Internationalizing Campus Partners

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ABSTRACT

The available discourse on how international students' needs and expectations are accommodated in U.S. higher education institutions is extensive while the corresponding research on how International Services' Staff (ISS) are prepared for the challenge is limited. The purpose of this essay was to research the personal, academic, and professional background of individuals working in International Services Offices (ISOs) nationwide and identify issues that are not sufficiently addressed. The survey allowed for the collection of data on the training and experience of International Services Staff as well as the methods and strategies used to effectively communicate with international students. Upon discussion of the findings and their significance, the author proposes future recommendations through the implementation of a practical training module.

Keywords: intercultural communication competence, internationalization, international services staff, international students

International students are arguably some of the bravest, most ambitious, and motivated scholars of our generation. Even though their pursuit of a higher education degree away from home, family, social support, and comfort zones is full of obstacles, they recognize that the benefits outweigh the challenges. Contingencies that are likely to affect their cultural adjustment to the host country and overall college experience include cultural, linguistic, social, and educational barriers. These barriers usually emerge in a variety of forms such as culture shock, homesickness, and differences in communicative patterns, making the process even more challenging. With the U.S. being a leader in international education, it is important that professionals working directly with international students know how to adapt to the diversity of the group, effectively communicate with them, and understand their needs. To facilitate development and improvement of the

intercultural skills necessary to assist international students, a study was conducted of university staff members whose primary responsibilities are in offices that address international student needs. The study and resulting training module are presented in this article after an overview of the research underlying both.

The impact international education has on the U.S. is demonstrated through its contribution to the country's economy and job market and, thus, validates the necessity to continue developing and expanding it. During the 2014-2015 academic year, international students brought $30.5 billion worth of revenue to the United States, an amount that funded over 370,000 jobs (NAFSA, n.d.). The majority of international students pay full-tuition as opposed to their domestic counterparts who qualify for in-state tuition, more scholarships, and federal loans, and thus international students guarantee a consistent revenue stream for their institutions (Hegarty, 2014). The benefits, however, go beyond the financial realm by contributing culturally to the host country of the sojourner, the institution, and its student body. In addition to supporting scientific research, contributing to technical innovation, retaining faculty and preparing domestic students for global careers, international students boost socioeconomic advancements and intercultural exchange (Anderson, n.d.). The personal relationships and friendships that are created allow for the building of bridges between countries that can potentially lead to long-term personal, business, and diplomatic relationships with benefits for both parties.

Hence, the U.S. and its institutions specifically should do their best to cater to international students' needs and concerns, help them immerse in the culture, and overcome the challenges while respecting the diversity of the population. International Services Staff (ISS) are meant to be the first (but not only) point of reference for international students and interact with them on a more regular basis than other campus offices. However, a collaborative approach among university constituents and a shared understanding of international students' needs and struggles can lead to a higher student retention and an enhanced educational experience (Hegarty, 2014), which benefits both the students and the institution. In retrospect, retention also shows the institution's level of internationalization and ability to accommodate cultural differences (Rubin, 2016). Subsequently, internationalization efforts aim to unify the entire campus through the implementation of services and initiatives that promote cultural sensitivity and awareness. The international student body and the International Services Office (ISO) are key elements in the process but should not be deemed as the only units responsible for the implementation of those efforts.

As a result of the need for collaboration and intercultural competencies with ISS and staff across the campus, the study reported here was conceived. Specifically, the research sought to identify the existing gaps

and problems ISS experience nationwide and implement a feasible resolution. For the purpose of this paper, International Student Advisers (ISAs) are designated as a subcategory of ISS and both terms refer to employees of ISOs. This essay provides the literature review that explores the plethora of struggles and challenges international students experience and demonstrates the need for campus partners to be wary of those. The study, that was part of a Master's degree completion project, presents and analyzes the results which cultivated in a digital platform providing visitors with a variety of useful resources and tools pertaining to international education and framework for an Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) workshop.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Students

Like any individual pursuing a higher education degree, international students have a plethora of options to explore. However, in most cases they have to make a decision based on virtual tours and email or phone/Skype conversations. International recruiters appeal to the qualities that they know can attract scholars from abroad. Features that are bound to influence the decision to attend a U.S. institution include institutional, program, and recruitment characteristics (Leong, 2015; McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallett, 2012). Institutional characteristics include university size and enrollment, liveliness of location, physical attractiveness of campus, and social atmosphere of campus. Program characteristics include friendliness of department staff, faculty/student ratio, length of time required to complete program, and partnerships with other universities. Lastly, marketing recruitment characteristics include speed of acceptance into the program, ease of admissions process, affordability, family connection at the school, and presence of institution on a university-ranking list (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallett, 2012).

