

# HESA Graduate Students' International Involvements and Civic Engagement

Snejana Slantcheva-Durst<sup>a\*</sup>

*<sup>a</sup>University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio*

\*Corresponding author (Snejana Slantcheva-Durst): Email: [snejana.durst@utoledo.edu](mailto:snejana.durst@utoledo.edu)

Address: University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio, USA

## Abstract

This study maps the types of international involvement opportunities available to HESA: Higher Education and Student Affairs graduate students in the U.S.A., as seen through the eyes of the students, and analyzes the impact of these students' diverse international involvements on their orientation towards social responsibility. The study follows a survey research design. The study's results indicate low levels of international exposure amongst HESA graduate students across diverse programs, and moderate rates of orientation towards civic responsibility. HESA students' orientation towards social responsibility can successfully be predicted by a combination of five variables, three of which represent curricular and co-curricular environmental engagements: listening to an international speaker, discussing the ways the U.S. higher education links to the rest of the world, and attending presentations of study abroad students. The findings aim to inform program directors and faculty on existing opportunities for international exposure, on the rate of student involvements in them, as well on the importance of international exposures for their students' future professional preparation.

Keywords: student affairs, graduate education, international engagement

## Introduction

Across U.S. colleges and universities, higher education/student affairs (HESA) professionals play a critical role in shaping students' democratic values and beliefs. Their important influence on student growth increasingly necessitates preparatory HESA graduate programs that can strengthen their graduates' abilities to guide diverse student populations, foster sense of civic engagement, as well as stand up to incivility and injustices in their communities (ACPA/NASPA, 2015). HESA programs increasingly employ a variety of approaches to expose professionals-in-training to other cultures, and to impart the awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions "needed to work with others who are culturally different from oneself, as well as those who are culturally similar in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways" (Pope et al., 2019, p. 37; 40). Exposure to diverse cultures and worldviews not only sharpens graduates' awareness of themselves and their worlds, but also raises their support for diversity, intolerance to injustice, and responsibility to engage in community initiatives.

Ample research has demonstrated that student exposure to international initiatives and their international involvements contribute to the preparation of open-minded and engaged citizens (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; de Wit et al., 2020; Soria & Johnson, 2017). HESA graduate programs across the United States offer opportunities that expose their students to the cultures, socio-political and economic structures, and the higher education systems of other countries. Such opportunities may include study abroad, foreign language and area studies, infusion of non-U.S.-focused issues in the curriculum, faculty with overseas experience or interests, or research projects with global or international focus (ACE, 2022; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Shelton & Yao, 2019; Yao et al., 2022). Studies focusing specifically on graduate students have reported on the strong influence of international exposure on students' critical consciousness, social awareness, personal transformation, gender identity development, and multicultural sensitivity (Haber & Getz, 2011; McDowell et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2014; Slantcheva-Durst, 2018; Squire et al., 2015; Vatalaro et al., 2015).

Research on the rate of internationalization of HESA programs and the influences of international exposure on HESA graduate students has increased. More than a decade ago, Schultz et al. (2007) mapped international opportunities across HESA graduate programs. Other studies have reported on the influences of program internationalization initiatives on HESA graduate students' intercultural competence, self-awareness, and personal and professional growth (DuVivier & Patitu, 2017; Haber & Getz, 2011; Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018; Yao et al., 2022). Research on the effects of international involvements on HESA graduate students' democratic attitudes and values, including orientation towards civic engagement, remains scarce.

The present study aims to map the types of international involvement opportunities available to HESA graduate students, as seen through the eyes of the students, and to analyze the impact of these students' diverse international involvements on their orientation towards social responsibility. The study contributes to our understanding of the types and frequencies of international initiatives that graduate students in higher education engage in order to broaden their horizons, as well as to our understanding of how such international exposures influence students' orientation towards civic engagement. The study's contribution also lies in its unique data source: students themselves. The study's results will inform program directors and faculty on existing opportunities for international exposure, on the rate of student involvements in them, as well on the importance of international exposures for their students' future professional preparation. Two research questions guide this study: 1) What are the types and rates of involvement in international activities of HESA graduate students across HESA programs in the United States? and 2) What is the relationship, if any, between types of involvement in international activities and the students' orientation towards social responsibility?

## **Literature Review**

With their campus programming and daily activities, HESA professionals carry growing responsibility to address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and worldviews, educate students, help them form core values, attitudes, and beliefs especially concerning inclusion and multicultural learning, contribute to their intercultural development, and provide an environment that fosters civic engagement (Bell, 2013; Gansemer-Topf & Ryder, 2017; Major & Mangope, 2014; Yakaboski & Perozzi, 2018; Yao et al., 2022). It is critical that higher education professionals embrace democratic values and civic mindedness, and are "culturally sophisticated and globally aware to ensure they, in turn, are able to develop such a capacity within students" (Schultz et al., 2007, p. 617; Mitchell & Maloff, 2016). Sound knowledge of multiculturalism and diversity, and understanding of global developments, are competencies endorsed by professional associations and professionals themselves (Shelton & Yao, 2019; Witkowski & Mendez, 2018; Yakaboski & Perozzi, 2018). HESA professional standards, shaped in tandem by the leading professional associations CAS, ACPA, and NASPA, stress the need to develop a broad worldview and global perspectives in all graduates. In their "humanitarianism and civic engagement" domain, CAS's recommendations emphasize "global" competency in direct connection to civic engagement, stating that HESA programs must inculcate "understanding and appreciation of cultural and human differences, social responsibility, global perspective, and sense of civic responsibility" (CAS, 2018, p. 6). Similarly, the ACPA/NASPA's (2015) professional competencies list a Social Justice and Inclusion outcome that speaks directly to the importance of

international involvements for “student affairs educators” that foster “a sense of their own agency and social responsibility that includes others, their community, and the larger global context” (p. 14).

Around 20% of new professionals receive their training in master’s HESA programs, and an increasing number of seasoned professionals hold doctoral degrees in higher education (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022; Yakaboski & Perezzi, 2018). HESA graduate programs serve as the main socialization agents for HESA professionals, and provide the formative basis for the development of professional identity (Hirschy et al., 2015). Research on the graduate preparation of HESA professionals (Shelton & Yao, 2019; Shultz et al., 2007; Witkowsky, 2020; Yao et al., 2022) has emphasized the need for increased internationalization of programs. The most recent survey of program internationalization took place more than a decade ago (Schultz et al., 2007) and found that HESA graduate programs offer opportunities for international exposure albeit unevenly, and often rely on or mirror their institution’s offerings. Research (Shelton et al., 2019; Shultz et al., 2007; Witkowski, 2020) also points to a mostly U.S.-centric program curricula and delivery across HESA programs. Yao et al. (2022) reported that the highest exposure to international learning was found in the informal curriculum of graduate programs, including study abroad, practice, and assistantships. Shelton and Yao (2019) reported on the limited preparation available to HESA students to work with international students. The effects of study abroad opportunities, especially short-term, for higher education professionals represent the most studied area (DuVivier & Patitu, 2017; Haber & Getz, 2011; Mitchell & Maloff, 2016; Slantcheva-Durst & Danowski, 2018; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018; Yakaboski & Birnbaum, 2017). Research suggests that graduate student study abroad trips have positive effects on students’ intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive growth, as well as their intercultural competence and promotion, global disposition, professional skills, and career development.

