while looking for a job is also included.

University of California, Berkeley

The Berkeley Career Center provides current international students with international alumni success stories.

The Launch: Embarking on a Lifelong Relationship



The Launch: Embarking on a Lifelong Relationship

This section outlines a launch plan for colleges and universities to embark on a lifelong relationship with international students that spans their entire academic lifecycle with the institution. It comes at the end of this monograph for two reasons. First, recruiting international students is often an institution's key internationalization focus. We wanted to illustrate, however, that international student recruitment and enrollment is but one part of the engagement U.S. higher education has with students from abroad. To achieve sustainable, responsive, humanistic, and equitable international student success, institutions must devote more attention, resources, and commitment to the broader outcomes and essential elements articulated by this compact. Second, the launch, coming at the end of this monograph, signifies not only the conclusion, but also the beginning and ongoing nature of learning, dialogue, and action that centers international students. Our lifecycle model begins and ends with a focus on building lifelong relationships that colleges and universities can use as the framework for inclusion and success in their planning and recruitment efforts.

A focus on building lifelong relationships involves full recognition of how many international students the institution can support; it focuses on the composition of the entire student body, so that ethnic and cultural diversity contributes to the institution's learning mission; it requires *domestic* students, faculty, and staff to develop inclusive intercultural competence; and it requires a commitment to lifelong relationship-building with international students, their families, and their communities. The launch part of the model focuses on three essential elements of building lifelong relationships with international students: enrollment planning, student decision factors, and facilitating fit.

Enrollment planning

Going forward, institutions will need to geographically diversify their international student recruitment profiles—both to increase equitable global diversity on campus and to account for shifts in global student mobility trends. For example, the international enrollment boom of the last 20 years has been driven overwhelmingly by growth in students from China who are seeking an on-campus U.S. experience. For years, China has lacked a sufficient number of universities to meet the demand of middle-class families seeking a college education. But that capacity is growing, reducing the need for students to leave home in order to pursue a degree. Further, data now illustrate that Chinese students who study in the U.S. struggle to find jobs when they return home. If wage disparities continue to indicate that Chinese students earn a premium if they attend universities in ASEAN countries over traditional Western destinations (Dillon 2019), pressures to diversify U.S. international student enrollment will persist and intensify.

Institutions need to be agile as they adapt their enrollment plans. They must recruit international students from a wider range of countries while developing innovative academic programs (majors and minors) that will appeal

to new generations of more budget-focused, career-oriented international students (Fischer 2020). It is critical to revisit assumptions about factors that have driven enrollment in the past, compared with the factors influencing enrollment patterns for new generations of international students. New generations of international students are asking: What new opportunities are available to me here? What life and career pathways are possible? With which communities can I engage during my time on campus and beyond? Are international students involved? Do they have a voice here? Are they heard? Is this a community where I will belong?

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

PREDICTORS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' RECOMMENDATION OF THEIR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

Ammigan (2019) analyzed data from 45,000 international students at 96 different institutions globally who completed the International Student Barometer (ISB) on four dimensions of satisfaction variables as predictors of institutional recommendation. The results show that, while academic achievement and career development often take center stage when it comes to international students' goals and intentions for studying abroad, the practice of establishing a sense of belonging is the foundation for international students' overall adjustment and success.

ARRIVAL VARIABLES (RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE):

- Accommodation office
- Social activities

LIVING VARIABLES (RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE):

- Making friends from this country
- Networking
- Quality of the external campus environment
- Immigration and visa advice
- Transport links
- Availability of financial support

LEARNING VARIABLES (RANKED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE):

- Studying with people across cultures
- Organization of course
- Leading to a good job
- Opportunities for work experience
- Teaching ability of lecturers
- Academic content
- Quality of lectures
- Physical library facilities
- Career guidance from academic staff
- Access to academic staff
- Improve English language skills

Student decision factors

On the whole, issues of academic quality, reputation, and career prospects predominate the decision factors most important to new generations of international students. Studies underscore the importance of these factors with variations that include rankings, quality of staff, variety of degree programs, availability of internship opportunities, and alumni job placement rates (Falcone 2019; Gai, Xu, and Pelton 2016; Mazzarol and Soutar 2002). Taking these factors into account on par with the framework of inclusion and success outlined previously, we suggest five key decision factors that international students consider when they select a country and institution to pursue their studies: safety, program quality, affordability, country reputation, and employment opportunities.

Safety

A sense of safety and security is a basic human need (Maslow 1943). Students seek institutional settings where they feel welcomed and where they are comfortable participating in activities on campus and in the surrounding community. Safety, however, is a growing priority for international students—particularly for those from Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, who are four times more likely to cite safety concerns than students from Europe (Chow 2011).