The same characteristics may also shape the expectations that international students set for their college experience in the U.S. Expectations can range from foreign language acquisition and application of classroom concepts to exposure and immersion into other cultures, as well as enhanced employment opportunities (Salyers, Carston, Dean, & London, 2015). Regardless, through their experience, international students attain improved cultural sensitivity, language proficiency, personal growth, openness to diversity, and enhanced civic responsibility (Salyers, Carston, Dean, & London, 2015), elements that are likely to rebound on the individuals surrounding international students. For the exchange to be successful though, and have the desired outcome, individuals need to be provided with the appropriate tools and guidance.

The benefits students obtain while studying away from home come with a series of challenges and struggles for them to overcome. Extensive research has been done on the linguistic, cultural, academic, and social barriers that international students encounter during their experience here. In terms of linguistic barriers, the lack of fluency in the language, knowledge of slang or pop culture references can induce miscommunication between international students and native speakers. These barriers can ultimately lead to homesickness, isolation, lack of confidence (Banjong, 2015; Kwon, 2009), and, consequently, affect international students' performance in the classroom and ability to form friendships (Leong, 2015). Students may be the subject of discrimination and negative attitudes by native speakers including micro-aggressions and insults as well as physical, sexual, race, and language-related assaults (Ee, 2013). Even though language barriers are portrayed as one of the main challenges international students encounter, there are a number of emotional struggles related to standardized (for the host culture) procedures that are often neglected. Everyday tasks such as paying bills, installing cable television, finding a cell phone plan, tipping at a restaurant, figuring out temperature, converting clothing sizes, and even crossing the street can become a source of frustration and stress (Gebhard, 2012). The challenge derives not only from the language barrier, but also from the differences in the process that is required to carry out basic daily tasks.

Cultural barriers cover a wide spectrum of differences that may affect how students perceive and react to the host culture. The U.S. pedagogical model is an example of such a barrier and refers to differences in the utilized teaching methods and expectations, grading/assessment manners, class attendance/size, exams, class participation, and faculty-student relations where interactions can be more formal/informal or more/less strict than in the student's home country (Leong, 2015). More differences are apparent in the availability and access to academic resources including up-to-date information and materials that usually originate from Western societies and are not translated in the native language of the respective country. Moreover, some countries avoid providing updated statistics about controversial topics or in some cases distort them (Leong, 2015), leaving their population unaware and uninformed. International students work extra hard to overcome the language barrier but also have to figure out how to maneuver through the fixed norms of the academic system if they want to succeed in the classroom. Despite all these adversities, they are appreciative of the quality of education they receive, their professors, class size, freedom of class selections and options, academic opportunities, and other resources (Leong, 2015). Academic success and cultural integration are equally important as they tend to stabilize each other.

Social barriers concern friendship formation, self-segregation, dating, and roommate situation problems (Leong, 2015) that can influence students' experiences and hinder their cultural integration. Americans' individualistic acumen seems to discourage friendship formations between international and domestic students, and ultimately promotes self-segregation among international students in the form of cohorts with co-nationals. The shared struggles, familiarity, and comfort of communicating with co-nationals provide international students with a social support group that empathizes with them, but it also impedes cultural immersion and language proficiency. These language and cultural differences along with Americans' directness of sexual expressions also impede the creation of romantic relationships (Leong, 2015). International students' on-campus residential experience is already troublesome due to cost and closing of residence halls over breaks and holidays, and in many cases the situation is exacerbated due to lifestyle differences (e.g. partying, sleeping schedule, playing video games, sexual permissiveness) with the roommate(s). Lastly, the high cost of living, lack of funding (e.g. scholarships, federal loans, etc.), constantly rising tuition, and textbook prices along with the lack of job opportunities—immigration rules forbid international students from working off-campus—underpin international students' financial burdens (Kwon, 2009; Leong, 2015).