Our understanding of what influence international exposures may have on HESA students’ orientation towards civic action and social engagement – a standard recommendation for HESA graduates - is still limited. Gurin et al. (2002) maintain that incorporating different perspectives into the curriculum makes students more open to a variety of ideas and ready to engage with current social problems. The concept of student social engagement or civic responsibility encompasses student desire to engage in social change, including actions regarding issues of social justice, charity, environmental protection, and public life (Hurtado et al., 2002; Jacoby et al., 2009; Mayhew & Engberg, 2011; O’Leary, 2014). Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) defined civic responsibility as “the sense of personal responsibility individuals should feel to uphold their obligation as part of any community” (p. 24). Available research on universities’ influence on the civic education of students comes primarily with respect to undergraduate students. In the last couple of decades, there have been increased pressure on colleges and universities to renew their civic missions and their commitment to preparing informed and engaged citizens. Higher education associations, foundations, government agencies, and the world of business have pushed for strengthening higher education’s focus on developing responsible citizens (Brennan, 2017; Mlyn, 2013; Soria & Johnson, 2017; Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Woolard, 2017). Despite the movement to reinvigorate higher education’s civic mission, many scholars ascertain that colleges and universities have turned away from their traditional commitment to prepare students for democratic citizenship (Flores & Rogers, 2019; Jacoby et al., 2009; Simmons & Lilly, 2010; Woolard, 2017).

## **Theoretical Framework**

Alexander Astin’s (1993) Theory of Student Involvement and his input-environment-output (IEO) model frame the study theoretically. The basic premise of Astin’s theory is that student learning and development is positively impacted by educationally meaningful curricular and co-curricular involvements. Participation in different international opportunities, both in and out of class, represents a high impact practice (Kuh et al., 2010). In order to understand the relationship between international exposure of HESA students and their orientation towards social justice, this study takes into account students’ characteristics and exposure to international initiatives prior to joining their HESA graduate program (inputs), and their involvements in international activities, both curricular and co-curricular, during their HESA graduate studies (environment).

## **Methodology**

## Sources of Data

After receiving approval by the Institutional Review Board (Study 300191-UT; IRB), I collected data through a survey instrument, which gathered information on graduate students' demographics, degree level, type and location of institution, students' exposure to international initiatives prior to and during their graduate studies, and their orientation towards social engagement. I relied on program directors across higher education programs in the United States to distribute the survey to their graduate students. From the 123 programs in the ACPA Directory of Graduate Programs in 2019, I identified 94 program director contacts. I emailed a request to all of them for assistance in distributing the survey instrument, and repeated my request two more times, respectively 10 and 20 days after the initial request.

## Participants

At the end of a two-month-long period, I received 415 student responses from 58 different institutions (61.7% institutional response rate). Of these 415 responses, 367 were complete and entered the dataset for analysis. By region, there were 83 student responses (23%) representing 12 colleges and universities from the North East region (including the states of VT, MA, CT, NY, and PA); 179 responses (49%) representing 25 institutions from the Midwest region (including the states of OH, MI, IN, WI, IL, IA, MO, NE, and ND); 61 (17%) representing 16 institutions from the South region (including VA, WV, KY, NC, TN, GA, FL, MS, AR, and TX); and 44 (12%) representing 5 institutions from the West (MT, CO, CA, and WA). By institutional type, 303 responses (82.6%) were from public institutions.

While this survey's high response rate and representation of institutions, programs, and states (totaling 58 institutions from 28 states) allowed for statistically significant outcomes in the data analysis, caution must be applied to all findings from this study when making generalizations to all institutions with higher education graduate programs in the United States. The chi-square goodness-of-fit tests, used to compare group frequencies, revealed significant differences in the participant representation amongst the Midwest, South, Northeast, and West geographic regions ( $X^2(3, N=367) = 118.96, p < .001$ ) and between public and private institutions ( $X^2(1, N=367) = 155.64, p < .001$ ). Midwestern colleges and universities were over-represented (with 179 responses) while the West region was under-represented (with 44 responses). In addition, the majority of participants came from public institutions (303 responses).

The majority of the respondents were women (268, 73%); of these, 165 (62%) were in the 20-29 age group. Most of the respondents (246, 67%) were White. Of all respondents, 272 (74%) spoke one language, and 83 (23%) spoke two languages; 263 (72%) of the respondents were pursuing a master's degree in higher education, with the remaining 104 (28%) pursuing a PhD or an EdD degree in higher education. The program titles could be grouped in the following categories: "higher education," "higher education administration," "educational leadership and policy," "student affairs in higher education," "college student personnel," "counseling and higher education," "leadership of student affairs in higher education," "higher education: community colleges," "college student development," and "adult learning and higher education." Twenty-five participants (7%) were not employed, while 154 (42%) were employed full-time, and 166 (45%) - employed part-time.

## Measures

To capture students' orientation towards social engagement, I utilized a scaled index of seven items developed by Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan, and Landreman (2002) to assess the level of personal responsibility one feels to taking action to improve society. The researchers' exploratory analysis on the measure revealed factor loading scores between 0.55 and 0.69 for the seven items, with Cronback's alpha reliability of 0.83 (p. 173). I titled the variable "Importance of social action engagement" (Appendix 1).

Following the guidance of Astin's theory of involvement, as well as scholarship on the types of international exposure and the benefits for students, I collected data under four main blocks (Table 1). Block 1 included student demographic variables (age, gender, and race) and institutional variables (institution, institutional location, program level, and program name). Block 2 included variables of prior international involvements reflecting the time students had spent on seven kinds of international involvements before starting their graduate program in higher education. The variables in Block 3 focused on the frequency of students' involvements with 13 types of curricular international activities while enrolled in their graduate program in higher education. Block 4 included variables on the frequency of student involvements with eight types of international co-curricular activities while in their higher education program. Finally, Block 5 included two intermediate educational outcomes variables: number of languages that students spoke, and employment status. The intermediate educational outcomes are not necessarily choices that the student made when they enrolled in their graduate program; intermediate outcomes may themselves be the result of early program choices, and may affect the final targeted outcome differently. As their effect is uncertain, Astin and Antonio (2012) suggest to treat them separately and enter them after other environmental influences.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. First, not all 94 HESA graduate programs were represented amongst student responses, and not all programs that were represented were evenly represented. In this light, this study's findings are not generalizable across all HESA students in the country. In addition, the study's aim was to map student involvements across programs, and not provide in-depth discussion of specific initiatives or student experiences. My interest was in the frequency and variety of involvement, and not on the depth of experience. Future research should aim to increase program representation in the response pool as well as consider providing in-depth exploration of the involvements in select programs. Next, all responses come directly from HESA students and may reflect students' bias towards different questions, their attitudes in the moment, or their overall energy in filling out surveys. Finally, the instrument on orientation towards social engagement measured students' self-reported levels sending a caution that students may not possess an accurate assessment of their orientation (Bowman & Seifert, 2011).