The U.S. is considered far less safe than alternative destinations like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom (IDP Education 2019). Perceptions of safety—on and beyond the campus—may be shaped as students scroll through social media feeds and see news stories about American gun culture, political unrest, and school shootings. Many students are perplexed by the right to bear arms codified in the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, especially if their home country has strict gun control laws, and may see this as a significant threat to their safety.

Often, international students have been drawn to institutions in cities with a vibrant social life, various cultures and languages, and travel opportunities (Tran and Pham 2016). However, safety concerns have sparked a growing interest in colleges and universities in rural areas with low crime rates and that are far away from large, urban metroplexes that have received media attention for gun violence and civil unrest.

Program quality

General university reputations matter, but the quality of individual academic programs is also a crucial factor in the international student decision-making process (Hobsons 2014). New generations of students are gravitating toward more specialized majors and graduate programs that offer a strong promise of employability. Institution rankings remain a vital part of the equation for many students, as well as insights from friends and family (Hazelkorn 2018; Pusser and Marginson 2011). However, subject rankings often outweigh institution rankings when prospective students are deciding between institutions.

A major survey by World Education Services highlights the value prospective international students place on academic programs that lead to employment. The “availability of a desired program” was the top deciding factor for both bachelor’s and master’s students for international students from all regions, followed by “institutional reputation,” and then “earning potential after graduation,” although students from China weighted institutional

ranking more highly than students from other countries (Roy, Lu, and Loo 2016, 8). Teaching quality is often the most important deciding factor once international students narrow their choices to two institutions, with nine in 10 international students citing it as most important in their final decision (Hobsons 2014).

Affordability

U.S. higher education costs remain a perennial challenge in attracting international students (Choudaha 2020). Fifty-five percent of institutions cite cost as one of the reasons for decreasing new student enrollment (Baer 2018); tuition is the number one reason international students decline admission offers (Hobsons 2014). The value-for-money calculus weighs the reasonableness of cost against its perceived quality (Choudaha 2020). Given relatively high-cost U.S. universities versus emerging educational hubs in other locations, the availability of affordable health care, scholarships, fellowships, work-study opportunities, discounts, and other forms of financial support matter a great deal to international students. Creating further challenges, currencies in some key emerging economies have devalued against the U.S. dollar. For example, for Indian undergraduates, the cost of attendance in 2018–19 increased by at least 30 percent as compared with 2014–15 (Choudaha 2020).

The stakes (both real and perceived) of finding a good financial fit are high; enrolling at an institution abroad entails substantial “sunk costs”—money, time, and emotion—and the “switching costs” of leaving an institution and enrolling elsewhere are considerable. Aware of this reality, students often embark on the selection process with a relatively high anxiety level. International students may not qualify for U.S. federal financial aid, but that does not mean they are not borrowing from relatives or family friends to finance living costs, tuition fees, and health care. There has been a marked uptick in both the number of borrowers and the amount of money borrowed.

While cost may not be a top driver of institution choice for all international students, it is, by necessity, a heavier consideration for new generations of students with limited financial means who often consider their decision in terms of value-for-money. In a sign of increasing focus on investment return, “when students are asked to make decisions and choose the most important attribute that could influence their perception of teaching quality, they choose tuition fees” (Hobsons 2014, 34). In addition to favoring institutions with lower tuition rates, less wealthy students are more apt to factor availability of scholarships and other financial aid into their decisions; in some cases, relative geographic proximity may come into play to minimize travel costs (Tan 2015).

Country reputation

Beyond individual institutions, the reputation of the overall higher education system certainly influences decision-making. However, other factors beyond education also shape an international student’s image of a country. Large-scale surveys indicate that the U.S. is considered the highest-quality educational system but also the least affordable and the least safe—with the most complicated visa process—compared with major destinations such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (IDP Education 2019). Current issues impacting the reputation of the U.S. include onerousness and uncertainty of visa requirements; anti-immigrant politics; currency exchange rates and affordability; hopes and doubts about job prospects; and concerns about race relations, gun violence, and fears of civil unrest. Recent surveys from the Institute of International Education (IIE) indicate that international student concerns about U.S. visa delays and denials, as well as safety and the American political environment, have increased in recent years (Baer 2018; Sanger and Baer 2019).

Employment and internship opportunities

International students are guided by the opportunity to participate in internships, as well as by long-term U.S. employability prospects after graduation. This is especially true when they compare the U.S. with alternative destinations like Canada that have more generous postgraduation immigration and employment options. Further, international students' "motivation to engage in intercultural connectedness is linked to not only their desire for respect and recognition for intellectual, cultural, and linguistic capacities and diversities, but also for employment aspirations . . . intercultural engagement is seen to encompass not only empathy, sociability, and equity but also employability" (Tran and Pham 2016, 560). Thus the nuanced reasons that international students consider their study abroad experiences valuable go beyond acquiring internships and employment; they also reflect students' desire to develop an intercultural skillset that may influence their future employability.

