

Analysis of International Student Engagement

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This paper analyzes the relationship between international student engagement and persistence to graduation through the lens of Alexander Astin's (1994) input-environment-output (I-E-O) model, with special attention to barriers that international students encounter, and the strategies administrators might employ to understand and support students as they face such barriers. In accordance with Astin's (1984) definition, this paper focuses on student engagement and "student involvement [to] refer to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). This approach allows for student effort to be examined through a framework of active verbs and behaviors rather than relying on an abstract analysis of interior motives (Astin, 1984).

Although international students may face barriers in engaging meaningfully with their environment, they provide "significant contribution[s] to the economy" (p. 132) of America while also being "vital to the United States in maintaining its competitive edge in areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)" (Lee, 2015, p. 132). Further, international students provide non-economic forms of cultural capital including global perspectives and diverse opinions to campus environments (Lee, 2015). Finally, international students who remain in America after graduation often attain jobs in areas of need such as STEM fields, while those who "return home most often do so with good will and affinity for their second home...to benefit relations between countries" (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 381).

Engaging meaningfully in a campus environment is directly correlated to the likelihood of student persistence to graduation and attainment of university outcomes (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1993). Astin's (1994) I-E-O model can be used to evaluate a student's engagement because all students, regardless of national origin, enter their university with unique inputs – "characteristics

of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution” (p. 7). These inputs then influence how the students interact with their institutional environment – “the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed” (Astin, 1994, p.7). If a student is successful in adapting to these interactions, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging which “has been directly linked to successful outcomes in academic programs” (Murzi et al., 2019, p. 3). Institutions each have a unique set of intended student outcomes, or “characteristics after exposure to the environment” (p. 7), such as persistence to graduation or attaining a favorable career (Astin, 1994). Specifically, this paper will evaluate how input characteristics influence environmental interactions leading to the favorable outcomes of engagement, involvement, and persistence to graduation for international students and will offer strategic suggestions that support attainment of these outcomes.

Input Characteristics of International Students

Overgeneralization of International Students

Before examining pathways to favorable outcomes, it is important to understand the diverse characteristics of international students. For simplicity in reporting, institutional research studies often compare local students, classified as native or permanent residents of the U.S., to international students, classified as foreign nationals who possess a non-permanent U.S. visa (Lee, 2015). However, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE) (2020) in the 2019/2020 academic year, 227 countries were represented among the 1,075,496 international students studying in the United States. Therefore, international students are not a homogenous group, but rather an extremely diverse one whose members possess varying cultural beliefs, past experiences, future goals, socioeconomic status, family educational history, and motivations for studying in America (Lee, 2015). Hence, input qualities vary greatly between international

students. Moreover, input qualities are, “interconnected...[and] interact in important ways [to] shape individuals’ identities and experiences” (Peifer et al., 2017, p. 3). These interactions, referred to as intersectionality, can be used as a framework to gain a nuanced understanding of student needs (Peifer et al., 2017). Once needs are identified, actions can be taken to address those needs (Harper & Quaye, 2014). In short, this type of overgeneralization of international students as a cohesive, homogenous group does not consider intersectionality or input variation which, if ignored, could negatively influence attainment of favorable outcomes.

Intersectionality in Action

Intersectionality can be used as a framework to understand barriers to social acceptance that international students might encounter. For example, an interview with a student who is Black and from Africa explained that she “felt excluded by White students” (p. 96), but she could become friends with other international students including those from other African countries despite the vast cultural differences among these countries (Lee & Rice, 2007). Interestingly, she felt “ambivalence toward African Americans...[because] she felt her U.S. African American peers distanced themselves from her because she represented an African heritage they had rejected” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 96). Upon further interviews with various participants, Lee & Rice (2007) gathered that African students who are Black do not feel welcomed as a homogenous addition to the African American community because the African American students’ customs, perspectives, language, and subculture differed greatly from their own. Most often, international students formed close connections with each other, regardless of sending country, “due to a shared identity of rejection” (Lee, 2015, p. 134). Moreover, international students could “form alliances based on shared common challenges” (p. 134) such as “issues regarding mastering the local language, cultural norms, food tastes, and social shock”

(Lee, 2015, p. 134). Although this student did not feel welcomed by her White, U.S. peers nor by her African American peers, she was able to find a community among students experiencing similar social rejections because they shared the intersectionality of cultural clash between their home environment and their new, American environment.