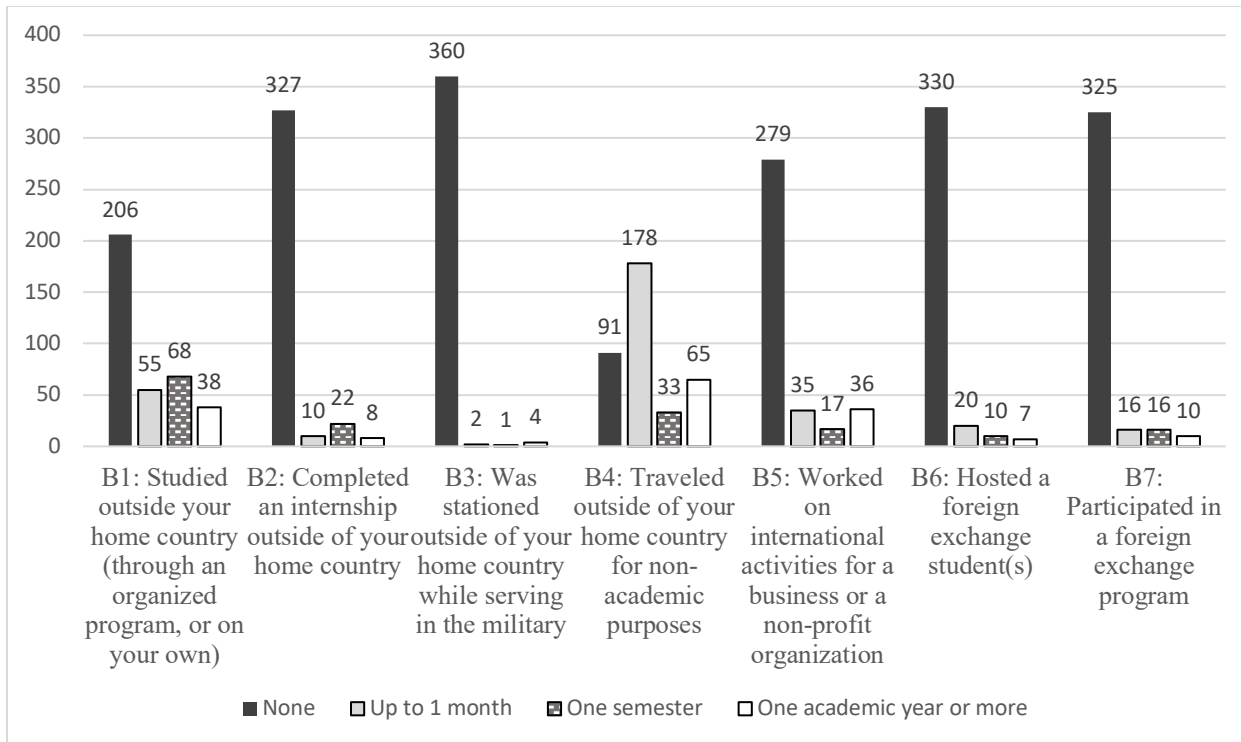
## **Results**

### **Research Question 1: What are the types and rates of involvement in international activities of HESA graduate students across HESA programs the United States?**

Most of the student respondents (75%) indicated no involvement with international activities prior to their HESA graduate studies (Figure 1). The highest rates of involvement amongst the quarter of the students who reported some international involvement across the seven types of activities was travel outside of the U.S. for no academic reasons (75%,  $N=276$ ; B4), of which 49% ( $N=178$ ) reported on some travel for up to a month; 18% ( $N=65$ ) indicated longer periods of travel for a year or more. Close to 44% ( $N=161$ ; B1) of the respondents also indicated involvement in some kind of study abroad ranging from one month to an academic year or longer. Finally, 24% ( $N=88$ ) also reported on work on international activities for a business or organization ranging from one month to an academic year or more (B5).

**Figure 1**

*Involvement in International Initiatives Prior to Enrollment in Higher Education Graduate Program*



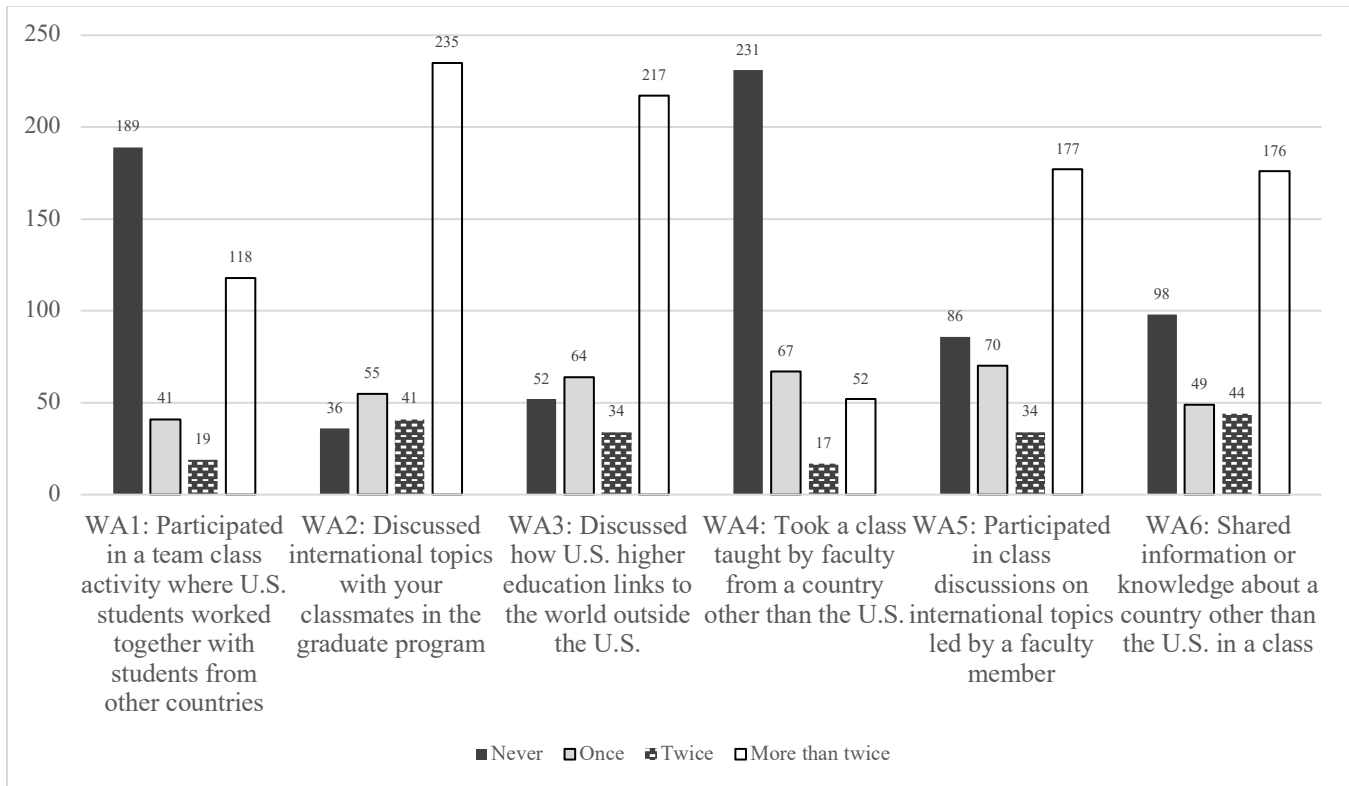
Note. Responses (N=367) to question: "BEFORE attending your graduate program in higher education, how much time have you spent on each of these activities?"

During their HESA graduate program enrollment, students involved themselves in international activities at a higher rate. However, the sum of frequencies from 20 curricular and co-curricular international involvements revealed relatively low rates:  $M=22.7$ ;  $Mdn=22$ ; Range: 0-56. A little over half of the respondents (51%) indicated some level of involvement across 12 kinds of curricular international activities (Figures 2 and 3), while 46% reported some involvement across eight kinds of co-curricular international involvements (Figure 5). Pearson correlations between the combined frequencies of the curricular involvements and the combined frequencies of the co-curricular ones revealed a high statistically significant positive correlation ( $r=0.523$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), which signals that the higher one's involvement in curricular international initiatives, the higher their involvement in co-curricular ones as well.

Regarding curricular involvements (Figures 2 and 3), higher frequencies emerged in the following types: 1) discussed international topics with classmates (WA2, 90% or  $N=331$ ); 2) discussed how U.S. higher education links to the world outside (WA3, 86% or  $N=315$ ); 3) participated in class discussions on international topics led by a faculty member (WA5; 77% or  $N=281$ ); 4) shared information about a country other than the U.S. in class (WA6; 73% or  $N=269$ ); and 5) engaged in meaningful interaction with faculty on international topics (WA8; 69% or  $N=254$ ).

