

## Changes in Faculty Practice for International Students: A Case Study

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### **Abstract:**

This research addresses faculty perceptions of the challenges faced in teaching international students in a culturally mixed classroom and the impact of those students on the learning environment. This multiple case qualitative study focuses on the integration of international students into the learning environments in three distinct U.S. higher education institutions. Nine faculty members, who had experience teaching international students selected from three institutions were interviewed to explore how they manage the mixture of cultures and linguistic backgrounds into a traditionally homogenous environment. Data were organized into themes, which included Language/Cultural challenges; Teaching and Learning Challenges; Ethnic Perceptions; and Enrollment Desires. Findings suggest that faculty have various approaches to the challenges presented by the inclusion of international students. Institutional culture, desires for enrollment revenue and faculty perceptions of ethnic differences in student preparation all influence the methods used by instructors to foster an environment where all students are afforded an opportunity to be successful.

### **Key Words:**

International Education, Faculty Practice and Development, ESOL, Enrollment, Andragogy.

## Introduction

Higher education institutions throughout the United States (US) and other countries are experiencing significant increases in the number of international students enrolled at their campuses. Aoun (2012) described this effort as a possessing a “gold rush mentality” (p. 37) with expectations of immediate revenue enhancement for an institution struggling with dwindling resources. The addition of large numbers of international students can present challenges to a university that may not have the infrastructure on campus to meet their unique needs.

Publications produced by World Education Services (WES) advise institutions on the “hot markets” for recruiting international students (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA <http://www.nafsa.org/eis>) creates national and state-by-state economic impact statements estimating economic activity generated from the enrollment of international students. However, the inclusion of international students on campus poses some unique challenges for the faculty who must engage students from various cultures into the classroom. International students come to American college campuses with a variety of linguistic abilities, differing experiences in terms of the academic culture they are accustomed to and non-cognitive challenges such as culture shock and homesickness that are distinct from the experience of their fellow classmates from within the U.S. that are not facing similar challenges. This multiple case research study addresses the challenges that faculty experience in working with international students and the faculty members’ perceptions of difference in the manner in which they must teach their classes when international students are enrolled.

## Research Questions

- As international student enrollment in the classroom increases, how does this impact faculty perception of the learning environment and subsequent faculty practice?
- What pedagogical changes, if any, do faculty engage in based on the cultural and linguistic differences they perceive and the abilities of international students to engage in the learning process?

## Literature Review

### *International Education*

The annual “Open Doors” report published by the Institute for International Education (IIE) in 2012 points to significant increases in international student enrollment throughout the US, in aggregate numbers and as a percentage of the total enrollment in higher education in the US (Table 1).

**Table 1. International Student Enrollment and US Higher Education Enrollment**

Year	Int'l Students	Annual % Change	Total Enrollment	% Int'l
1951/52	30,462	2.2	2,102,000	1.4
1961/62	58,086	9.4	4,146,000	1.4
1971/72	140,126	-3.2	8,949,000	1.6
1991/92	419,585	3.0	14,359,000	2.9
2001/02	582,996	6.4	15,928,000	3.7
2006/07	582,984	3.2	17,759,000	3.3
2007/08	623,805	7.0	18,248,000	3.4
2008/09	671,616	7.7	19,103,000	3.5
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5
2011/12	764,495	5.7	20,625,000	3.7

Table adapted from Institute of International Education: *Open Doors Fast Facts (2012)*.

In some cases, institutions have experienced the enrollment of international students doubling or tripling in the last five years. The World Education Service (WES) predicts that “enrollment growth at the Bachelor’s level is set to outstrip growth at the Master’s and Doctoral levels” and that “some institutions are viewing this trend as a solution to current fiscal challenges” (Choudaha & Chang, 2012, p. 2).