This is just a sample of the various stressors international students experience and need support with. However, many of them tend to associate seeking support (academic, mental, etc.) with acknowledgement of failure due to a variety of cultural norms (Katsara, 2015). Poyrazli (2015) identified that the number of students seeking assistance from the counseling center of their campus is disproportionate to the number of students with psychological concerns. When asked to report on support sources during stressful and troublesome times, students rated highly peers and friends, while the International Services Office (ISO) came next with a notable difference (less than half) followed by professors and organizations they are involved with (Kwon, 2009). The lack of mention of student support services and counseling services should be alarming to institutions considering that the purpose of these campus resources is to effectively resolve and address such struggles for students. The data indicates the importance of social support and the need for ISOs to strengthen and enhance their efforts in providing the necessary assistance to the international student body.

All these adaptation and adjustment issues, challenges, and struggles lead to what is called culture shock. It also explains why there is extensive research and initiatives/efforts put forth to appropriately support international students. Culture shock is a term used on a regular basis to describe the emotional and mental condition that individuals entering

different cultures undergo. Oberg (1954), who was credited the implementation of the term "culture shock," identified four stages. The honeymoon stage refers to the excitement and initial euphoria that sojourners experience during the first few days, weeks, or even months. The second stage entails more irritation and hostility by the sojourner as small and big differences between the host and home culture start to emerge and prejudices, stereotypes, and homesickness signs become more notable. During the third stage, adjustment, comfort and facilitation start to take place, and the sojourner starts to gain perspective and open up to the home culture. The fourth and last stage indicates that the sojourner has adjusted and is no longer affected in a negative way. Considering the barriers and contingencies previously discussed, culture shock is paradoxically a necessary step of students' acculturation process.

International Services Staff (ISS)

International student advisers (ISAs) play a multi-faceted role in the transition and experience of international students. Due to the nature of their position, they can potentially have a significant influence on students' lives. The advisor's role is to communicate cultural and academic norms and expectations to international students, ensure compliance with governmental regulations and policies, and aid cultural integration, as well as promote and manage event programming (Bista, 2015). With the implementation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) after 9/11, the job and responsibilities of ISAs have become more demanding and complex, especially due to the constantly changing immigration regulations that require advisors to allocate more of their time to the enforcement of these policies (Bista, 2015; Katz, 2011). Some ISAs are forced to spend as much as 95% of their time doing immigration-related work, including advising, processing, and compliance (Austell, 2013), which ultimately takes away from assisting with students' cultural integration and social support. International students are held accountable for their immigration status, which is in itself very overwhelming and stressful as they navigate a new bureaucratic system. Despite the adversities, ISS members do their best to guide students through this paperwork maze while balancing the reinforcement of immigration requirements with social support and cultural integration (Austell, 2013).

ISAs need to be equipped with intercultural competence, empathy, patience, sensitivity to cultural differences, generosity of spirit, and willingness to master databases (Bista, 2015; Katz, 2011). In addition to these characteristics, universities seem to show preference towards young, enthusiastic, bilingual candidates with study abroad experience and intercultural competence skills (Bista, 2015). Challenges of the role include the implementation of more resources for international students as their

number is constantly increasing in a rather fast pace, the "education" of faculty, staff, and domestic students about their struggles, and strategies to bridge these gaps (Bista, 2015). In its strictly operational function, the role encompasses effective advising and ensuring international students are familiar with their academic and immigration status (Bista, 2015). These responsibilities should be balanced with the sociocultural support and assistance of students and it requires the right individual to take up the task. Regardless of one's academic and professional background and experience in the field, his/her skill set can always be enhanced through training and mentoring opportunities.

International student support should not be seen as the sole responsibility of the ISO. A successful international student experience requires the involvement and collaboration of the entire campus community, including faculty, staff, and students as well as the implementation of more institutional initiatives to improve the process. A study by Roberts and Dunworth (2012) showed that ISAs believed that international students were fully aware of the campus services available to them but that they lacked understanding of what the service involved and how to access it. Student responses, on the other hand, indicated that more than half of them were unaware of these services. Additionally, students commented on faculty's ineffective referral or lack of knowledge regarding campus services' availability (Roberts & Dunworth, 2012). Considering that international students struggle navigating the bureaucracy of the new culture as well as the academic system and social norms, it is imperative that they receive appropriate and timely assistance from all constituents.

