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The Transition Experiences of International Graduate Students in Clark University School of Professional Studies

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Abstract

In the last decade, the School of Professional Studies at Clark University has witnessed a sharp increase in international students. More and more international students in the millennial generation have entered the School of Professional Studies pursuing one of the two-year graduate programs: Master of Science in Professional Studies, Master of Science in Public Administration, and Master of Science in Information Technology. In the past, working adult student dominant the program. These students already had a career outside the classrooms before them came to study. The millennial international students have generated new adjustment problems. Some of the transition issues of international students have been described in the literature, and these issues can be categorized into three types: academic challenges, social isolation, and cultural adjustment. In response to these new trends, the School of Professional Studies has been providing departmental support services for international students since the 2016 fall semester. This Capstone project researched strategies offered by other American universities in dealing with international students' transition issues and suggested a series of practical solutions for the School of Professional Studies. These practices include the School of Professional Studies International Students Page, Buddy Program, Academic Training Program, and American Survival Program. We hope these strategies will help the School Professional Students to improve inclusion and the environment for international students.

Keywords: inclusion and diversity, international students, adjustment problems, transition experiences, graduate school

Executive Summary

It is an established fact that international student numbers are increasing. At Clark University, the percent of international students was 15% in 2014, compared to 7% in 2000, while in the School of Professional Studies, 61% of the students are international students. The international students are experiencing adjustment problems in three categories: academic challenges, social isolation, and cultural adjustment.

Academic challenges: in international student's home country, the teaching methods and learning style may be totally different from that in the United States. For example, new assignments, case studies, and review writing can be a new and difficult challenge. When they are preparing their first assignment they may not be familiar with writing structures and sources. But, studies should always come first, so every student must study hard and get used to new academic challenges.

Social isolation: when international students live in the United States, they observe people interact differently with their friends or colleagues; even students and teachers interact differently in different social situations. When the students first start any program, they feel lonely and feel shy in class. They face problems creating a new network at the university. So, students must step out of their comfort zone and talk. They need to interact with other people freely, so they can feel less social problem.

Culture shock: when international students arrived in the United States, they may feel very lost due to different cultural backgrounds and life experiences. The feelings of homesickness and loneliness may be experienced when travelling to new countries with different languages can feel devastating at first. This is called "culture shock". Obviously, people from different countries have unique behaviors and life styles.

In order to learn if the international students transition problems exist at other American universities, peer-reviewed literature was reviewed. The literature indicated that international students at other universities are experiencing the same transition problems: academic challenges, social difficulties, cultural shock, discrimination, daily life problems, language, communication barriers, and e-learning pressures

For now, the only information about international students on Clark University's official page is about financial aid and scholarships for undergraduate international students. One of the main values of Clark University is to challenge tradition and change the world. These values are fully supported and addressed in this project.

It is hoped that this research will do what has never been done before in terms of improving international students' lives. Therefore, relative experiences from other universities which have formed a comparatively perfect system about international students.

After exploring the strategies of other American universities, a set of operational and sustainable solutions for the School of Professional Studies are suggested. The solutions include a School of Professional Studies International Students Page, a Buddy Program, an Academic Training Program, and the American Survival Program.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