Administrators of colleges and universities may perceive students as economic inputs without consideration of the unique needs and experiences that students from different cultural backgrounds and different linguistic abilities bring to campus. The faculty of institutions that are engaged in the increased recruitment of international students may be unprepared for the significant resources required to effectively engage international students in the learning process. Although many universities justify the recruitment of international students as an attempt to educate the global citizens of the future and to create diversity, it is also clear that many institutions are involved in recruiting international students for financial reasons (Fischer, 2011). Studies of foreign student perceptions appear to indicate that students admire the academic culture in the US (Chow, 2011). However, there are also signs that some international students face difficulties in an environment they are unprepared for (Bauer, 1998; Fischer, 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lee, 2007). Lee (2007) found that many international students enrolled at American Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) experience neo-racism, defined as “discrimination based on culture and national order” (Lee, 2007, p. 389) as they attempt to navigate higher education in a new culture.

### ***International Teaching and Learning***

The literature on internationalization of college campuses includes studies about the unique needs of international students and the challenges and benefits they bring to US classrooms. Faculty perspectives on perceived changes in andragogical issues and integration of foreign students is an important element of the learning environment. Knowles (1984) proposed andragogy or adult learning to include: adults needing to be involved in the planning and evaluation; experience provides the basis for the learning; immediate relevance to their life; and is problem-centered. Bartram (2008), found that international students have unique needs that must be addressed, including “socio-cultural needs; academic needs; and practical needs” (p. 666). Often, institutions focus solely on the academic integration of foreign students without recognizing the challenges that foreign students face in acculturating to a new location.

Ryan (2005) identified andragogical issues, which international students may encounter frequently include learning and living in a different culture; learning in a foreign university context; learning while developing English language proficiency; and learning the academic disciplinary discourse.

Effective instructional methods for international students align well with what we know about how people learn in general. Specific additional instructional strategies that can be useful in course redesign and implementation, which can further help international students may include

- outlining the main points of the lecture and make links to other connective concepts;
- highlighting key questions or issues, in writing and verbally;
- creating and sharing concept maps as a visual representation, especially on how concepts relate to other areas in the course;
- providing guides for note taking;
- explaining relevant background information that may assist students in understanding key concepts; and
- defining new or unfamiliar words or concepts, and provide opportunities for clarification (University Planning Office, 2005).

Biggs (2003) found that it is typically not the international students’ cognitive skills that are in question but their English language ability. The University Planning Office (2005) indicates that small group discussions are key for second language learners of English. Strategies to help facilitate a rich discussion include

- providing key questions so that students can prepare their answer before the class;
- creating a teaching atmosphere where students interact with each other;
- asking students how the issue would be considered from their experiences;
- summarizing the discussion, highlighting the key points;
- posing questions or issues that students can discuss in pairs and then report back to the class;
- structuring the group tasks so that international and domestic students are grouped together;

- assigning roles for each member of the small group, including discussion leader, timekeeper, note-taker, and person to report back; and
- organizing group activities so that diversity of experience and knowledge are necessary for successfully completing the task.

### ***Faculty Practice and Development***

Effective teaching practices are frequently generalizable across many domains, including teaching international students. Using over 25 years of research, Ken Bain (2004) identified several key aspects of what good colleges teachers do. The major attributes of a good teacher are that they know how we learn; teach as a serious intellectual endeavor; assess their own efforts and make adjustments, accordingly, create an environment where diverse learners explore, analyze, synthesize and construct their own meaning. They also understand the importance of Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship reconsidered, especially the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). It is through critical examination and reflection, that good teachers are able to create new innovative teaching methods, deploy with intentionality, collect data and examine the outcomes, many times producing a scholarly manuscript, which is submitted to a peer-reviewed SoTL journal, which is publically disseminated so colleagues can integrate into their teaching and learning.

Pinantoan (2015) has compiled suggestions, which assist teachers creating an open and tolerant learning environment for all your students, which are key attributes for effective teaching strategies for international students. The items include

- finding out where your students are from and do a little research on those cultures;
- be sensitive to regional terminology;
- use more visual examples;
- consult with experts in your subject field;
- make curriculum relevant to student experiences;
- encourage cultural exchanges in class discussions;
- use neutral language;
- avoid politics and religion; and
- remember that you set the example.