ISS should encourage and ensure that students are familiar with the location and services provided by the different campus resources. There is a strong positive correlation between campus resources and the alleviation of international students' struggles (Banjong, 2015), therefore, these services should ensure their transparency to the entire student population. Career services, specifically, are an important resource to any institution as they assist the students with academics, career goals, and cultural adaptation. They provide a wider spectrum of how acculturation and cultural integrity can be achieved, enhancing their practical skills and enriching their experience (Jing, 2013). Such practices will improve international student recruitment, retention, and institutional reputation.

There is a need to implement resources that promote intercultural communication, interaction, and exchange outside the classroom and support identity management of international students (Triana, 2015). Developed by Cupach and Imahori (2005), identity management theory refers to how identities are established, maintained, and negotiated within relationships and is designed to explain communication competence in intercultural encounters. International students' transition in a new culture

comes with stress, uneasiness, and self-doubt as the experience enables them to question and evaluate their own values and beliefs. ISS can benefit tremendously from collaborating and working closely with other on-campus offices (student involvement, counseling services, health center, academic affairs, etc.) to ensure that both sides are sufficiently prepared to provide the appropriate referral when the international student comes seeking support (Austell, 2013). However, due to barriers mentioned previously, it sometimes becomes difficult for students to communicate their concerns or for staff to fully understand the issue that needs to be resolved.

Intercultural Communication Competence

By definition, intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the degree to which an individual is able to effectively and appropriately exchange information verbally and nonverbally with individuals of different cultural backgrounds (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999). ICC is a blend of skills that require extra flexibility, self-reflection, and appreciation for diversity, while the development of those skills is a lifelong learning experience. The United States has an extremely diverse (culturally, ethnically, racially, religiously, and linguistically) population that keeps growing, making these skills a prime necessity across disciplines and professions. The urgency for the development of such skills among professionals in higher education is greater considering the frequency of their interactions with international students and the need for these interactions to be effective and genuine.

Intercultural communication is complex, and individuals engaging in such interactions recognize the variety of barriers that are likely to emerge in the process. By overcoming these (cultural, linguistic, social, etc.) barriers, one can gain friendships, knowledge, new perspective, and appreciation for diversity. Linguistic knowledge alone does not suffice for a successful and efficient interaction with a native speaker of a given language (Jiao, 2014). There is a lot more that goes into a successful interaction. Slang, idioms, historic references, and pop culture references are just a few of the linguistic obstacles that may hinder communication. Both verbal and nonverbal patterns along with expectations on response manner, level of politeness or formality as well as time frame of reaction, which vary across cultures, show the multidimensional facet of communication and the variety of rules that underpin it. Communicators need to constantly build their knowledge base so that they can adapt and adjust to the context of their interaction and be aware of the principles that surround it.

The theoretical framework surrounding the development of ICC through workshops and trainings is broad, but the core of the development process is applying these principles in context, *i.e.* interacting with individuals of differing backgrounds with a genuine desire to see things from their viewpoint. This experience itself will enhance participants'

intercultural sensitivity leading to stronger ICC skills. However, an intercultural training workshop is a step in the right direction by providing participants with the foundations and basic guidelines to facilitate the communication and exchange. Specifically in the field of higher education, multicultural competence and sensitivity are necessities for staff working with international students but both elements and their training are inadequate (Lieb, 2016). Thus, the implementation of a training module will not only improve the intercultural communication skills of university staff, but it will also enhance the institution's internationalization efforts, increase retention, and enhance international students' experience.

METHOD

Study Rationale

Surveys related to international education tend to concentrate on international students' cultural, academic, and social experience and the struggles they encounter in the process (Gautam, Lowery, Mays, & Durant, 2016; Kusek, 2015; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). The corresponding discourse and evidence on staff professional preparation, background, and input is very limited, allowing this project to advance the research agenda, identify ISS needs, and improve institutional and administrative practices in the field.

