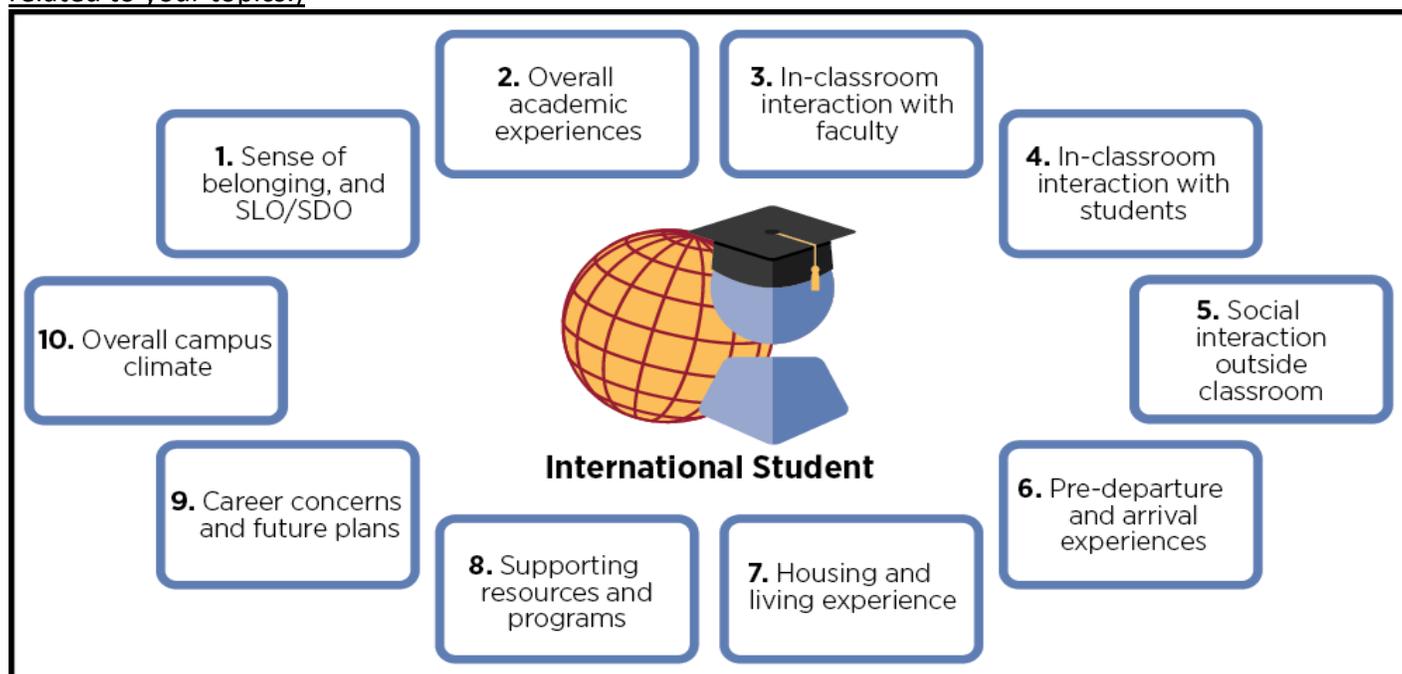


2016 - Synthesis of International Undergraduate Student Needs

Overview

The University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus has put significant effort into understanding the international student experience. Over the past decade, our graduate international student population has remained fairly consistent, while the undergraduate international student population has increased from 500 to more than 2,600. Understandably, with this extent of change, there are many questions facing the campus. During the past several academic years, multiple research projects were conducted to better understand the needs and challenges of international students, with significant focus on undergraduate students. **This report synthesizes the data from multiple projects and highlights the 10 topic areas that international students identified as needs and challenges.** For more information and summary for each study, please visit:

<http://global.umn.edu/icc/resources/umntc-ugis-data/index.html> (For those proposing projects to the Fees Committee, you are highly encouraged to read the summaries and full reports of the data and research related to your topics.)