Successful Adaptation Despite Input Barriers

Naturally, not all sojourners, that is individuals who experience cross-cultural adjustment, fully adapt. Assuming supportive programs, networks, and advisors are accessible to international students, it is the student's responsibility to engage with these environmental resources. Successful adaptation to major life changes must be driven by a sojourner's willingness to embrace change and respond through internal growth and development. Anderson (1994) explains that the sojourners must conquer obstacles that challenge

[identity] defining values, attitudes, and beliefs between the home and host cultures ...

[adjust to] loss of the familiar and/or loved objects of home cultures ... [sojourners must also] experience social incompetence because newcomers to a social group have neither the perceptual sensitivity nor the behavioral flexibility to respond to the new setting. (p. 304)

So, international students must navigate culturally different values, embrace a loss of the familiar, and endure social incompetence upon arriving to their new environment. Each of these challenges will require substantial internal growth to overcome because they each directly correlate to key elements of an individual's identity. This paper will refer to identity as, "the core, multiple social identities, relationship of the social identities to the core and identity salience, and contextual influences" (p. 77) in accordance with Jones & Abes' (2013) Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI). In other words, international students must adapt to

environmental changes by reconciling their previous social, core, and cultural identity saliences to be compatible with the demands of their new environment (Anderson, 1994; Jones & Abes, 2013).

Reconciling Novel Intersectionalities

This internal adaptation of an individual's core identity defining values is surely challenging. Fortunately, Jones & Abes (2013) have found "that identity is complicated and constantly shifting resulting in the need to negotiate between [one's] internal sense of self (core) and external influences (context)" (pp. 81-82). In other words, adapting identity salience to be compatible with an environment is not impossible, rather, it is an instinctual response to change. For example, an international student arriving from China to America may find their "race to become salient in a way that it was not" (p. 89) in China (Jones & Abes, 2013). This shift in salience will influence how the student responds to situations, and it will likely begin intersecting with other internal identities in new ways (Jones & Abes, 2013).

Increased Input Diversity with Increased Third-party Recruitment

In addition to the general diversity and varying instances of intersectionality among international students, many institutions have been expanding recruitment through loosening academic admission requirements and utilizing third-party recruitment agencies (Glass et al., 2014). National data reflects that international student enrollment has increased from 2.1 million students in 2001 to 5.3 million students in 2019 (CNBC, 2020). Moreover, the use third-party agents to achieve this increase in enrollments "tends to result in recruitment of younger students with lower high school rankings and parents with less than a college education" (Glass et al., 2014, p. 92). However, increasing the number of international students enrolled could support a variety of positive cognitive and learning outcomes for both international and local students

including, intercultural competencies, global perspectives, and preparation for success in an “increasingly diverse workforce” (Peifer et al., 2017, p. 2). Additionally, international students provide notable financial contributions to the U.S. economy and the institutions they attend (Lee, 2015). If institutions can increase recruitment of international students willing to pay out-of-state tuition without scholarships or federal aid, then institutional finances will be positively impacted. Overall, expanded recruitment of international students increases institutional tuition revenue while also supporting cognitive and learning outcomes.

On the other hand, loosening academic admission requirements and widening recruitment efforts will increase the likelihood of enrolling international students with maladaptive input qualities. For example, expanding the admissions range could mean accepting students with less exposure to foreign cultures who will be vulnerable to culture shock, social isolation, and loneliness upon arriving in America (Lee, 2015). Culture shock is a "frustration reaction syndrome" international students might encounter when trying to adapt to a new environment (Anderson, 1994, p. 293). This frustration can become extreme and inhibit a student's willingness to interact with the unknowns of their university environment ultimately negatively impacting attainment of favorable outcomes (Anderson, 1994; Astin, 1984). Simply put, loosening admission requirements and expanding recruitment efforts could negatively impact meaningful international student involvement by increasing student input variability. Moreover, this increased variability in international student inputs and intersectionality may strain previously successful institutional support programs. In other words, increased recruitment efforts, especially through third-party agencies, must be accompanied by increased student support so maladaptive outcomes such as social withdrawal, culture shock, or not persisting to graduation can be reduced (Anderson, 1994).

