

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

Voice from the Faculty on What they Think and Do

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Abstract

As more and more international students are enrolled in American colleges and universities, the institutions have to understand faculty's perspectives and ensure the quality of teaching and advising. This study fills the void of investigating the concerns and actions of college faculty. With responses from over 300 faculty members through a questionnaire survey in two universities, the authors examined: 1) The importance and satisfaction faculty members think of internationalization; 2) their views on the experience of international student and the responsibility, 3) their feedback on foreign students' skills, and 4) their actions taken. Data are analyzed and conclusions are made. Several important practical implications are drawn.

Keywords

Internationalization, International Students, Faculty Intervention

Introduction

Recruiting more international students is one of the major approaches that colleges and universities have adopted in combating with economic downturn and shrinking financial support from the local/state and federal government. It is particularly true in California as its economy struggles and its public spending budgets have to be cut again and again (Douglass, Edelstein, & Hoareau, 2011). Both private and public higher education institutions have acted proactively to attract international students from countries around the world, especially those nations and regions where economy is relatively better. For example, China and India are two countries where many institutions have made key efforts and successfully enrolled an increasing number of foreign students. When state and federal education budget cuts become the norm, higher education institutions everywhere else in the United States react similarly as in California (Institute of International Education, 2010a).

Although American faculty member now teach around 700,000 international students, an increase of 2.9% from previous year, with China the top of the increase 29.9% and enrollment with 127,628 students (Institute of International Education, 2010b). Very few publications have examined faculty members' perceptions and experiences.

The authors intend to focus on the following five questions: 1) Do faculty members regard internationalization as important from various aspects? And are they satisfied around the aspects of internationalization? 2) What kind of opinions do they have about the experience of international student and the responsibility? 3) What do they think of foreign students in various skills and abilities, such as English and communication skills? 4) What kind of actions have they taken to accommodate the special needs of international students? Data are analyzed and conclusions are made. Several important practical implications are drawn.

Literature Review

Literature on internationalization of higher education seldom reports faculty members' voices and publishes from faculty's perspective. Overall, other than some articles about faculty's mobility and research/program collaborations, few were from faculty's perspectives and reflect their voices, especially those who work with international students on a daily basis.

Studying what faculty members think and enhancing their engagement is void, but a direction for future and for the success of internationalization of higher education.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Research Methodology

The authors designed a survey questionnaire and requested all faculty members to fill out an online survey. The survey link was sent out by email to all full-time faculty members who taught during the semester in two universities and part-time faculty member in one university. The response rate in one university for all full-time faculty members was 52% (of 302, 277 were full-time); 36.9% for full-time faculty members and 22.5% for part-time faculty members. The

overall response rate was 41.9%. The questionnaire had included over 90 questions around six sections:

1. Importance and satisfaction about various aspects of internationalization;
2. Experiences and reviews around teaching and advising international students;
3. Concerns regarding international students that may be related to academic studies;
4. Actions taken in teaching and communicating with international students;
5. Demographic information of the respondent; and
6. Qualitative comments about internationalizations and international student enrollment.

In two universities, 471 faculty members responded to the survey, with 302 from one public university and 169 from one private university.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Importance and Satisfaction

Faculty members' perceived importance is critical to the success of internationalization efforts. Of a dozen items around internationalization efforts, their agreement with the importance on a 5-point Likert scale ranged from 3.67 to 4.40 (5 means "strongly agree").

On the same items, the satisfaction levels ranged only from 2.77 to 3.19.

The least gaps are observed in inviting international scholars, recruiting international students, incorporate international elements in curriculum, and emphasizing it as the goal of the university.

Priority areas for improvement actions are

- Providing more academic support services, such as a writing center and a reading Center, for international students
- Enhancing faculty's role in the internationalization of the university
- Encouraging faculty participation in internationalization efforts

Overall, the faculty in the college of arts & sciences are relatively less satisfied with internationalization than those in the college of business, which in turn are less satisfied than those in the college of education.

No differences in gap for age, years of service, gender, ethnicity, and academic rank.

Those who are in academic administrative positions have a higher gap, not because they think that internationalization is more important, but because they are less satisfied.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Experiences

In terms of faculty's experiences with internationalization, questions were asked around: Faculty Responsibility and English Skills, Awareness and Understanding, Study Habits and Improvement/Adjustment, Benefit of Internationalization and Faculty Interest, Assistance and Help Seeking. They are very likely to understand their responsibility to help international students to adjust to

the US educational system and are aware of student language problems. They are also responsive and available for help. However, they are less likely to think that it is their responsibility to help them overcome language difficulties. They also suggest that students do not adjust well and ask questions as much as they should be, while having problems academically and socially.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Concerns

Faculty members' concerns about international students are around three main factors: international students' communication and relationship with others, their sense of responsibility and compliance with university administrative and academic policies, and their English skills. Faculty members are very concerned about students' English skills. 71.6% of the faculty members are very concerned about international students' academic writing in English and 61.5% are very concerned about their reading textbooks in English. In addition, almost 50% of the faculty members are very concerned that students are not in compliance with standards of integrity, regarding cheating and plagiarism.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Actions

The faculty members have taken actions around providing learning tools, giving special efforts around requirement, English speaking and writing, group learning, non-verbal learning, and other teaching and learning techniques.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

Conclusions Remarks

This study concludes that faculty members think internationalization is important, but not as satisfied; they have strong concerns about international students and also taken many types of actions.

The authors strongly argue that the final quality of higher education internationalization and accountability to international students are all in the hands of the faculty members.

The authors suggest that university and colleges have to listen to faculty's concerns and facilitate faculty's teaching and advising of international students.

This study is important in filling out the void of lacking in internationalization research from the faculty's perspective and in providing recommendations on what colleges and universities should do to enhance higher education internationalization.

For detail, please contact the corresponding author.

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