**Figure 2**

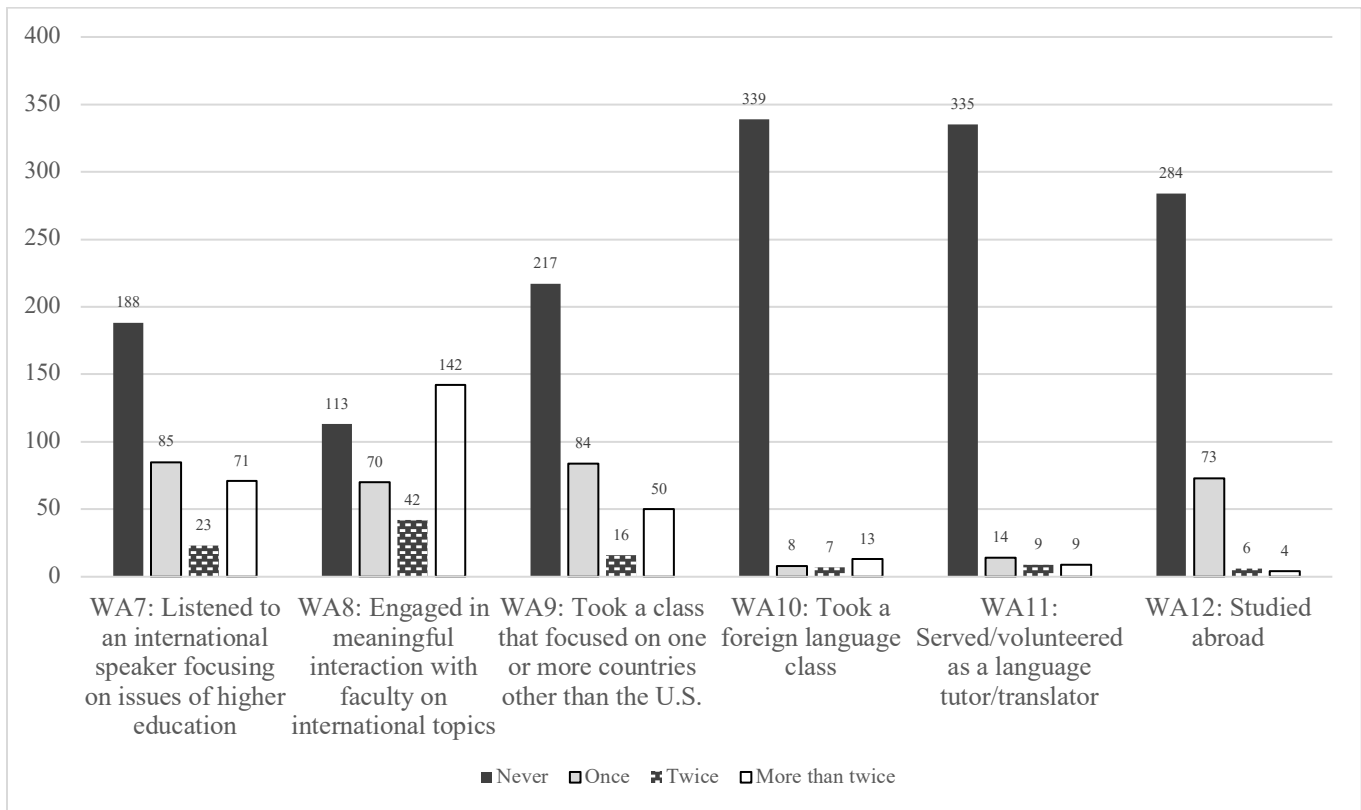
*Curricular International Involvements While Enrolled in HESA Graduate Program*



*Note.* Responses ( $N=367$ ) to question: "WHILE attending your graduate program in higher education, how frequently were you involved in each of the following activities?"

**Figure 3**

*Curricular International Involvements While Enrolled in HESA Graduate Program – Continued*



*Note:*

Responses ( $N=367$ ) to question: "While attending your graduate program in higher education, how frequently were you involved in each of the following activities?"

One-way ANOVA analyses of different levels of involvement with academically-related international activities amongst different groups revealed statistically significant differences amongst groups based on degree level, age, number of languages spoken, and institutional location (region) (Table 1). Along six types of involvements (WA1, WA4, WA5, WA7, WA10, and WA11), there were statistically meaningful differences between at least three groups. For example regarding WA7: Listened to an international speaker focusing on issues of higher education, differences emerged between different degree level groups ( $F(2,364)=3.19, p=0.04$ ), between age groups ( $F(2,364)=3.67, p=0.026$ ), and between institutional regions ( $F(3,363)=4.68, p=0.003$ ). In light of the over-representation of responses in the Midwest region as compared to the other three regions in the country, I further applied independent t-test analyses to the specific regional group pairs with significantly different means. For each of the five types of international involvements where regional group differences emerged (WA5, WA7, WA8, WA9, WA11), the independent t-tests, two-sided and set with the condition of "equal variances not assumed," confirmed that the differences in the means between the group were indeed statistically significant (see Table 1). Overall, across most types of curricular involvements, PhD students were involved at higher rates than master's and EdD students; more engaged were also students of age 40 or above, students who spoke more than one language, and students in Midwestern institutions.



**Table 1**

*Multiple Comparisons with One-Way ANOVA and Post Hoc Tukey Tests, by Graduate Degree, Age Group, Number of Languages, and Region of Institution*

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Mean (M) Difference (A- B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
WA1: Participated in a team class activity where U.S. students worked together with students from other countries	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.795**	0.180	0.000
	20-29	40 or above	-0.683**	0.198	0.002
	Speak 1 language	Speak 3 languages	-1.675**	0.451	0.001
	Speak 2 languages	Speak 3 languages	-1.513**	0.467	0.007
WA2: Discussed international topics with your classmates in the grad. program	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.373*	0.143	0.025
WA4: Took a class taught by faculty from a country other than the U.S.	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.871***	0.140	0.000
	Ed.D.	Ph.D.	-0.631**	0.210	0.008
	20-29	40 or above	-0.486**	0.158	0.006
	30-39	40 or above	-0.462*	0.186	0.036
	Speak 1 language	Speak 3 languages	-1.076**	0.361	0.016
	Speak 2 languages	Speak 3 languages	-1.187**	0.374	0.009
WA5: Participated in class discussions on international topics led by a faculty member	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.441*	0.171	0.028
	Speak 1 language	Speak 2 languages	-1.187**	0.374	0.009
	MidWest Region: OH, MI, IN, WI, IL, IO,MO, NE, ND	South Region: VA, WV, KY, NC, TN, GA, FL, MS, AR, TX	0.557**	0.184	0.014 (Two-sided t-test: p=0.003)
	Speak 1 language	Speak 2 languages	-0.472**	0.159	0.016
WA7: Listened to an international speaker focusing on issues of higher education	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.391*	0.158	0.037
	20-29	40 or above	-0.451*	0.172	0.024
	MidWest Region: OH, MI, IN, WI,IL, IO,MO, NE, ND	South Region: VA, WV, KY, NC, TN, GA, FL, MS, AR, TX	0.523**	0.170	0.012 (Two-sided t-test: p=0.001)
	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.435*	0.174	0.035
WA8: Engaged in meaningful interaction with faculty on international topics	South Region: VA, WV, KY, NC, TN, GA, FL, MS, AR, TX	NorthEast Region: VT, MA, CT, NY, PA	-0.558*	0.214	0.047 (Two-sided t-test: p=0.009)
	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.428**	0.143	0.008
	MidWest Region: OH, MI, IN, WI,IL, IO,MO, NE, ND	South Region: VA, WV, KY, NC, TN, GA, FL, MS, AR, TX	0.435*	0.154	0.026 (Two-sided t-test: p=0.002)
	Master's Degree	Ed.D.	-0.303**	0.108	0.015
WA10: Took a foreign language class	20-29	40 or above	-0.347**	0.091	0.001
	Speak 1 language	Speak 3 languages	-0.667**	0.209	0.008
	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.284**	0.100	0.014
	Speak 1 language	Speak 2 languages	-0.284***	0.070	0.000
WA11: Served/volunteered as a language tutor/translator	Speak 1 language	Speak 3 languages	-0.589**	0.189	0.011
	NorthEast Region: VT, MA, CT, NY, PA	MidWest Region: OH, MI, IN, WI, IL, IO,MO, NE, ND	-0.211*	0.076	0.030 (Two-sided t-test: p<0.001)
	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.205**	0.074	0.016
	Speak 1 language	Speak 3 languages	-0.589*	0.189	0.011
WA12: Studied abroad	Speak 2 languages	Speak 3 languages	-0.636**	0.188	0.004
	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.379**	0.110	0.002
	Ph.D.	Ed.D.	0.389*	0.164	0.048
WA13: Joined an international study trip organized by the program	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.379**	0.110	0.002
	Ph.D.	Ed.D.	0.389*	0.164	0.048