Through a ten-year observational study, Hargis (2014) found that many of the strategies, which are found advantageous to international students, were similar to those observed to be effective for most classrooms, which contained a broad spectrum of students with diverse backgrounds. The researcher made observations based on major categories of presentation skills, rapport with students, clarity, instructor organization, content knowledge, variety and pacing of instruction, impact on learning and instructional strategies. Each of these areas aligns well with effective ways to enhance instruction for international students. Yee and Hargis (2012) further supported this evidence through qualitative data collected on the role of indirect faculty development. In their new faculty development model, they build upon a theoretical model of socialization informed by emotional intelligence for authentically connecting faculty with developers, and subsequently faculty with international students. Institutional administration, which, support faculty development in creating a helpful,

healthy learning environment for all students will ultimately affect the enrollment of international students.

### ***International Enrollment Market***

One trend in the recruitment of cross-border higher education students in sending countries is the use of agents, often contracted by one institution or a consortium of institutions, given the task of convincing students to go to an institution that is providing a commission to the agent for every student recruited. The pressure students face from agents is noted by Caluya (2011) as an indication of the extent to which students are both customer and economic good to be traded among various players in the global trade of students. In a New York Times article, Levin (2011) noted the pervasive use of agents and coaches to help Chinese students get into the college of their choice. US institutions publicly discourage the pervasive use of agents but do not appear to be denying students' entry.

The pressure, and perhaps the lure, of seeking international students to enroll in the US is influenced by recent economic developments. Due to the global economic crisis of 2008, many state governments in the US have experienced budgetary difficulties and have cut spending. One area where some states are decreasing spending is in the area of public higher education. In 2012, Aoun commented "states are disinvesting in public systems at a time when 80 percent of US college students attend public universities" (p. 37). As US colleges and universities seek to address budgetary issues at home by recruiting international students to matriculate and as some institutions seek to invest in providing educational opportunities in other countries, it is natural to wonder what impact this will have on the mission of higher education in the US, with long traditions of academic freedom, competition, and quality.

With demand increasing for education worldwide, American universities are stepping in—but sometimes with a gold-rush mentality. What is the impact on our model? If our system is based on exclusion, what happens if we add 5,000 students in India? If we believe in access here, are we going to give access there? If we believe in academic freedom and establish ourselves in a country without academic freedom, how do we deal with that? (Aoun, 2012, p. 37)

As US institutions engage other countries and other cultures in the exchange of students, cultural conflicts are inevitable. This is likely to create changes that will impact all students enrolled at higher education institutions, whether they are from foreign countries or neighborhoods nearby.

Deschamps (2013) found that public colleges and universities in the US are engaged in entrepreneurial activities specifically in regard to their international student offices and the perceived need to offset decreasing state budget cuts by increasing the enrollment of international students. However, in many cases across the country, the increased pressure to recruit international students does not lead to increased funding for distinct services that international students need.

Institutions of higher education are now engaged in global competition for students, faculty, grants, research, and all resources needed to maintain continued growth and relevance. These efforts are part of a college administration's mandate to "bring national and international distinction to the university" (Pandit, 2009, p. 647). Although all of the

various motivations for internationalization are understandable, it is clear that for institutions engaging in the process of internationalization, there are challenges and barriers to the effective integration of internationalization strategies on any campus.

## Methods

This qualitative multiple case study was designed to explore how faculty and staff perceive and interpret the influx of international students. The study includes interviews with selected participants from three institutions who have taught or provided service to international students. The multiple case study method is appropriate because the three institutions involved are distinct in their missions and demographics. Each institution is treated as a separate case.

The study is an investigation of three institutions in the western US that have a history of significant international student enrollment and how the institutions may have experienced changes in relation to the organizational functions and processes in relation to internationalization efforts. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012), College A reports 7% of its undergraduates come from foreign countries, University B reports 42%, and University C reports 10%. The names of the institutions are pseudonyms.

### ***Participants and Research Sites***

A total of nine faculty members of the three institutions were purposefully selected to participate in the study. A major criterion for selection was that faculty had to have worked with international students within their classrooms. In the findings section, participants are noted by their role (FA for faculty,); their institution (A, B or C) and a number assigned. For instance, participant FA C-3 is a faculty member at University C and was the third faculty member interviewed at that institution.