Sources of Data

Research Studies on International Undergraduate Students at Twin Cities:

1. [Seeking Best Practices for Integrating International and Domestic Students](#) (BPI)
2. [International Student Barometer \(ISB\) results](#) (ISB)
3. [Listening Sessions Partnering with UMN Departments](#) (LS)
4. [Office for Student Affairs Focus Groups](#) (OSA)
5. [Survey of Student Experience in the Research University \(SERU\) 2014](#) (SERU)
6. [Study of the Educational Impact of International Students in Campus Internationalization](#) (EI)
7. [South Korean Undergraduate International Students' Experiences](#) (SK)
8. [Career Services for Undergraduate International Students](#) (CS)
9. [Student Voices: A Report on First Year Experience of International Undergraduates](#) (SV)
10. [First-Year Student Thriving Quotient Survey](#) (TQ)
11. [Everfi Courses Responses](#) (Evfi)
12. [Academic Impact of Compulsory Military Services on Korean Male International Students](#) (KMS)

(NOTE: The letter after each study is the abbreviated symbol to indicate the sources of studies for the following findings)

Findings

(NOTE: IS = international student; DS = domestic student)

1. Sense of Belonging & SLO / SDO (SERU, TQ)

- (1) IS's sense of belong is significantly lower than DS (based on 2012, 2013, & 2014 SERU results).
- (2) IS's sense of belonging moderately to highly correlates with their student learning outcomes (SLO).
- (3) IS's sense of belonging moderately to highly correlates with their student development outcomes (SDO).
- (4) First-Year students: Compared to white students and students of color, scored lower in these outcome-related items: 1) I intend to re-enroll at the U next year; 2) I intend to graduate from the U; 3) the U is a good fit for me given my current goals; 4) I really enjoy being a student here.

2. Overall Academic Experiences (ISB, LS, SERU, EI, SV)

- (1) Lower satisfaction of educational experience reported compared to undergraduate students overall.
- (2) Lower level of current academic skills reported including critical thinking, communication, research, and cultural appreciation compared to undergraduate students overall. Yet IS reported greater gains in these skills.
- (3) Lower level of academic involvement reported including contributing to class, interacting with faculty and faculty recognition compared to undergraduate students overall.
- (4) Lower level of English proficiency is a barrier for studying and participating in class.
- (5) Lack of shared academic/classroom culture compared to the education system at home country.
- (6) Linking study to future career is challenging.
- (7) Academic integrity is a challenging issue (e.g., IS not familiar with citation requirements, etc.).
- (8) Time management and balancing study and social life can be challenging.

3. In-classroom Interaction with Faculty (ISB, LS, SERU, EI)

- (1) Recognition of IS's unique challenges and needs from faculty is needed.
- (2) Faculty, instructors, and TAs need effective strategies to address IS needs.
- (3) IS needs faculty's encouragement and support.
- (4) The teaching quality from some professors and TAs is not satisfying; lower satisfaction reported compared to other CIC peer institutions.

4. In-classroom Interaction with Students (DS & Other IS) (ISB, LS, OSA, SERU, EI)

- (1) Lack of confidence in English language skills and communicating with other students.
- (2) Perceived bias and prejudice against IS with weaker English skills.
- (3) Perceived lack of structured opportunities to interact.
- (4) Group work and team-based learning are both a challenge and an opportunity to learn.
- (5) Cross-national interactions help improve intercultural communication and the ability to reflect on one's own culture.
- (6) Cross-national interactions develop leadership and problem-solving skills and engage with course content at a deeper level.
- (7) In-classroom interactions start friendships among IS and DS.

5. Social Interaction Outside the Classroom (BPI, ISB, LS, OSA, SERU, EI, SK)

- (1) Challenges of making friends with DS include: language barriers, cultural differences and misunderstanding, feeling self-conscious and lack of interest, and decreasing amount of time for DS staying on campus.
- (2) Lack of meaningful and facilitated interaction/friendship.

6. Pre-departure & Arrival Experiences (ISB, LS)

- (1) Class registration upon arrival is challenging (e.g., too late to register for desired courses, not familiar with U.S. education/academic system, lack of guidance from academic advisors, etc.).
- (2) Airport pick-up is not convenient and confusing (e.g., available schedules are limited).
- (3) Orientation format and content needs revision considering students' readiness.
- (4) Academic preparation and social support upon arrival are sought.
- (5) Challenges of timeline to secure on-campus housing.