Finding fit

Finding a mutual fit is the primary goal of the admissions process, and it is the first step in the international student lifecycle. Students need to find a college or university that offers academic programs that will improve their social position and allow them opportunities for personal learning and development. Institutions seek a diverse and balanced class composed of students they can support and who are likely to succeed.

While the objective of finding the right fit is the same, the process of selecting an institution often plays out quite differently for international students than for their U.S. peers. The decision process for prospective international students is influenced by a robust migration industry that comprises international student recruitment teams, international education agents, and other institutions selling higher education overseas. The policies that impact international student recruitment span "multiple government agencies or ministries, encompassing different policy fields. This requires greater policy coordination, which remains elusive for the most part" (Sá and Sabzalieva 2018, 231). All of this is increasingly challenging for students and families to navigate; deliberate and well-planned recruiting approaches are necessary on the part of institutions to ensure mutual fit. Here we emphasize the need for a recruitment process that is family oriented, Internet first, and third-party informed.

Family oriented

Education migration is often a family decision, not just an individual choice. Because regular communication with family is part of international student life, institutions need to form relationships with extended families (parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents, spouses, and children), not just individuals. International students "do not operate within a vacuum but rather draw upon extended networks of individuals who have chosen to do so themselves or advocate studying abroad" (Beech 2015, 332). International students ultimately make a decision about where to study in conjunction with family and friends who may hold different views of the desirability of different destinations. Their choice is shaped by images from the media, news reports, and firsthand experiences students hear from networks of extended family members and friends (Beech 2014; Tan 2015).

Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014) found a significant network effect overlooked in the literature:

As for other migration flows (like economic migrations), the factors measuring the costs of migration are statistically significant and economically meaningful. In particular, we find a strong network effect. The presence of country nationals at the destination tends to act as a magnet for international students. Interestingly, this effect is found to increase with the level of education of the network at the destination. The higher the level of education of migrants already present in the host country, the higher the flow of students of the same nationality. The effects of diaspora outweigh the traditional role of previous colonial ties. Students tend to move more to the former colonizer, not explicitly because of these direct colonial ties, but because they can rely on people from their origin country. (51)

A country's location and social heritage particularly matters to families in culturally conservative parts of the world who want their children to maintain their cultural values. Hence, cultural and geographical proximity have become increasingly influential forces reshaping global migratory flows, pulling students away from traditional destinations toward emerging regional hubs (Gesing and Glass 2018; Kondakci, Bedenlier, and Zawacki-Richter 2018). A large-scale analysis of international student migration patterns indicated that “relational ties created by colonial linkages, common language, and preexisting migrant stocks” (Perkins and Neumayer 2014, 246) were far more influential than countries' university quality.

Family concerns are particularly important for graduate students. Graduate students with spouses need to think of their partner's well-being and career, and they also may be responsible for the caretaking of children. For students with families, decisions about where to study often involve long conversations and negotiations of shared compromise and sacrifice (Anderson 2013). The entire family bears the costs of—and stands to benefit from—international study, and thus is often heavily invested in all aspects of the decision and outcome. Visa restrictions might mean a well-educated spouse puts their career on hold only to later return to the labor market after a prolonged absence. Spouses also add complexity to career planning, since one partner may secure a job while the other partner may have an uncertain job outlook or better job prospects in another country. Choices for a students' child dependents (primary/secondary education, childcare, health care, etc.) can have significant influence on the challenges they navigate while studying in the U.S.

Ultimately, students themselves need to weigh the unique constellation of these variables inherent in their own families and experiences. Institutions, however, can help prospective students by including family members in information sessions and activities, and providing clear information about opportunities for families on campus and in the surrounding community.

Internet first

Domestic and international students differ considerably in terms of how they learn about and select an institution. Domestic students often visit the institutions they are considering in-person—perhaps multiple times—to talk directly with admissions staff, faculty, and current students about institutional characteristics and generally get a feel for the campus. They are also likely to have access to family, friends, and community members—including alumni—who have direct experience with the institution and can answer questions and provide additional perspectives on its strengths and weaknesses.

International students, however, often choose an institution sight unseen. Without the benefit of an immersive visit to campus, they typically must cobble together various types of information from multiple sources to form an overall impression of the institution. A recent study of international students (hailing from a range of countries, but studying in the U.K.) found, for example, the most often-accessed source of information about international study was the institutional website and/or school representatives (32 percent) followed by educational counselor/agent (27 percent) (Dillon 2019).