The survey that was conducted in the initial phase of the research project led and defined the direction of this paper and its discourse. The survey prompted ISS to discuss their perspectives on issues their profession encounters, thus, exhibiting results that identified a variety of problems that need to be addressed and resolved. For the next step, previous research and literature review helped identify the root of the problem along with other significant factors that may have affected and contributed to its development. Lastly, a solution was proposed and implemented through a digital platform.

The study, which included the survey, was entitled "Accommodating International Students' Needs and Expectations: How Are International Services' Staff Prepared for the Challenge?" and was part of master's degree completion project. The survey allowed the collection of data on the personal, academic, and professional background of individuals working in the Office of International Services around the nation, as well as the methods and strategies they use to effectively communicate with international students. Its purpose was to see ISS's perspective on the needs and struggles they encounter when communicating and interacting with international students as well as give them the chance to communicate other issues that are not sufficiently addressed.

A survey was created through a Qualtrics tool and emailed to the International Services Offices' staff of several educational institutions

through the AIEA (Association of International Education Administrators) and the AJCU international affinity group (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities) listservs as well as to a number of smaller universities that were randomly picked through an online search and were not included in the other two lists. To qualify for the survey, participants had to be employed within an ISO. The survey included 34 questions (mostly multiple-choice, some open-ended, and some on Likert Scale), which covered a wide array of subjects including the participants' personal, academic, and professional background as well as their opinion on the communicative and challenging aspects of their position. The introductory page of the survey explained the purpose of the study, affirmed IRB approval, guaranteed the anonymity of answers provided by each participant and provided the contact information of the researcher for anyone who had questions regarding the survey. The participants' right to privacy, honesty, choice to participate, and choice to discontinue participation at any point of the process was emphasized.

The first section collected the participants' demographic information, including age, sex, education, ethnicity, and nationality, followed by academic background. They were asked about the highest level of degree they had achieved and were prompted to indicate the major/program they had completed for their Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degree (if applicable) based on their response. Additionally, participants were asked to indicate membership to relevant associations, attendance to relevant conferences, and completion of relevant certifications and/or intercultural trainings.

The next section covered questions pertaining to their personal experience that are relevant and applicable to their position, including experience studying, living, working abroad, traveling, experiencing culture shock, as well as interacting with individuals of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Language knowledge is among the necessary and highly valued skills in the field, and therefore participants were asked to indicate their native language and any additional languages they are fluent in. In the last and longest section of the survey, participants were asked a few open-ended questions. Some questions were close ended, while others asked participants to rate quality of communicative processes using a Likert scale. A few questions required short answers with their feedback on topics related to international education and international students' struggles. Specifically, participants were asked how and why they got involved in the field, their favorite and least favorite part about their job, the main challenge they encounter on a regular basis, and what they find to be the three essential qualities for anyone working with international students.

Participants were also asked to self-reflect and evaluate how effectively they communicate with international students verbally, nonverbally, and through email/social media platforms. Next, they were

asked whether or not they share their personal cell phone number with students and what they believe is the principal communication challenge (language, cultural, social, or other) students experience. Lastly, they were asked how they stay up to date with trends in the international education field, what the major cultural struggle of international students is in their opinion, and what needs and challenges ISS face that need to be addressed.

RESULTS

The total number of participants who attempted completing the survey is 170 while 125 of them completed the entire survey thus, all the percentages are reported in terms of the number of actual responses to each question. Qualtrics provided the majority of the survey statistics but there were many open-ended questions and questions asking for specific examples and information that had to be analyzed manually including affiliations to associations, names of publications, and names of conferences attended. Considering that some participants did not respond to all the questions, the percentages represent the number of total responses on each question.

In terms of demographics, the field is dominated by white (79%), female (66%) U.S. citizens (75%). The majority of ISS professionals hold a Master's Degree (66%) while degrees of all levels (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate) were mostly within a Higher Education, International Education, or International Studies field. Close to 92% of respondents have attended an International Education Conference (primarily NAFSA) while 84% of them are members of an international education organization or association (primarily NAFSA). A relatively high percentage of professionals in the field have experienced studying (66%), working (63%), and living (71%) abroad while 86% of them believe that travel should be considered professional development. Participants reported having experienced culture shock (76%) themselves and as major coping strategies they utilized in the process, they reported interacting with locals (23%) and interacting with co-nationals and others who have gone through it (15%).