Suggestions to Mitigate Input Barriers to Engagement

Suggestions to Support Incoming International Students

International student advisors, institutional recruitment officers, and staff involved in facilitating first-year programs are structurally positioned within the institution to provide first-line support to incoming international students (Lee, 2015). These professionals could introduce first-year support programs, explain the programs' potential benefits, and encourage international students to participate in them before they physically arrive at the institution (Lee, 2015). This way, the students will be introduced to orientation programs, clubs, and other supportive groups while they are still in a familiar country surrounded by their existing support system. If the potential benefits of engaging in these programs is explained before the students arrive, a potential barrier to engagement can be avoided.

Forming connections between local and international students is a "crucial step in best supporting [international] students" (Lee, 2015, p. 141). In an increasingly digital age, social media platforms are a familiar tool can be used to facilitate a space that allows international student advisors, current international students at the institution, interested local students, and incoming international students to communicate and begin building a network (Lee, 2015). This way, incoming students can engage with an unfamiliar physical environment through a more familiar digital environment. Similarly, institutional websites could provide practical advice information about local shopping centers, grocery stores, parks, and other locally focused informational resources (Lee, 2015). Depending on the institution, suggestions for finding foreign food could even be included. Each of these could be communicated to the student alongside their orientation, welcome packet so international students feel supported in facing unknown barriers before they even arrive.

Suggestions to Support Meaningful Engagement in First-Year Programs

Institutions utilize various programs to encourage the formation of a social group that can enhance first-year students' adaptation and understanding of their new social context. Some examples of programs that support first-year students' transition to their new environment and foster a sense of belonging are first year seminars, living and learning communities, and academically-related clubs (Murzi et al., 2019). However, international students are less likely to engage in these programs because they "face different barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of interventions created to welcome [local] students into college" (Murzie et al., 2019, p. 5). In addition to the common input barriers mentioned in the previous sections, some of barriers to interacting with first-year programs include being unaware of the programs, not understanding the value of participation in these programs, reluctance to engage in a social activity where cultural clashes are likely to occur, and preoccupation with their recent adjustments of navigating new customs, language, and food (Murzie et al., 2019). Naturally, input barriers like these will likely hinder international students' adaptation to their new environment.

However, higher education professionals can support these students through their initial environmental transition if they are aware of these potential maladaptive input qualities and corresponding barriers to meaningful campus involvement. For example, "student affairs staff should reach out to international students, educating them on ways that students can seek out support and encouraging them to take advantage of what these programs offer and [explaining] how to participate" (Lee, 2015, p. 145). Taking identity developing obstacles into account allows educators a broad view of international students' input characteristics while simultaneously acknowledging their transition into the institutional environment.

Suggestions to Support Students After Orientation

Once orientation is over, and a routine is established, international students are still reconciling their identity saliences to align with the demands of their environment. To minimize maladaptive responses during this time of transition, faculty and staff must strive to understand international students' unique points of view to actively foster an environment that is welcoming and encouraging (Lee, 2015). They can do this through providing advocacy after initial orientation activities have ended and a regular routine has been established (Lee, 2015). If faculty and staff have consistently provided a welcoming environment, they can become advocates for students who have experienced “unexpected and unanticipated maltreatment... [such as] a degrading remark from a professor, sexual harassment from a supervisor, or social isolation from classmates” (Lee, 2015, p. 144). Not only is it ethical to support students through instances of maltreatment, but faculty-student interactions are one of six “evidence-based, high-impact practices (HIPs)” (para. 13) which are directly correlated to “higher levels of learning success” (The American Association of Colleges and Universities [AAUP], 2022, para. 13). Therefore, increased communication, rapport, and interactions between faculty and students can provide support if needed and increase the likelihood of attainment of favorable outcomes.