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 lev

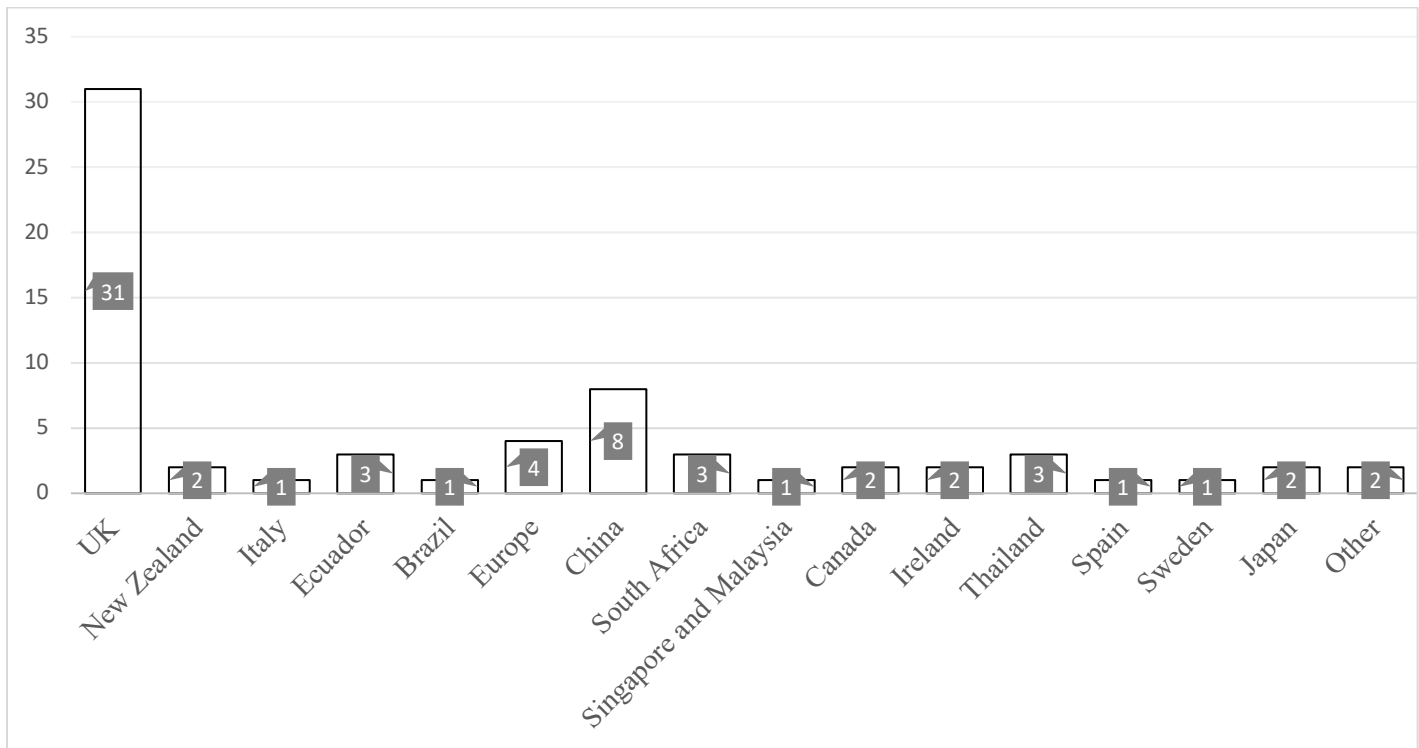
\*\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level;

\*\*\* The mean difference is significant at <0.001 level.

Slightly over 18% ( $N=67$ ) of the responding students indicated participation in a study abroad program organized by their HESA graduate program (Figure 4). Of these 67 students, 60 reported on a 1-to-3-week length study abroad, 2 students traveled for less than that, and the remaining 5 went for a semester or more. The majority of those program organized study abroad trips were to Europe (60% or  $N=40$ ), of which 31 students (46%) went to the United Kingdom.

**Figure 4**

*Destination of the Study Abroad Trip Organized by the HESA Graduate Program (N=67)*

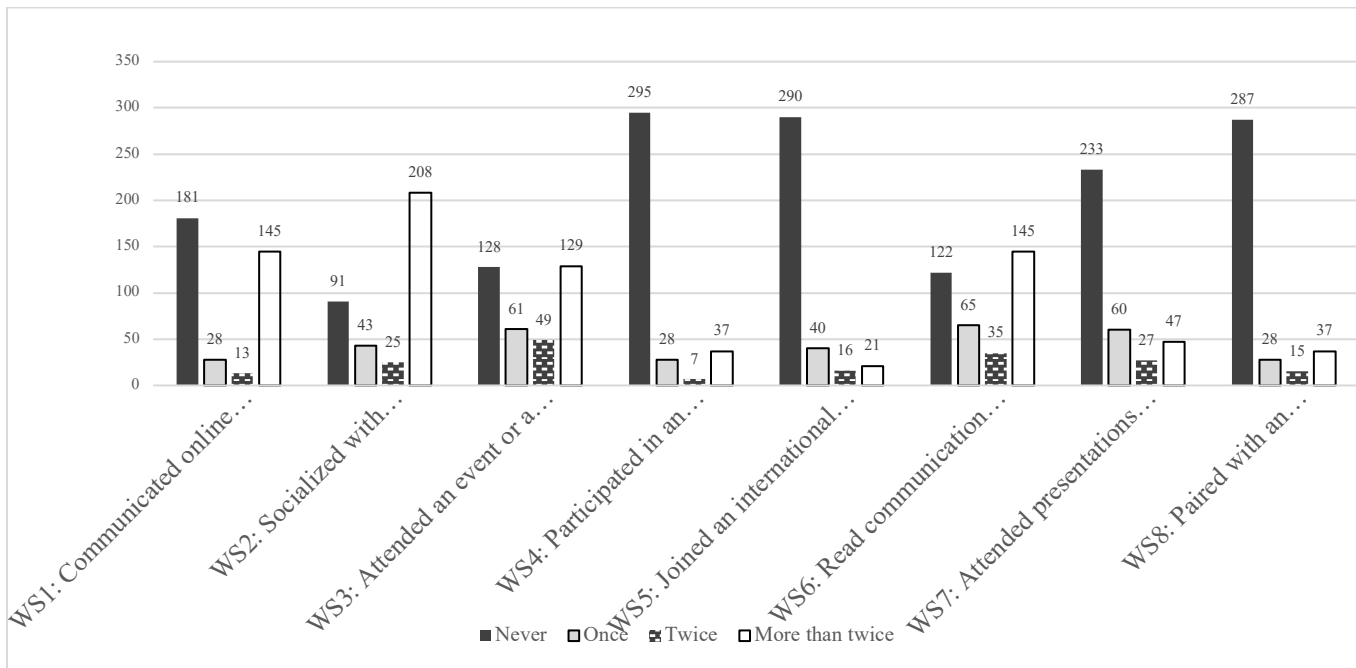


Students from institutions in the Midwest region partook in international study trips organized by their HESA program at a much higher rate than their peers in other regions. The group comparisons revealed statistically significant differences between the means of the Midwest region and the South region student groups ( $M=0.527$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; two-sided t-test, equal variances not assumed:  $p<0.001$ ), and between the Midwest region and the Northeast region student groups ( $M=0.448$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; two-sided t-test, equal variances not assumed:  $p<0.001$ ). In addition, PhD students participated in these trips at a higher rate than master's ( $M=0.379$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and EdD students ( $M=0.389$ ,  $p=0.048$ ). No other group differences based on demographic characteristics (race, gender, age), employment, or number of languages were statistically significant.