English is the native language for 78% of ISS professionals, followed by French (26%), with 76% of them indicated they are fluent (conversational level) in another language, with Spanish (43%) and French (36%) being the top two. In terms of job responsibilities, 83% of them indicated that learning about other cultures (83%), interacting with international students (74%), and working within the higher education field (72%) were their favorite parts of the job. On the other hand, their least favorite parts of the job include SEVIS/immigration compliance (51%), institutional politics, and bureaucracy. From the ISS perspective, the language (vs. cultural or social) barrier (49%) is the main struggle international students experience when communicating while the most challenging aspects of their overall transition, again according to ISS, are

cultural adjustment (61%), navigation of new culture's bureaucracy (59%), and, again, language barriers (56%).

In terms of intercultural training, 59% of participants have received intercultural training outside their current employer, but only 28% have received formal intercultural training before starting in their current position. An astounding 85% of them believe that a training of this nature would be useful in helping them improve communication with international students. When asked to indicate the top three qualities that are essential for an ISS member, participants pinpointed intercultural communication competence (60%), adaptability (57%), and patience (57%). Lastly, to the open-ended question what the main challenges ISS members face that are not sufficiently addressed, out of 55 respondents, 25% implied being understaffed and 13% pinpointed lacking resources. In addition, an equal number of respondents (7%) indicated that their compensation is low and that there is a lack of funding, lack of support, and understanding from their institutions as well as dissatisfaction with other campus offices who lean on ISOs too much to "fix" international students' concerns.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results indicated consistency and homogeneity in many aspects of ISS's background but also a variety of challenges and gaps that need to be addressed. In terms of demographics, the population lacks diversity, especially with regard to race. The field should strive for greater racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among its professionals, which would benefit ISOs by increasing their productivity and creativity. It would allow team members to bring unique perspectives to the table and the ability to foster strong connections with people of various cultures and backgrounds (Marwaha, 2014). Embracing diversity in such a practical manner will also allow more international students to relate to ISS, demonstrate the institution's commitment to inclusion, and enact its internationalization efforts. Given the diversity of the student body, it seems that an equally diverse staff would increase students' level of comfort, willingness to seek out help, and overall satisfaction.

Most of the survey's participants hold degrees in relevant fields and demonstrate drive and enthusiasm for their profession by affiliating themselves with professional organizations and associations related to the field and attending respective conferences. More than half of the participants have experience studying, working, and living abroad, which might explain the lack of intercultural training provided to them in their current positions. Employers might be substituting employees' experience abroad, foreign language proficiency, and claimed culture shock experience with the required ICC skills and the need for further intercultural training. However, that would refrain ISS members from expanding those skills. Further

research should explore this assumption. Regional experience or a simple study abroad may not be adequate to develop and cultivate those skills.

Learning ICC is not an easy task, and it does not happen automatically. It is a lifelong learning experience (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2012) that needs to be exercised and constantly stimulated due to the nature of intercultural communication, which is multi-dimensional, dynamic, and fluid. ISS members seem to support the implementation of intercultural trainings. As many as 85% of the survey's participants agreed that a training of this nature would be helpful in improving their communication with international students. Thus, intercultural training, especially in such culturally diverse settings should not be neglected, but rather revisited on a regular basis and progressively enhanced.

As expected, ISS indicated that SEVIS and immigration compliance is the least favorite function of their role. As portrayed by the survey's results and literature review, staying up to date with all the immigration policies that are constantly changing is a rather time-consuming process which takes away from one of the tasks they enjoy the most, interacting with students and supporting their cultural experience and integration. Consequently, immigration compliance is bound to make it difficult for many ISAs to sufficiently assist students with the cultural and emotional struggles they encounter as well as with the challenges of navigating the bureaucracy of the new culture. Even though institutions cannot control the degree or frequency that governmental and immigration policies change, they can assure that their ISOs are sufficiently staffed, funded, and supported by the entire campus community and its administration.