Interviews were conducted in 2013 by the primary author, originally as part of a broader study researching faculty, staff and administration perceptions of the impact of international students on institutional responses to rising international enrollment. Faculty interviewed in this effort taught in a variety of disciplines, including Anthropology, Business, English, Foreign Language, History, Nursing, and Psychology. Interviews generally lasted one hour.

College A is a public, two-year community college that offers a number of vocational programs and traditional Associate's degree programs. In recent fall semesters it has generally enrolled over 7,000 students. It is unique among community colleges in that it attracts a relatively large percentage (7-9%) of its students from foreign countries. Two-year colleges have not traditionally been involved in the recruiting of international students, but this trend is beginning to change. As some state legislatures are now decreasing the amount of funding to public institutions, administrators of some institutions are drawn to seek revenues from other sources than the state legislatures, although College A's efforts to internationalize predate more recent economic challenges in the US.

University B is a private, religiously affiliated institution that generally enrolls over 3,000 students in recent fall semesters. It has been listed among the "most internationalized" colleges in the US among its Carnegie class (Chronicle of Higher

Education, 2009). It has long been part of its mission to educate students from foreign countries and to encourage those students to return to their home countries after graduation to foster development. The inclusion of University B in this study served as an interesting contrast to the other two institutions, neither of which is religiously affiliated.

University C is a private, secular institution that generally enrolls over 7,000 in recent autumns. Interestingly, this institution has perhaps the strongest reputation in the state for being internationally focused, even though their international student enrollment is normally less than 10% of overall enrollment. This was an important part of the study because of its distinctness in relation to the other institutions and indicated the extent to which their particular focus and mission includes issues of internationalization.

Any one of these particular cases is of interest as a single case in terms of their experience of recruiting international students. However, the multiple case study was useful in answering the research questions in this study. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) concluded “multiple cases create more robust theory because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence” (p. 27). In this study the collection of cases are all HEIs that have similar processes for admitting and educating students, but their unique classifications and distinct organizational cultures and missions made them interesting from a multiple case methodology.

The case study method allowed for an investigation of faculty experiences on each campus, and how those experiences have changed over time in relation to the increase of international students. The element of time is important, as a case “typically evolves in time, often as a string of concrete and interrelated events” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). Case study methodology also allowed for the best possible answer to the research questions because “there are more discoveries stemming from intense observation of individual cases than from statistics applied to large groups” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 310).

### ***Coding and Analysis***

Once the analysis of each case was completed a cross-case analysis began. The data from interviews were analyzed and coded under themes that helped to answer the research questions. Each of the institutions was treated as a comprehensive case by itself. Due in part to the uniqueness of the three institutions involved, the cross-case analysis gave more value to the results as it allowed us to evaluate data based on how the research questions were answered in different contexts.

### ***Validity***

As Maxwell (2005) found, since it is impossible to eliminate the researcher’s theories, beliefs, and perceptual “lens” (p. 108), it is important to include multiple ways of understanding data as an important effort to provide various interpretations to increase validity and confirm findings. The quality of the case study and the findings therein “will depend on the validity claims that researchers can place on their study, and the status these claims obtain in dialogue with other validity claims in the discourse to which the study is a contribution” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 308). Triangulation procedures were used to promote the credibility of findings. Member checks were conducted to “rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants said and did and the perspective they have on what is going on” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). We sent the



relevant portions of interview transcriptions to each of the faculty of the three universities in order for them to check and review the accuracy of quotes and findings.

## Results

The data from this qualitative multiple case study were organized into themes, which included Language/Cultural challenges; Teaching and Learning Challenges; Ethnic Perceptions; and Enrollment Desires. Participant's key identifying statements, which align to each of these categories includes the following.

### ***Language/Cultural Challenges***

Along with the importance of recognizing differences in linguistic and cultural needs is the faculty member's response to the challenges that international student present in the learning environment. As with the recognition of differences, faculty at the institutions studied had a variety of responses to the cultural and linguistic differences in their classes.