Environmental Barriers to International Student Engagement

Importance of International Student's Engagement in the Classroom

In addition to student-faculty interaction being positively correlated to attainment of favorable learning outcomes, it is more strongly correlated to student satisfaction than any other variable (AAUP, 2022; Astin, 1993). A large study of junior and senior undergraduate international and domestic students was evaluated where international students were assumed to be a homogenous group (Kim et al., 2017). The study found that international student

engagement with faculty in class, after class, or through email positively affected all three outcomes of interest at a statistically significant level showing, "higher levels of cognitive skills...interpersonal skills...and civic attitudes" (Kim et al., 2017, p. 407). In other words, increased faculty engagement leads to higher levels of cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, and civic attitudes among international students (Kim et al., 2017). Furthermore, the study revealed that increases in involvement were observed in international students who actively engage during in-class debates, discussions, and other critical reasoning activities in comparison to students who did not actively participate or who largely took courses that were lecture based (Kim et al., 2017). It is therefore reasonable to assume that an increase in cognitive skills, interpersonal skills, and civic attitudes will also increase an international student's likelihood of engaging meaningfully with their college environment and therefore increase the likelihood of achieving favorable outcomes.

Cultural Differences in Personal Interactions

Although, there are substantial benefits to international student engagement with faculty, there are also significant barriers in developing these relationships due to cultural differences in personal interactions. For example, Lee (2015) explains, "avoiding eye contact can be perceived as a signal of respect and reverence in one culture but the same gesture might also be perceived as being untrustworthy in another" (p. 135). Another example of differing cultural mannerisms is the handshake. Americans view a firm handshake as being a symbol of confidence and respect while some Asian cultures consider a firm handshake to be highly offensive (Lee, 2015).

Institutional faculty and staff should avoid making assumptions about the intent of an international student's behavior and instead engage the student in conversations to gain an

understanding of their perspective. Hopefully this approach can turn an instance of perceived disrespect into an intercultural exchange of ideals.

Cultural Differences in Classroom Engagement

Similarly, an international student may not show classroom engagement in the same as an American student. For example, they may not smile, nod their head during lectures, or volunteer answers during classroom discussions (Lee & Rice, 2007). Meaning, international students might appear to be purposefully disengaged or lacking in intellectual ability when they are likely engaging in way that is culturally acceptable in their home country (Lee & Rice, 2007). For example, an Asian student may stand and bow when their teachers enter the room yet put their head down during the lecture (Lee, 2015). Alternatively, African student may refrain from eating or drinking in a classroom as it is highly offensive yet not participate in classroom discussions (Lee, 2015). So, it is possible that an international student feels that they have already shown respect to a professor or is currently showing respect to their professor when, in fact, the professor views their actions as disrespectful.

Coupled with cultural differences as barriers to classroom engagement are language barriers. Often, foundational ideas are learned in an international student's native language, so if the course material is not delivered with visual aids, or accommodations are not implemented to help the student slow down the delivery of material, such as recording the lessons or sitting in the front to read the professor's lips, a student may lose focus due to a lack of understanding (Lee & Rice, 2007). In these cases, students strive to teach themselves the information from their textbooks rather than asking their professors for help or attending office hours (Glass et al., 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007). If students do not feel comfortable asking for accommodations or feel disconnected from their learning environment, less faculty-student interaction will occur.

Financial Barriers to International Student Engagement

International students are largely required to pay out of state tuition in full because foreign nationals have "little or no access to loans or scholarships" and do not qualify for federal financial aid (Lee, 2015, p. 136). Additionally, the U.S. visa and immigration processes are costly and the regulations accompanying maintaining a student's F1-visa are strict. International students are allowed to work on-campus "up to 20 hours per week while school is in session. [They] can work full-time on campus during holidays and vacation periods if [they] intend to register for the next academic semester" (International Student, n.d., para. 6). Funding for a student's education has various sources, but often international students are expected to be self-reliant regarding their living and educational expenses (Glass et al., 2014; Lee, 2015). Most international student expenses are sourced from "outside the United States, including personal, family, home governments and sending universities" (Lee, 2015, p. 132). However, many students do not have wealthy support systems, so they must support themselves financially despite facing limiting working restrictions. This financial uncertainty could exacerbate environmental stress factors such as social isolation, culture shock, or academic challenges leading to impacted persistence to graduation or increased vulnerability to injustices (Anderson, 1994; Murzie et al., 2019).