Regarding co-curricular international involvements, three quarters of the respondents reported socializing with international students (75% or  $N=276$ , WS2), 69% ( $N=239$ ) attended an event or program on campus that focused on foreign countries (WS3), 68% ( $N=245$ ) read communication from the program on international events (WS6), and 51% ( $N=186$ ) communicated online with people from other countries (WS1) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Co-Curricular International Involvements While Enrolled in HESA Graduate Program*



*Note.* Responses ( $N=367$ ) to question: "WHILE attending your graduate program in higher education, how frequently were you involved in each of the following activities outside of class?"

Group comparisons, with one-way ANOVA analyses and post hoc Tukey tests, revealed statistically significant differences along six kinds of international activities based on age group, employment status, number of languages, race, and degree level (Table 2). Overall, older students, those not employed, those speaking three languages, those identifying themselves as Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander as well as with the "Other" racial groups, and PhD students were involved at higher rates.

**Table 2**

*Multiple Comparisons with One-Way ANOVA and Post Hoc Tukey Tests, by Age Group, Employment Status, Number of Languages, Race, and Degree Level*

<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Mean (M) Difference (A-B)</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
WS1: Communicated online with people from countries other than the U.S.	20-29	30-39	-0.473*	0.183	0.027
	Not employed	Employed full-time	0.900*	0.303	0.016
		Employed part-time	0.865*	0.301	0.022
	Speak language	1 Speak 3 languages	-1.431*	0.474	0.014
WS3: Attended an event or a program on campus that focused on one or more countries other than the U.S.	White	Other	-0.706*	0.243	0.031
WS4: Participated in an international student organization or committee on campus	Speak languages	3 Speak 1 language	1.429***	0.311	<0.001
	Speak languages	3 Speak 2 languages	1.296***	0.323	<0.001
WS5: Joined an international organization related to your career choice	White	Asian American /Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	-0.495**	0.152	0.011
	Speak languages	3 Speak 1 language	1.387***	0.266	<0.001
	Speak languages	3 Speak 2 languages	1.161***	0.276	<0.001
WS6: Read communication from your graduate program	Master's Degree	Ph.D.	-0.484*	0.177	0.018
WS8: Paired with an international student to help them adjust to U.S. culture and college life	Speak languages	3 Speak 1 language	0.914*	0.325	0.027

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level;

\*\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level;

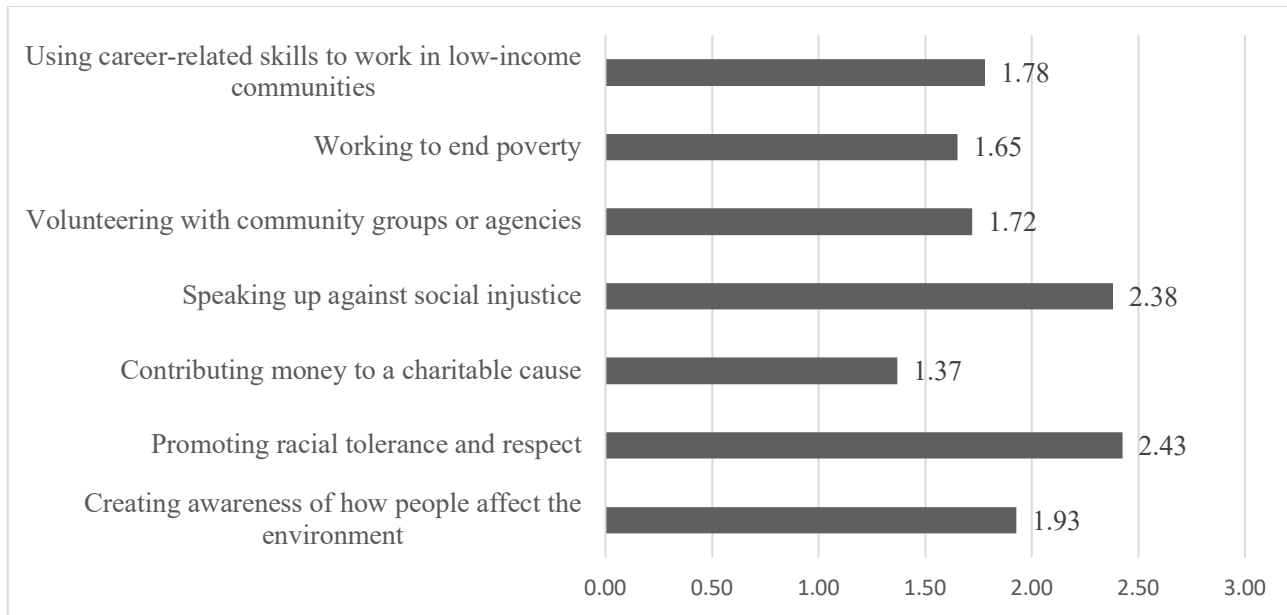
\*\*\* The mean difference is significant at <0.001 level.

### **Research Question 2: What is the relationship, if any, between types of involvement in international activities and the students' orientation towards social responsibility?**

Respondents exhibited moderately high levels of orientation towards social responsibility ( $N=367$ ,  $M=13.25$ ,  $Mdn=14$ ,  $SD=3.77$ , Range 0-21). When taken separately, students' highest scores came in the areas of Promoting racial tolerance and respect and Speaking up against social injustice (Figure 6). Contributing money to a charitable cause received the lowest mean scores.

**Figure 6**

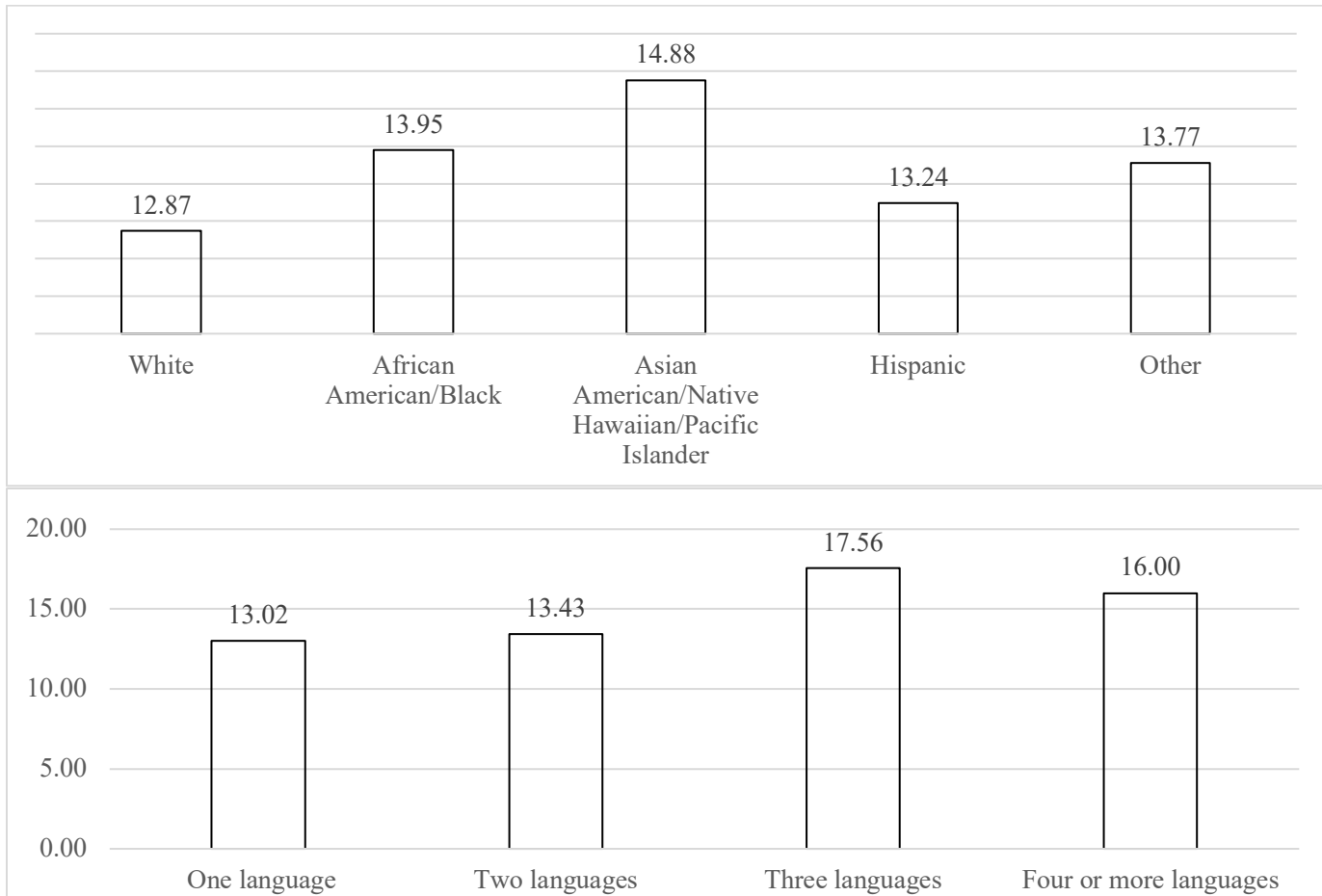
*Respondents' Orientation towards Social Responsibility, Means by Measure Items*