A faculty member at University C noted that he recognizes the importance of learning about the various cultures and also making sure that local students respect their classmates as well: Some of our diversity comes in very interesting ways.

To me it puts a little bit of a challenge...all of the more the onus on me to learn a little bit more about the culture and to make sure the environment is not just respectful but interested in this diversity [Faculty C-2].

An instructor at University B commented on the challenge of working with a variety of languages in the class, and how that impacts depth of his instruction:

You can have a class with students that, you know, English is really hard for them, like Korea, Mongolia, or China or you can have others that it's a little bit easier, (such as) some European countries some South American countries. But as a teacher I have to find an average, decide how to leverage, how deep I will go or how superficial to make sure that everybody will understand [Faculty B-2].

At University C, a faculty member who is also part of the administration noted the importance of the faculty member's understanding of the psychological stress that students experience when working in a second or third language, and the expectations that the instructor should have in the classroom:

...Nor can anybody force or should they force someone else to speak. The invitation must be clear. We all have to double check to make sure we have no prejudices or intimidating attitudes or implicit assumptions about any group because those will be sensed and will be a burden for the student and also for the individual [Faculty B-1].

A faculty member at University C explained how he tries to get the local students to be understanding and accommodating towards the international students, and the importance of that understanding for creating a more positive learning environment for the international students:

We talk about what that experience would be like, being in a place and the amount of mental effort it takes to just communicate in a basic way and then to

express yourself frequently in a language that is not your first. How exhausting that can be sometimes... [Faculty C-2].

Although instructors do make attempts to accommodate their international students, they also have to recognize the needs of their local students as well. In some cases, when local students feel as though they may be getting less of an experience due to the presence of international students, it can cause some tensions in the learning environment. One faculty from university C noted:

Some of my local students, they're not shy, they flat out said, "why are you spending all your time with them? We feel like you're not spending the same amount of time with us. You know, we all pay the same!" I said, "You know I don't care how much you pay but you're right. I'm not giving you the attention that you deserve" [Faculty C-4].

Even though instructors make accommodations to their international students, some faculty expressed concern that they are obligated to change the depth of the academic experience for the class based, sometimes, on the presence of students with varying linguistic abilities. As one instructor at University C noted:

I feel as an instructor to some extent you have a responsibility or an obligation to be able to communicate to your students so what would happen is, even though you have curricular standards and pedagogical standards and you have certain things that you have to teach to, you can't help but teach to the middle. So when the middle is where it is because of the inability of a lot of people to speak English particularly well, it does affect the way that you present the material [Faculty C-5].

The same instructor continued to explain how he manages the information that is presented in class, especially based on his assumptions regarding the international student's understanding of the written material in class:

I think subconsciously or maybe even consciously at times you find that you are slowing down and trying to explain more than you normally would. I think part of it is almost as if you were coming from the perspective that they don't understand what is written in the textbook so I have to talk about it in a different way. I think it could affect the way that I presented material [Faculty C-5].

In the case of University A, a faculty member has found that it is important for international students to have someone to turn to in the event that they have communication problems with their classmates or other instructors:

Sometimes the language limitation causes unforeseen difficulties and I don't know how to deal with those but it will happen anyplace. I think the main thing is to have a faculty who they can go to [Faculty A-1].

The University A instructor also commented on the level of psychological pressure faced by the international students, and how the institution has responded in order to provide support:

They're under such pressure, including mental issues and even suicidal thoughts that have not been addressed fully. We now have a behavioral counselor and

also international counselors to support students. Any institution that is dealing with international students...because of the economic pressure, I think there's a need...to include this kind of service [Faculty A-1].

The data points to a number of significant language and cultural issues that instructors must address when working with international students. The dynamic in a classroom will be influenced by the variety of cultural backgrounds in the class, the relative size of the international population in the class and the cultural sensitivity of the instructor, and perhaps the instructor's own cultural background.