7. Housing & Living Experience (ISB, LS)

- (1) On-campus dining services (food quality and labeling, cost) are not satisfactory.
- (2) Cost of on-campus housing is expensive.
- (3) Learning Living Communities help IS make friends from different backgrounds.
- (4) Safety concerns.
- (5) Lack of knowledge on leasing, renter rights & responsibilities.

8. Available Supporting Resources & Programs (ISB, LS, CS, SK, Evfi, KMS)

- (1) Need to better communicate about what resources and programs are available.
- (2) Need to develop and disseminate strategies to provide culturally appropriate services.
- (3) Need to map out of the opportunities for IS to interact across cultures throughout their academic life.
- (4) Writing Center: very helpful, but hope to expand accessibility of services.
- (5) Boynton Health Services: lack of knowledge and accessibility of health insurance.
- (6) Career Services: needs more help in finding internships and jobs.
- (7) Dining Services: expensive, bad quality of food, limited options for food.
- (8) Need education on consequences of alcohol use.
- (9) For Korean male: academic advising and career planning before and after military services is needed.

9. Career Concerns & Future Plans (ISB, LS, CS)

- (1) Career-related challenges: finding internships and jobs, visa requirements and work authorization, language proficiency, lack of connections, lack of qualification, and interviewing.
- (2) Networking and interactions with DS are seen as beneficial.
- (3) Perceived helpful resources: career fairs, seeking personal advising and networking, internship classes and internships, workshops and info sessions, emails and notifications of internship opportunities for IS, online resources (GoldPASS and The Edge), and cross-cultural communication programs.

10. Overall Campus Climate (ISB, LS, SERU)

- (1) Campus climate for diversity: levels of satisfaction from IS declined over 3 years (SERU results) and were significantly lower than UMN-TC undergraduate domestic students and students of color (non-international).
- (2) Feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Top Needs Identified by International Students

1. To increase international student's sense of belonging to the campus community.
2. To build meaningful friendships with DS and other IS.
3. To improve confidence and receive additional support to study in a second language.
4. To enhance effective in-classroom interaction with instructors and other students.
5. To better prepare post-graduation career (or graduate school) planning and development.

Recommendations for Campus Initiatives

ISSS received funding from the Academic Enhancement Fee for a project to explore Best Practices in Integrating International and Domestic Students. The advisory group for this project took on the task of coordinating the outcomes from other research and data being collected about the international student experience on our campus. This group hosted a January 2015 retreat for more than 30 campus partners to share key findings from each of the recent research and data projects, consider the impact this data might have for our campus as a whole, and to explore how the findings intersect with the work of various units and departments across campus.

The integration advisory group has been renamed the Advisory Committee on International Student Integration and has continued to meet to review the data and discuss recommendations that cover the scope of the international student experience¹. We recommend the following:

1. Increase shared ownership of the international student experience.
2. Encourage faculty, staff, and students to be more curious about international student experiences.
3. Create and facilitate friendship programs among international and domestic students.
4. Provide faculty and staff with more opportunities to further develop intercultural awareness and skills. Specific attention should be given to educational strategies in the classroom that promote integration of international and domestic students.
5. Showcase what is working on our campus -- the best practices of faculty, staff, and students
6. Create a campus vision that values international students and the benefits of integration among international and domestic students.

Please NOTE: The above recommendations focused on top needs identified by international students. There are other data points indicating specific action needed, but not included on this list. Additional unit or area specific findings and recommendations (such as class registration for new students, and safety issues) are being pursued/discussed/shared/considered with appropriate areas around campus.

Members of the Advisory Group (in an alphabetical order by last name):

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Xi Yu

Questions? Or want to review your college/unit-level data? Please contact Xi Yu (yuxxx637@umn.edu), Evaluation Specialist, at International Student and Scholar Services.

¹ The group has also used the name “The Data and Research Advisory Group at GPS Alliance”