International Students as a Vulnerable Subpopulation

The *Class Action Lawsuit v. Yale* in 2005 illustrates that international students are a vulnerable subpopulation because they may be misinformed or hold false assumptions of their rights regarding labor conditions and compensation (Marklein, 2015). In extreme cases, litigation may be necessary to protect these rights. For example, the Graduate Employees and Students Organization (GESO) at Yale began a class action lawsuit to encourage the university to stop

overworking and neglecting Chinese graduate students who “likely wouldn’t object for fear of losing funding and their visa eligibility” (Marklein, 2015, p. 20). Faculty members know that these students are desperate to maintain their visa eligibility and complete their degree.

Regrettably, some members of faculty were abusing this knowledge either through overworking their graduate students or refusing to advise Chinese students because it is time consuming (Marklein, 2015). Following the GESO’s protests and lawsuit, the students have been informed that they cannot lose their fellowships or visa eligibility due to protesting their unjust treatment (Marklein, 2015). Barriers such as this can lead to mistrust between the institutional environment and students.

Violation of an international student’s working rights might occur on an individual scale as well. The limitation in working hours combines financial and academic stress for some international students by disqualifying them from pursuing paid research or teaching assistant positions which often require more than twenty hours of work per week. For example, an international student from India described a research position where she was offered "fourth time funding" which is 10 paid hours a week but asked for half time funding and was approved (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 402). She soon found out that the increase in paid hours per week also included a substantial increase in required work. After some time, she learned that local students who were working in similar time and funding structures were not required to manage such an intense work schedule. Not willing to be unjustly overworked, she “spoke out” and promptly lost the position and fell out of favor with faculty (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 402). Although she was able to remain enrolled in the institution, she no longer had an opportunity to legally work under her student visa constraints in turn increasing her financial stress (Lee & Rice, 2007). Instances of mistreatment make international students wary of asking for increased workloads or pursuing

wages that they see local students receiving because on-campus jobs and faculty favor are already difficult to attain (Lee & Rice, 2007). Furthermore, participating in undergraduate research or internships are HIPs, which are both directly correlated to attainment of higher levels of learning and success and therefore the attainment of favorable institutional outcomes (AACU, 2022). Any barriers to participation in these HIPs could have negative impact on a student's engagement with university as well as their stability financially.

Neo-racism and Personal Safety

In addition to financial hardships, international students may experience neo-racism, also known as cultural racism, that creates fear for their personal safety (Lee, 2015). Students report instances of being told to go back to their countries, getting things thrown at them, or being asked sexually harassing questions regarding cultural stereotypes (Lee & Rice, 2007). Coupled with U.S. national tragedies such as school shootings or acts of terror, concerns regarding personal safety are growing among potential and current international students. A 2011 survey reflected "30% of over 9,000 respondents indicated that the U.S. does not welcome international students" (Lee, 2015, p. 139). Peifer et al. (2017) found that "institutions with a more diverse student body composition – a feature also referred to as structural diversity – [are] correlated with higher levels of student intercultural competence" (p. 2). So, institutions with more structural diversity are more likely to be accepting of international students. Additionally, according to Bok (2006), all colleges have a duty to students to pursue both academic and non-academic outcomes including, "foster[ing] generally accepted values and behaviors, such as honesty and racial tolerance" (p. 974). In short, neo-racism and personal security concerns should be addressed through providing additional support and advocacy for current members of

diverse populations while simultaneously developing structural diversity as a long-term initiative that will benefit all students.

Reliance on International Affairs Office

International affairs staff are largely responsible for providing logistical support that international students may need. To do so requires detailed knowledge of visa and immigration policies for students' countries of origin and countless other duties. Lee (2015) explains, “scant resources tend to be devoted to a single isolated international affairs office that is somehow responsible for catering to the many complex immigration issues as well as academic and social needs for the often thousands of students from all over the world in a single campus” (p.133). In other words, as these offices must prioritize confirming students’ legal status, there is little time or resources to provide personal support to students who are also struggling to find transportation, understand local supermarkets, learn how to pay their bills or other daily tasks that local residents find mundane (Lee, 2015). After all, maintaining legal residency in America while studying must be the main priority for both the international students and the international affairs officers.