### ***Teaching and Learning Challenges***

Among the three different institutions, there were differences regarding how faculty might change their preparation for a class based on the presence of international students. At University C, two of the faculty expressed that they either would not change any of their preparation for the differences in language and culture, or had no preparation from the administration to address linguistic and cultural differences in the classroom. One faculty member from University C explained his approach this way:

I might count the names but I won't pay attention to "oh look, this guy sounds Russian" yeah so usually it's on the first day of class I find out. Students introduce themselves and that's when I find out. So I'm not going to "oh, four and I have to change the way I do things." I just structure the class the way I would normally structure a class [Faculty C-1].

Another instructor commented that she might be open to changing her pedagogical style, but had no preparation or assistance from the administration to address the different languages and cultures in the classroom:

I was not prepped that I was going to have international students that may not understand what the course is all about or how it was taught the American way. I just assumed that they understood what the expectations were [Faculty C-3].

When international students are in the classroom, faculty members are aware of the pedagogical challenges that must be addressed in order for their students to be successful. For many, it is a matter of requesting feedback more often and checking in with students to make sure that the material is understood. An instructor at University C took note of the need to reach out to international students to make sure they understand the lesson.

I've become more aware of...slang terms that... I have to stop and explain because they won't necessarily interrupt and ask, "What does that mean?" Sometimes checking in during the lecture and asking, "Okay is that clear". It's very unusual that an international student would say, "no I'm not clear, can you go back?" because they don't want to hold up the group. Sometimes I check in with them when they are in smaller groups or individually, or have some way for them to check with me, to verify things [Faculty C-2].

The same instructor notes that his experiences with international students have helped him see the challenges they face in attempting to secure education in the US system:

The more that I've been there the more I've gotten into things like the textbook, for example, really being geared towards a US student. Some of the references in there are really more inclusive of your understanding of being raised in the US. A lot of the international students get pop culture references because it's exported [Faculty C-2].

At University B, an instructor took note of the fact that faculty were supposed to cover all the same material, regardless of the number of international students enrolled, but found that it just wasn't possible to achieve the same level of depth as when there were fewer international students:

In the beginning the expectation was you were supposed to do everything the same and that the minutes they allotted for class time was supposed to still be equivalent. The students couldn't handle it. There wasn't enough time to internalize the teaching for the time to develop skills. So I have absolutely modified my syllabi and teaching method. I've tried to identify my students and I said, "Well this is traditionally what we tried to include in this timeframe but I cannot do it." My understanding is that most of the faculty has felt the need to do that, to go back and say what we really absolutely need. The other stuff is nice, maybe, if we have time [Faculty B-3].

The responses from instructors in relation to this theme point to the various methods that instructional faculty have in recognizing cultural challenges in the classroom as it relates to the variety of international students. Some instructors choose simply to teach the same way, regardless of the cultural makeup of the student body in their class. Others have learned over time to recognize the challenges that international students face and to make adjustments that will create more inclusiveness in the learning environment. Some note the need for more preparation and support from administration in knowing how to adapt to the changing demographics in the class.

### ***Ethnic Perceptions***

An interesting aspect of the experiences that faculty have with international students appears to be a preference toward working with students of European heritage. The responses in this section appear to support Lee's (2007) findings with respect to "neo-racism". All of the instructors interviewed in this study had received their degrees and training in western institutions. It is apparent that the rise of students coming from Asian countries presents challenges for instructors and students alike. Faculty member C-1 is from North America, and noted the ethnic challenges he has experienced in the classroom with different cultures:

With respect to the Scandinavians, they tend to be a lot better prepared than American students generally. Really on the ball and very motivated, very interested. The language skills are really good. The Asian students, there's two challenges. The first is language. The other is doing history the way we do history in the west. There's a really big emphasis in my classes, both undergraduate and graduate on critical thinking, and history as interpretation. It's not a science [Faculty C-1].

Another faculty member from University C noted the challenges faced, and her attempts to address the problem:

As far as pedagogical, I note that some Asian students will not question me. Now, instead of asking individual questions which is what I've always done in the past, I now ask them to pair up with someone, and they pick so no [complaints] and they would answer it as a group. So it kind of took away that spotlight on one person, and they could discuss the answer, and they could look it up if they needed and then presented to me. I make sure every group does that. So that was a big change for me [Faculty C-4].