The lack of support and understanding from campus partners exacerbates the struggles both for ISAs and international students. This lack of understanding may derive from a number of sources including the lack of ICC skills among campus partners' staff members, the lack of familiarity with the role of the ISO, and the lack of cohesion in efforts to effectively address international students' needs and concerns. These might also explain why campus offices depend on ISS to "fix" international students' problems. With ICC skills being the top quality of a professional in international education, one can argue that other professionals within the higher education field–both faculty and staff–should also exhibit such skills. Campus partners should provide international students with the same quality of service and attention as domestic students despite the challenges in the process. Considering the frequency and high likelihood of students having inquiries from and interacting with campus offices (other than the ISO), ICC becomes a necessary skill set for all professionals within higher education and suggests the need for training not only for ISS staff but also for faculty, student support staff, health services, etc. if a campus is truly to be internationalized.

Recently, in order to internationalize the entire campus community more initiatives have been implemented to include administrators and staff. However, there is need for a critical consideration of how internationalization efforts are embedded within the strategic plan of each institution, how they are implemented and, most importantly, how their effectiveness is evaluated. Ensuring that the entire campus community has a clear understanding of the various struggles international students undergo has the potential to increase cultural sensitivity and the quality of cross-cultural interactions. Even though the academic experience plays a dominant role in international students' life, the cultural and social aspect of their experience should not be neglected as those can significantly influence a student's academic performance and overall satisfaction. Through the training of campus partners, U.S. institutions can enhance the internationalization efforts on their campuses, which will ultimately improve international students' experience and facilitate their cultural integration while offering a professional development opportunity for the institution's employees. International students are known to have significant socioeconomic and cultural contributions to their institutions by internationalizing the student body through the exposure to cultural diversity and relationship building opportunities. However, little is said or done about the implementation of such opportunities for staff and campus partners who also interact with international students on a daily basis. Internationalization efforts are fortified when the campus community has a shared understanding of the significance and benefits these students bring nationally and locally.

Specifically, the enhancement of internationalization efforts put forth by U.S. higher education institutions should support the implementation of an intercultural communication workshop for their campus partners. The rationale stands behind the limited number of such initiatives towards staff and campus partners as opposed to faculty and students. International Services Staff (ISS) who usually seek ideas and solutions for a smoother integration of the international student body through the collaboration of the entire campus community could play a major role in these initiatives.

Upon identifying the need for more internationalization initiatives of this nature on U.S. campuses, the author designed a framework for an intercultural training workshop targeting campus partners. Ideally, an ISS member will take up the task to customize and execute the workshop. The given framework is providing the individual(s) with practical guidelines to internationalize their campus partners by developing an intercultural training for university staff members who are likely to interact with international students on a daily basis and thus affect their experience and overall satisfaction. Examples of offices that would be invited to the workshop include (office names/titles may vary across institutions): Academic Affairs,

Athletics, Business/Payroll, Campus Recreation, Center for Service and Community Engagement, Counseling Services, Registrar, Residence Life, Student Health, Student Involvement, Student Success Center, etc. The model is tailored to U.S. institutions but could easily be adapted by institutions abroad as the issue has a global character.

The workshop framework along with the full data analysis of the survey and a variety of other materials and resources that are pertinent to international education and international students' cultural integration are available at koseva.wix.com/campuspartners. All the materials are free to download and utilize by visitors of the website. The author only asks to be given appropriate credit. The module combines interactional/relational approach with lecture, which are fundamental to any intercultural training model. It is a simple, flexible, and inexpensive method that most people have been exposed to, making it one of the most effective and cost-efficient choices. The framework comes with a "guidebook" (available in pdf format under the *Workshop* tab) explaining the rationale and giving step-by-step directions for the development and effective customization of the workshop.

IMPLICATIONS

Despite the plethora of remarkable responses provided, the survey had a few limitations. The study could have introduced a wider spectrum of data by expanding to a larger number of participants and by surveying staff outside ISOs that are also likely to interact with international students on a regular basis.   Additionally, the survey was predominantly completed by professionals in North America narrowing the scope of the results. Responses from professionals outside North America could provide a new perspective and broaden the discourse on issues that are not sufficiently addressed in the field.

Even though academic, professional, and personal information are good indicators of an individual's background and credentials, they do not account for their communication style, content, and quality of information or their ability to connect with and understand a student. Additionally, what seems to be effective for one communicator might not always be the case for the other communicator. Both ISS and international students are the subject of interactions that can be unintentionally misinterpreted beyond their control and understanding.

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