Legal Status for Studying Disrupted Resulting in Jail Time

If a student’s visa status is disrupted, even momentarily, severe consequences may apply. For example, in the case of *Bird v. Regents of New Mexico State University, et al.* (2011) Zimbabwe graduate student, Freedom Cheteni, “received in-state tuition at New Mexico State University (NMSU) while his petition for political asylum with the United States government was pending” (Bista & Dagley, n.d., p. 6). When his petition for asylum was granted, his visa status immediately switched, but he was not classified as a student native to New Mexico so was charged out-of-state tuition which he could not afford. In a whirlwind of events, Cheteni received

a financial hold on his account which prevented him from enrolling in classes. Consequently, he was temporarily not a student at the university. Now that he was granted asylum, there was a conflict with his F-1-visa status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS). This change in his SEVIS status alerted the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency that responded by detaining him for about five months. “Cheteni sued the university and its officials claiming the school retaliated against him by denying him his graduate assistantship, revoking his in-state tuition, filing a misconduct charge against him, and terminating his status in SEVIS” (Bista & Dagley, n.d., p. 6). Ultimately, the Court ruled in favor of the university based on supporting evidence of a misconduct charge the university filed against him. This extreme example serves as a cautionary tale for international students and international officers.

Mishandling any immigration legalities has severe penalties that can be damaging for the student as well as the institution.

Furthermore, delays in the student visa process can be common and often create rippling issues in planning for "travel arrangements, securing university housing, signing up for classes, and other time-sensitive tasks" (Lee, 2015, p. 136). International student affairs officers must prioritize legal needs before addressing the wholistic needs of a student. Unfortunately, a student who is not able to find guidance regarding cultural or other non-legal issues could feel unsupported by the university and therefore, less interested in participating in HIPs that increase engagement (AACU, 2020; Astin, 1984).

Unaware of Campus Resources

International students often do not understand, utilize, or know about the additional resources available on campus. For instance, taking advantage of mental health services are often taboo or seen as showing weakness in African and Asian cultures (Lee & Rice, 2007). Likely,

students from these cultures do not understand that using these services could increase their overall success by helping them learn coping mechanisms meant to mitigate their problems leading to cultural shock, extreme stress, or depression (Anderson, 1994). Lee (2015) suggests, "Beyond providing a written directory of support programs, student affairs staff should reach out to international students, educating them on ways that students can seek out support...and how to participate" (p. 145). If student affairs personnel are unable to focus their time or resources to provide direct support, peer groups could be established to encourage local students in similar residence halls, courses of study, or extracurricular clubs to work with international students to become more involved on campus (Astin, 1984).

Suggestions to Mitigate Environmental Barriers to Engagement

International House Living Arrangements

Successfully integrating into a social network with local peers is a barrier to engagement that many international students face. An international house (I-House) is one example of a purposeful initiative that universities can put into place to connect local students to international students in a way that highlights both students' strengths (Glass et al., 2014). One successful example is the five-year, dual degree, Global Science and Engineering program at the Northern Arizona University (NAU) that benefits both international and local students. This program requires local students to spend a year abroad interning in a country that complements their degree focus. The local NAU students are paired with international NAU students from the countries where they will intern, and the students live together in the year preceding the local students' internship. This linkage provides both students the opportunity to engage in language and cultural exchange with a peer who is deeply invested in learning about the others' country of origin (Glass et al., 2014). I-Houses are not a new initiative but utilizing them to enhance non-

language-based programs are fairly novel (Glass et al., 2014). On a more practical level, local students interested in making cross-cultural connections could join a small buddy system where local students are paired with international students who share similar paths of study or other interests (Lee, 2015). Implementing these types of programs more frequently could help connect international students to their local university communities and local peers to thus increasing student sense of belonging (Murzi et al., 2019).

Campus Involvement

Encouraging international students to participate in leadership positions within student government to become directly involved in addressing campus issues is another way to student engagement on campus (Glass et al., 2014). "Student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college" (p. 683) and leadership positions in co-curricular activities certainly demand time and effort (Kuh, 2009). Furthermore, students are more likely to be personally connected to the campus and its initiatives when they are directly involved in campus clubs, sports, or organizations. As international students possess globalized forms of non-economic capital including, "knowledge about and experiences in diverse cultures, economies, politics, social issues, and languages" (p. 133), collaboration between international students and local students should be encouraged (Lee, 2015). Co-curricular involvement, meaning involvement in any non-curriculum program or activity, also increases peer interactions and the chances of collaborating with students that would be unlikely acquaintances without engaging in these activities (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2020). International students also have the potential to provide peers and educators access to global perspectives, globalized collaboration with contacts in their home countries, and a wealth of other connections (Lee, 2015). These small-world connections are valuable forms of

non-economic capital which not only increase immediate engagement on campus but also increase the chances for favorable outcomes including persistence to graduation (Glass et al., 2014).