A third faculty member at University C had a similar solution to the challenges he faced with students from Asian Countries:

With Asian students I usually do a more-small group stuff when I have them in the class because speaking out in class and speaking to the professor is not part of their culture from what I understand and so they are more comfortable if I break into groups of threes or so and kind of structure in a bit, and they have a task and then they speak out a little bit more then and they get a little more comfortable in the class that way [Faculty C-2].

However, the same faculty noted the apparent favoritism that he and other faculty members displayed toward the European students, which presumably may have an impact on those students who may feel left out of the attention being given by the instructor:

Well, a lot of interest is developed in Asia and that's really brought the interest as we've been getting more Korean students and they have an excellent education. They're not as outgoing in class...our Scandinavian students, sometimes they become our little teacher's pets because they're interesting and they are more likely to participate in class and so they fit our little model of what we think a student should be doing and so they get coddled a little bit. Not coddled but they get attention because they are asking for it, they are engaged a little more [Faculty C-2].

An instructor at College A explained further that language issues can sometimes cause serious social issues for international students that can have negative impacts on their academic careers in the host country. This appears to be a more significant problem for Asian students as compared with European students as the language barriers appear in many cases to be more pronounced.

The problem of international students is sometimes because their language skills are limited, they make mistakes like "[local students are] so lazy" and then they're branded because what they mean is the work ethic is different. I've had several cases where international students are blacklisted for the whole semester and are told not to come to back to class because they made some mistakes they were not aware of [Faculty A-1].

Of the themes explored in this paper, faculty perceptions of different skill levels by national origin is perhaps the most problematic. The responses in this area appear to validate the concept of neo-racism described in Lee's 2007 work, both from the perspective of the faculty, and as noted in the last quote, on the part of the local students.

### **Enrollment Desires**

Many institutions recruit international students for financial reasons as much as for issues regarding the globalization of education, or desire to internationalize their student body. This financial motivation for the institution does create some additional challenges for the faculty member in the classroom. One instructor in particular noted the pressure he felt as an instructor to make sure that international student received passing grades, regardless of their academic abilities. He recognized the administration's motivations for recruiting international students:

I can say it was fairly obvious. Tuition driven institutions like international students. They like students who are on F1 visas because they have to come in fully satisfying all financial requirements. They don't get financial aid. They have to come in fully funded and the idea being that, like in any business, it costs you a lot less to retain a customer than it does to recruit a new customer. The point being that if they got here you could keep them here even if they weren't quite up to speed, or up to par and you could continue to have a nice profit margin off of that [Faculty C-5].

The same instructor noted the direct pressure he felt from the administration to inflate grades for his foreign students:

[The administration] wasn't directly saying, "Hey these are folks that are from another country with language difficulties, they really deserve a break and you should give them one." It was more along the lines of "you can't fail them because we need them to come back and you want to keep your job" [Faculty C-5].

He also took note of the indirect pressure he felt from the student experience, and the political environment that led him to consider how he was grading his classes: "So if the word is out on you that you're too tough on them then they're not going to take your class and you're not going to have classes to teach" [Faculty C-5].

Faculty member C-5 was not the only one to notice the financial motivations of the institution. In the case of University C, although it is a "non-profit" university, the students felt the culture of revenue driven decisions, according to another faculty member there:

University C is tuition driven, they don't get large grants, they don't have good foundations backing them, so it's all about the almighty dollar, and the students will say it too, that they felt like a walking dollar sign [Faculty C-4].

It is important to note that faculty at University C were the only ones to express the focus on revenue generation as a key element in the experience of international students at that institution. This reflects the fact that University C was the most overt in their desires to recruit international students as a strategy for revenue generation. As such, the responses also appear to indicate that faculty felt the most powerless in expressing problems to the administration, as problems would be viewed negatively, and might impact whether a faculty member kept their position.

At College A, a community college, there were some apparent financial motivations, but the desire to recruit internationally stemmed more from the international connections of the faculty and administrators. Also, as a state institution, there are political issues preventing the institution from seeking significantly higher percentages of international students. At University B, a religious institution, the motivation to recruit international students is more a function of the religious mission of the institution. Financially speaking, international students are perceived as a financial drain on the institution, as those students are highly subsidized by the church.