Statistically significant group differences emerged based on two group characteristics: 1) race: the group of White students had a statistically significant lower mean than the group of White and Asian American/Native Hawaiian/PI students ( $p=0.037$ ); and 2) number of languages spoken: those who spoke three languages differed statistically significantly in their mean orientation responsibility scores from those who spoke one ( $p=0.002$ ) or those who spoke two ( $p=0.009$ ) languages (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Respondents' Orientation towards Social Responsibility, Means by Racial Group and Language*



Two-tailed Pearson correlations with the “Orientation towards Social Responsibility” variable revealed a statistically significant relationship with 15 variables, which represented four out of the five variable blocks (Table 3). One of these 15 significant associations was negative (Race,  $r=-0.136$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Based on overall strength, two types of involvements, i.e., WS7: Attended presentations from students who had studied abroad ( $r=0.265$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and WA7: Listened to an international speaker focusing on issues of higher education ( $r=0.208$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), emerged as the strongest correlations with students’ “Orientation towards Social Responsibility.”

**Table 3**

*Bivariate Correlations b/n All Variables and “Orientation towards Social Responsibility”*

Variable Name	R
<b><i>Block 1: Student Characteristics and Institutional Characteristics</i></b>	
C3: Race: Are you White?	-0.136**
<b><i>Block 3: International Academic Involvements WHILE in Higher Education Graduate Program</i></b>	
WA2 - Discussed international topics with your classmates in the graduate program	0.166**
WA3 - Discussed how U.S. higher education links to the world outside the U.S.	0.171**
WA4 - Took a class taught by faculty from a country other than the U.S.	0.103*
WA6 - Shared information or knowledge about a country other than the U.S. in a class	0.138**
WA7 - Listened to an international speaker focusing on issues of higher education	0.208**
WA8 - Engaged in meaningful interaction with faculty on international topics	0.179**
WA11 - Served/volunteered as a language tutor/translator	0.112*
<b><i>Block 4: International Co-Curricular Involvements WHILE in Higher Education Graduate Program</i></b>	
WS2 - Socialized with international students	0.172**
WS3 - Attended an event or a program on campus that focused on one or more countries other than the U.S.	0.168**
WS4 - Participated in an international student organization or committee on campus	0.173**
WS6 - Read communication from your graduate program (email, web page, newsletter, or other) on international programs and events	0.150**
WS7 - Attended presentations from students who had studied abroad	0.265**
WS8 - Paired with an international student to help her or him adjust to U.S. culture and college life	0.125*
<b><i>Block 5: Intermediate Educational Outcomes</i></b>	
I1: Number of languages spoken	0.153**

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

In order to ascertain the combined influence of these 15 statistically significantly correlated variables on students' orientation towards social responsibility, I ran a blocked stepwise regression analysis in SPSS. The “Orientation towards Social Responsibility” variable was the dependent variable that represented the Outcome in Astin’s IEO model; the significantly correlated variable in Block 1 represented Input and entered the regression analysis first; the variables in blocks 3, 4, and 5 represented the Environment, and entered the regression analysis in their block order. The statistically significant variable from Block 5 entered the regression last.

Of the 15 predictor variables that entered the regression analysis, five emerged as significant predictors of HESA graduate students' “Orientation towards Social Responsibility” (*Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup>=0.12;  $p < 0.001$ ). These five variables represented four of the original blocks of variables (Table 4) and together helped explain 12% of the variance. The low strength of the beta weights of the five variables is worth noting. The predictive power of the environment involvement variables summed up to 9% of that portion of explained variance. Of all five variables in the model, students' attendance of presentations of other students who had studied abroad provided the largest portion of the explained variance.

**Table 4***Statistically Significant Variables Impacting HESA Students' Orientation toward Soc. Responsibility*

Variable	Step $\beta$ (variable first entered model) (Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ )	Final Step $\beta$ (Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ )	Portion of Total Variance Explained in Final Model	Variable Represents Block
C3: Race: Are you White?	-0.136***	-0.125**	3%	1 Student Characteristics
WA7: Listened to an international speaker focusing on issues of higher education	0.212***	0.099*	1%	2 International Academic Involvements
WA3: Discussed how U.S. higher education links to the world outside the U.S.	0.130*	0.110*	2%	
WS7: Attended presentations from students who had studied abroad	0.212***	0.208***	4%	3 International Co-Curricular Involvements
II: Number of languages spoken	0.104*	0.104*	2%	4 Intermediate Educational Outcomes

$N=367$ ; Model *Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup>=0.12; \* $p<0.05$ , \*\* $p<0.01$ , \*\*\* $p<0.001$

## Discussion and Implications for Practice

### HESA Students' International Involvements

The study's results suggest that HESA graduate students remain relatively under-involved in international initiatives while enrolled in their HESA programs. Low frequency of involvement across 20 kinds of international activities speaks to low levels of international exposure for students. Due to the nature of the study where data came directly from the HESA graduate students, it is difficult to ascertain whether the reason for such low international exposure is due to limited program opportunities or personal reasons on part of the students. On the one hand, one can conclude that HESA students rely on their programs for international initiatives, as more than half of the students reported some international involvement during their studies in contrast to the respondents' overall limited involvements prior to entering their HESA program (only 25%). In this light, an increased number of students gained opportunities to engage with international issues and activities when they joined their HESA graduate program. On the other hand, the results align with prior research findings documenting uneven levels of internationalization of HESA graduate programs across the United States (Shelton & Yao, 2019; Shultz et al., 2007; Witkowsky, 2020; Yao et al., 2022). Although comparisons with the earlier mapping study (Schulz et al., 2007) are difficult due to the two studies' different methodologies and data points of collection, the present study's major finding of more than a decade later echoes that of Schulz et al., that "Despite a global movement toward internationalization, the student affairs field has not kept adequate pace" (p. 627).

Regarding the variety of international involvements, the study's findings suggest that students engaged with international opportunities most often when such opportunities were integrated directly into the HESA program curricula.