Community Involvement and Exploration

Encouraging international students to become involved in clubs and community volunteering will also likely deepen their roots in the community and expose them to off-campus networking opportunities. For example, Elon College in North Carolina has a local exploration program where international students and local students spend a few weeks living in a new area such as a small mining town in Virginia or a neighborhood in New York City (Glass et al., 2014). Here they are tasked with interviewing local people, exploring shops and sites, and trying to understand the niche culture of the area. The program seems to break down barriers between international students and local students by putting them both in situations that are out of their elements. In addition, international students get to explore unique parts of America while learning about it from their instructors, peers, and interpersonal engagement with the locals (Glass et al., 2014). Facilitating personal connection to the institutional and community environments will help international students feel less disrupted by culture shock and safe to engage meaningfully with their environment (Anderson, 1994; Glass et al., 2014).

Cultural Development for Faculty and Staff

Valparaiso University is a school deeply invested in creating an environment that encourages international student engagement by encouraging and financially supporting faculty travel to common student sending countries to experience each country's culture first-hand (Glass et al., 2014). Learning more about an international student's country of origin can help reveal cultural divides that could be hindering effective communication. Sharing these findings

between departments could help educators throughout the institution collaborate to increase international student engagement and local students' global awareness. Furthermore, faculty could build self-awareness through completing Jones & Abes (2013) "Who Am I?" (p. 80) activity to identify a key descriptor of "identity that the individual deem(s) important" (p. 80). This way, faculty can practice identifying their own identity descriptors to, in turn, use this activity with their own students as way to identify similarities and differences between individual's identity. Coupling travel with MMIDI activities could show students that faculty are interested in both their home countries and their individual experiences (Jones & Abes (2013).

Professional Development for Faculty and Staff

Educators should resist the urge to accept negative assumptions and confront any implicit biases they may have regarding international student engagement in the classroom because there is likely an alternate explanation. Perhaps, the hesitant international student has concerns regarding their deficient English ability or the student is simply taking time to observe the social dynamics of the classroom to participate in a later class (Glass et al., 2014; Lee, 2015). Instructors who choose to be patient and publicly affirming in class will likely increase student engagement in class discussions and debates. If students are not adequately engaging in curricular discourse, educators can talk to them casually outside of class to assess their comfort regarding language and communication skills. If possible, educators should be flexible with engagement opportunities. For example, if possible, alter the layout of the chairs in the classroom to reflect learning pods so students must engage with peers with whom they are not acquainted. Although it will take time, slowly building trust and rapport through curricular and co-curricular interactions will likely yield better engagement results than simply assuming international students are not interested in engaging.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the interaction between international students' input qualities influences their involvement with their institutional environment which impacts attainment of successful outcomes including, meaningful engagement, social belonging, and persistence to graduation. Higher education faculty and staff can employ strategies that support students' adaptation to their new environment by viewing international students as a diverse population that represents a variety of input qualities. For example, faculty and staff can inform incoming students of the value and variety of first-year experience programs so students feel welcome and involved upon arrival. Additionally, support structures should be available to students after their initial transition to their environment because new barriers to engagement may be encountered. Some potential ways to continue supporting international students include establishing peer connections with local student through a buddy system or an I-House. Continued research is needed to identify improvements in how to effectively implement these suggestions with considerations to best practice. Additionally, faculty and staff should undergo cultural and professional development that aims to increase their own self-awareness to, in turn, create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students regardless of their country of origin or background. As the international student affairs offices have limited resources to support students' secondary needs beyond visa requirements, university budget committees could reevaluate the resource allocation to these programs. International students contribute both economic and non-economic forms of capital that support American institutional missions. Therefore, institutions who enroll international students should support them as they adapt their input identities so they can engage meaningfully with their institutional environment and attain favorable outcomes.

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