## **Discussion**

This research addresses faculty perceptions of the challenges faced in teaching international students in a culturally mixed classroom and the impact of those students on the learning environment. The findings suggest that faculty have a broad spectrum of perceptions, based on the institutional mission and history, and divergent views of how international students impact the learning experience for the instructor and for all learners in the classroom. The findings also suggest that the institution's market orientation impacts the perceptions that faculty may have in teaching international students but that not all institutions have the same connection to or focus on market forces. An unexpected finding displayed some faculty preference for European students and some problematic responses regarding adjusting to students from Asian cultures in the classroom.

With regard to the learning environment at the three institutions, it appears that the focus and passion of the administration play a significant role in how the staff and faculty serve the distinct needs of the international student body. At College A, a long history of administration and faculty connection to international affairs helped to create an organic growth of the international student body. In more recent years, due to the enhanced revenue that the state legislature witnessed, there has been an increased awareness of and emphasis on international recruiting and servicing of foreign students, leading to more international students in the classroom, and more challenges for those students and for the instructors. With desires for enhanced revenue, University C has attempted to increase international enrollment and has augmented those elements of the institution designed to recruit those students, but instructors have been left to address the cultural and linguistic challenges of teaching international students without much preparation or support from the administration. On the contrary, it appears that some instructors at University C feel pressured to assess international student work more generously than they might assess the work of local students, as the international students are seen to be more of a revenue generator for the institution.

All institutions of higher education are affected to varying degrees by market forces. However, in the cases of these three institutions, there is a clear distinction in how College A, University B, and University C respond to the market with regard to their attempts to recruit and teach international students. In the cases of both A and B, it is clear that the recruitment of international students is not primarily due to the need for revenue. For A, which is mandated by the state legislature to serve the local community, it appears that the growth of the international student body is a function of administrative passion. Although the added revenue is appreciated, administrators also feel that they

could function well without the revenue that international students bring. In the case of B, the recruitment, service, and return of international students to their home countries is a very costly enterprise and continues due to the religious mission of the institution more than a desire for revenue. In the cases of both A and B, the focus on serving international students well informs their work and the efforts they engage in to make sure that international students are integrated with the campus community.

As international student enrollment in the United States continues to grow, higher education institutions will need to consider issues beyond recruitment and enrollment. Although many HEIs report relatively low percentages of international students on campus, continued increases will eventually lead institutions to a situation similar to that in which University B finds itself. As one administrator there pointed out, “Everything we do has to embed our demographics. We have a critical mass of this where it forces itself on us unless we choose to just be blind or profoundly ethnocentric (AD B-2)”. The point where an institution reaches that critical mass may vary by institution. The lessons from each of the three institutions in this study can serve to inform various HEIs as they consider the potential challenges of increasing international student enrollment and the impact on the classroom experience for all their students.

Based on what we learned from the data collected at the three campuses, we would suggest the following recommendations to assist faculty in engaging with international students:

1. Faculty development programs can be useful enhancements to assist in a continuous improvement philosophy for faculty. Typical faculty development programs include workshops, classroom observations, learning communities, assessment, consultations and suggestions to integrate effective instructional technology into the classroom. We believe that ensuring faculty have access to workshops and/or other helpful material on how to build an inclusive classroom would be beneficial. Baseline attributes for inclusive classroom include purpose/goals, content, perspectives, learners, instructors, pedagogy, environment, assessment, and adjustment (Lattuca & Stark, 2009).
2. Secondly, when possible, universities should offer identification, diagnostics and enhanced ESL programs for students and faculty. As stated earlier, Aoun (2012) has found there is an increasing number of international students with a varying levels of English speaking ability on U.S. campuses. Providing learning opportunities for learners and instructors would help bridge the language gap and allow both parties to focus on content, processing and application of concepts.

Overall, we believe that our findings provide extensive new information on the interaction between international students and instructors by identifying specific challenges and faculty development.



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