Discussing international topics and considering the ways the U.S. relates to the world outside with classmates in the program, or participating in team activities with students from other countries, or participating in class discussions lead by a faculty member, or sharing information about another country in class, all emerged as frequently attended program features across student responses. In a way, this study's findings align with other studies, which maintain that a large portion of international learning for HESA students appears in class discussions (Shelton & Yao, 2019; Yao et al., 2022). However, Shelton and Yao (2019) and Shultz et al. (2007) also found international opportunities in co-curricular initiatives such as graduate assistantships, internships, practica, and campus involvement. In contrast, in the present study, initiatives involving other educational components beyond classroom discussion and participation, such as foreign language classes, opportunities to serve as language tutor, or study abroad opportunities, attracted very low student participation.

Another indication of uneven distribution of international opportunities across programs comes from group comparisons, as PhD students spoke of higher levels of involvements as compared to master's or EdD students, as did students at programs across the Midwest. Similarly, the low student participation in program-organized study abroad trips (18%) signals limited opportunities. Available study trips also revealed a Euro-centric focus; in fact, most programs targeted English-speaking countries. Limited exposure to non-U.S.-like cultures and countries has also received attention in prior research (Witkowski, 2020; Yao et al., 2022). Students in programs in the Midwest and PhD programs were more likely to offer such study trips. At the same time, no other statistically significant group differences emerged, which signals that if a program organizes study trips, students will very likely participate. Other significant group differences related to involvements beyond the classroom. Non-White students in the groups Other and Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were more likely to partake in opportunities to attend a campus event or program that focused on other countries and to join a professional international organization. Students who spoke more than one language were also more likely to partake in international initiatives.

The low levels of international exposure of HESA graduate students raises concerns as today, global understanding and awareness is "a fundamental dimension of learning for contemporary graduates"; it has "profound civic dimensions" as it affects not only what students learn but also what they do as a result of it (Jacoby et al., 2009, p. 54). The exposure of graduate students to other cultures and countries, especially ones that are very different from the United States, opens students' perspectives, broadens their horizons, and affects their civic mindedness as they witness diverse ways of life, different social structures and organizations, varied cultural approaches, environmental beauty and destruction, and challenges people face in foreign settings. Experiencing other cultures and worldviews while enrolled in their graduate programs also affects students' professional identities and thinking as they connect the issues of those other worlds to their field of study.

HESA graduate students prepare themselves for occupations that would bring them directly in contact with college students as they assume professional roles as student guides, advisers, success coaches, or program coordinators in diverse areas across campuses. HESA professionals thus play a critical role in shaping students' core values, beliefs, and attitudes, and in instilling in them an orientation towards active lives of civic engagement, commitment to inclusivity, and intolerance of injustice. These professional responsibilities necessitate that HESA professionals themselves have broad worldviews, embrace diversity and inclusion, and practice civic engagement. As Major and Mangope (2014) acknowledge, HESA professionals are key personnel in handling multicultural issues on campuses and must have sound multicultural competencies. HESA programs are a conduit of such skills and international exposure is a key component in their development.

It is critical that HESA graduate programs around the country offer international exposures to their graduate students. Program directors should aim to increase and diversify the available opportunities for international involvements across programs' curricula and co-curricula. Increasing opportunities for HESA students and future professionals is critical in light of the important role they are expected to play in shaping college students' values and beliefs, but also considering the surprisingly low international exposure of HESA students prior to their graduate studies. In addition, the positive impact of study abroad trips suggest not only a need to increase opportunities for students but to also diversify destinations to include non-U.S.-like cultures and higher education systems.

## **HESA Students' Orientation towards Social Responsibility**

The study's findings suggest that HESA graduate students' overall orientation towards social engagement remains moderate ( $M=13.25$ , Max: 21). These findings are concerning especially in light of how critical HESA preparation programs are in the training of effective, inclusive, and ethical future HESA professionals, as well as how influential graduate programs are on the development of their own students. The findings signal high rates of HESA graduate student detachment from the issues that surround them, as well as low interest in engaging with efforts to act on pressing social concerns or contribute to improving communities. Most critically, the moderate levels of orientation towards social responsibility in the HESA graduate students hint of lack of readiness to actively contribute to shaping student civic orientation as future HESA professionals.

As one of the first attempts to gauge this orientation, comparisons with prior research are difficult. As a complex measure, social engagement is comprised of diverse social issues. The high scores under two of the items in the measure, "promoting racial tolerance and respect" and "speaking up against social injustice", testify to HESA program's strong stance in support of diversity and engagement in efforts against racism. Similar strong emphasis needs to also inform HESA program training in the remaining components of social engagement. Program directors should aim to incorporate exposure to social issues related to the under-represented items in the measure including direct contribution to a community, or direct engagement and work in depressed areas. Programs should also increase the opportunities to include discussions around issues of social injustice from other countries, thus increasing student exposure to such issues from diverse cultural contexts.

## **Influence of International Involvements on HESA Students' Social Responsibility**

Despite the moderate rates of reported international involvements, 14 involvement variables significantly correlated with HESA graduate students' orientation towards social responsibility. The involvements that exhibited strongest associations related to engagements with people that are different: "attending presentations from students who studied abroad" and "listening to an international speaker on international issues." As Soria and Johnson (2017) attest, as high-impact practices, international initiatives "increase the likelihood students will interact with peers who are different from themselves," which in turn foster "higher cultural and social awareness" and "a greater sense of empowerment to enact social change" (p. 102).

Even in light of the low overall rate of involvement across many international activities, and the relatively small response rate, the results of the study indicate that HESA graduate students' orientation towards social responsibility can be predicted by a combination of five variables, three of which represent curricular and co-curricular environmental engagements: "listening to an international speaker," "discussing the ways the U.S. higher education links to the rest of the world," and "attending presentations of study abroad students." These three variables share an emphasis on graduate students' direct engagement with persons from other cultures and with issues beyond the boundaries of the United States and their institutions. Program and institutional efforts to incorporate foreign speakers, to encourage HESA students to attend study abroad presentations or meet study abroad students, and to bring non-U.S. perspectives in daily discussions already mark some influences on those students' orientation towards civic engagement. Further emphasizing such initiatives, diversifying them, and ensuring that HESA students partake in them will be critical in these students' growth into effective and socially responsible professionals. Race as a variable showed a statistically meaningful negative association with students' orientation, indicating that the more likely the student identifies as White, the lower their orientation. These results align with other research studies that demonstrate the value of international exposure towards a range of outcomes in graduate students (Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018).

## Conclusion

HESA graduate programs carry the responsibility to prepare culturally-sensitive, caring, ethical, and socially engaged professionals who would in turn impart those values to the students they serve. However, HESA students' exposure to other cultures through involvements in international activities remains low, while their orientation towards civic responsibility is moderate. Increasing international exposure opportunities for HESA students through graduate programs and co-curricular initiatives will not only enhance students' global awareness but also bolster their civic orientation. The study's findings contribute to our understanding of the available opportunities for international involvements for HESA graduate students across graduate programs, the students' rates of engagement with such opportunities, and the influence of such exposure on students' civic responsibility.

This study's findings should be considered in the context of an important limitation related to the survey responses. This limitation concerns generalizations of the findings. Responses to this study's survey did not come from all HESA graduate programs in the country; in addition, the Midwest region and programs at public institutions were over-represented in the response pool. As a result, the study's outcomes cannot be generalized to all HESA graduate students and programs in the United States. Despite this important limitation, the outcomes of this study can offer insights to program faculty and program directors regarding diversity of international exposures, their critical role in developing effective HESA professionals, and the importance of efforts that emphasize student involvement in international initiatives. Considering that HESA graduate student population across the 94 HESA programs in the country is not large, it was encouraging to receive the amount of responses that I did. Students' willingness to spend time and share experiences on this survey signal their interest in international initiatives.

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**Snejana Slantcheva-Durst** is a Professor in the Department of Educational Studies of the Judith College of Education at the University of Toledo. She is also the Director of the College of Education Russel Research Center. She holds doctoral degrees from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (in Higher Education Policy and Administration) and the University of Toledo (in American History). Her main research interests are in the areas of higher education history, university leadership and administration, and comparative policy analysis.