Social media also plays a critical role. With good reason, 85 percent of international students use it to research and compare universities (QS 2019). Social media allows communication in a prospective student's preferred language, can adapt to students' communication styles, and enables faster interaction across geographic boundaries (Sleeman, Lang, and Lemon 2016). Research conducted by Gai, Xu, and Pelton (2016) indicates that many Chinese international students, for example, use ChaseDream, a social forum popular among students who plan to apply for business programs in U.S. institutions. They use the platform as a resource hub for preparing applications, studying for exams, and sharing experiences related to housing and job searches. The forum is an online community that links applicant peers, current students in the programs, and alumni.

Relying on multiple sources of information, however, may mean that prospective international students do not have the comprehensive details needed to assess fit. As they plan recruitment strategies, institutions can assuage this challenge by using an intentional, human-centered Internet-first strategy. Surveys show, for example, that live videos from faculty, staff, alumni, and students are especially influential in international students' decision process. Social media is not just a way to share information, manage inquiries, and build a brand; it is also a powerful tool to listen and engage in conversations with prospective students. International staff can listen for and start conversations around issues of safety, program quality, affordability, and internship opportunities. An Internet-first strategy can be used to help prospective students and their families experience campus life and assess fit without ever stepping foot on the campus.

International staff should also keep abreast of the third-party websites international students are using to evaluate and compare universities. They can monitor organic word-of-mouth recommendations of alumni through Net Promoter Score and other aggregators to understand what graduates are sharing about their university's safety, program quality, affordability, and pathways to employment.

Third-party informed

International education has become a big business. It is part of a worldwide migration industry composed of a sprawling set of third-party educational intermediaries. These include traditional information providers like EducationUSA, but also recruitment agents and for-profit companies that host online search platforms.

Ideally, agents act as cultural mediators who provide and filter information and facilitate ethical decision-making processes (Robinson-Pant and Magyar 2018). However, concerns have been raised about their effectiveness, communication, ethics, and quality (Huang, Raimo, and Humfrey 2016). For example, Dillon (2019) reports that 62 percent of international students receive unreliable advice from international student agents; simultaneously, prospective students often lack information to determine whether the agent has provided appropriate services (Zhang and Hagedorn 2011).

Even when agents have contact with institution representatives (e.g., recruiting staff), the information they relay to prospective international students may be generic and untailored to the specific needs and priorities of different audiences. This may mean that international students lack access to information about the institutional characteristics that are most important to them. For instance, respondents to a World Education Services survey

indicated that students from Africa were much more likely to be interested in information about financial aid than respondents from other regions; respondents from the Middle East were the most likely to express interest in student services, including campus safety; and respondents from Asia and Oceania were most interested in information about career prospects after graduation. Recruiting mechanisms that fail to provide such nuanced information may ultimately hinder institutions' efforts to attract international students (Choudaha, Orosz, Chang 2012).

Institutions that choose to use agents should think carefully about the return on investment, as well as the quality of service and information they can provide to prospective international students (Huang, Raimo, and Humfrey 2016). For institutions, maintaining close contact with agents is critical, as are carefully defined strategies for collaboration and recruitment that align with the institution's values and this new compact.

RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

ROLE OF SENIOR INTERNATIONAL OFFICER (SIO) FOR VISION SETTING

The SIO or the equivalent campus leader may not oversee every element of the international student experience. Still, they have a vital role as chief advocate and facilitator, ensuring that many offices and units work together to deliver information, strengthen networks, and help international students plan for their education and beyond.

The SIO or director of the international students office is typically the lynchpin and organizer of such a campus-wide support network. A key function of this work is to identify and engage colleagues to underscore the importance of their roles in international students' networks. Coordination by the international student and scholar services director or internationalization leader helps ensure intentionality in how colleagues across the campus approach their work with international students. Some institutions achieve strong coordination by forming a committee of representatives from units across campus who work together to map out the pathways that international students travel after arriving on campus.

Conclusion



Conclusion

This monograph has outlined a new compact for international student inclusion and success. To move forward, we must acknowledge that, too often, there has been a gap between rhetoric and reality in the international student experience. A new compact begins and ends with a focus on building lifelong relationships between students and institutions from the first point of contact to their postgraduate careers.

The lifecycle approach aims to move beyond the consumer-in-market view with key tenets grounded in creating a more sustainable, culturally responsive, networked, human-centered, and equity-minded way to engage international students. Our vision recognizes benefits of international education and exchange for students, institutions, and society, including scientific collaboration, cultural diplomacy, alumni development, liberal learning, and economic development. The vision is supported by a framework for international student inclusion and success in all three phases of the international student lifecycle: before international students come to the institution, during their period of study, and after they graduate.

The future requires a different kind of conversation about international student inclusion and success: a new compact that recognizes that the same trends heightening risks in the near term also generate opportunities to produce better outcomes for international students in the long term. We believe colleges and universities can meet this moment with a more expansive vision for why they want to invest in international student inclusion and success with outcomes that benefit students, institutions, and society.

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