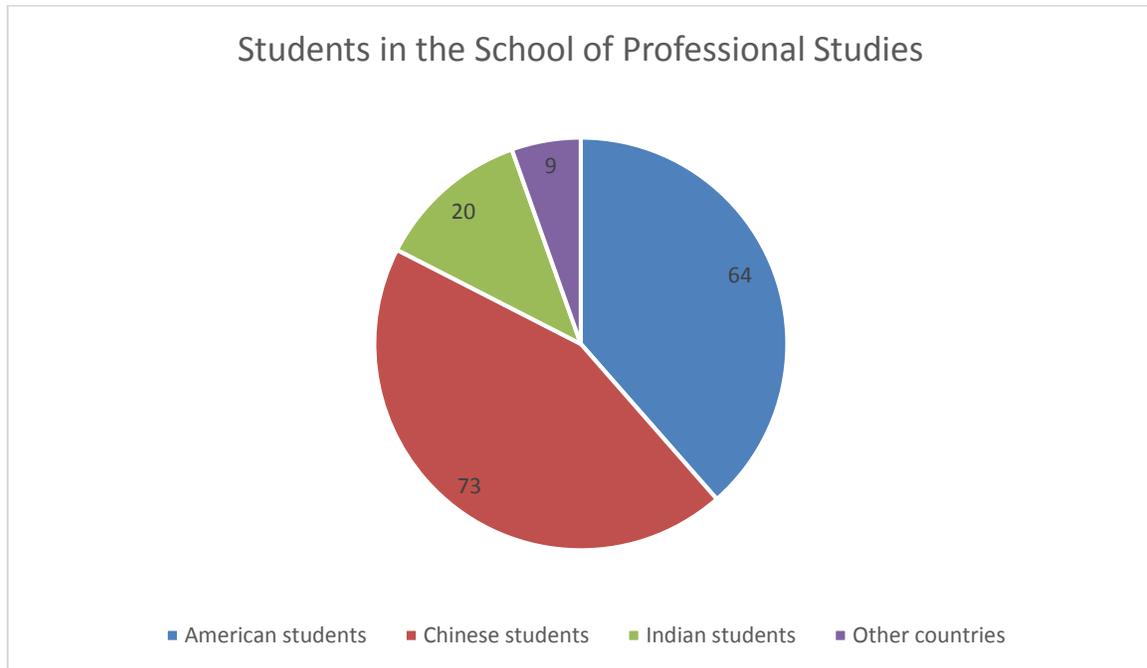
The United States is embracing more and more international students. In higher education, the international students' share of the total enrollment in American colleges and universities has vastly increased. The same situation has happened at Clark University. The percentage of international students was 15% in 2014, compared to 7% in 2000. In the School of Professional Studies, students from outside the United States bring the department a multicultural atmosphere; however, their transition issues should not be neglected.

Background

The School of Professional Studies at Clark University provides graduate-level education to mid-career adults and students throughout the world. It has campuses throughout the world: the United States, China, Russia, and Poland with more than 300 students in the academic year 2015-2016. Education seekers at the School of Professional Studies are diverse. In the past 75 years, the School of Professional Studies, formerly the College of Professional and Continuing Education (COPACE) has been offering practical, effective continuing education that prepares mid-career professionals for a better career life. The number of adult learners was a large percentage of the students in the history of the School of Professional Studies. The adult learners had their own professional lives while they were studying at Clark, so they did not need campus services like accommodation support, cultural adjustment help, after class activities, and career advising .

However, with the large influx of international students in the recent years, corresponding campus supports are needed. The number of international students in the School of Professional Studies is a large portion of all students. In 2015-2016 academic year, there are 166 full-time two-year graduate program students, and among them, 102 are from outside of the United States.

The top two home countries of the international students are China and India with 73 students from China and 20 from India.



This research utilized the International Student Needs Assessment (ISNA) survey conducted by the Career Advisor, Stephanie Medden from October 12th, 2016 to October 29th, 2016 to the current international students in the School Professional of Studies. As the survey result reported, 97.67% of the respondents are below the age of 36 (62.79% aging between 21-24 and 30.23% aging between 25-30). That means almost all of the students belong to the millennial generation or Generation Y. Demographers and researchers typically use starting birth years ranging from the early-1980 and ending birth years ranging from the mid-1990 to early-2000. As of April 2016, the millennial generation surpassed the Boomer generation in size in the USA, with 76 million boomers and 77 million millennials.

Millennials are the active-learner generation with a lot of good characteristics. According to Howe and Strauss (2003), the characteristics considered possessed by this generation include:

- Specialness: These young people have been made to feel special. Young people also tend

to trust the adults and institutions that have encouraged them to feel this way.

- Sheltered: Highly protected as children.
- Confident: Motivated, goal-oriented and confident in themselves in the future.
- Team-oriented: They may sacrifice their identity to be part of the team rather than being individualists.
- Achieving: They focus on getting good grades, hard work, and involvement in extracurricular activities resulting in higher achievement levels.
- Pressured: Schedule filled with structured activity
- Conventional: Respectful to the point of not questioning authority

Salient Issues

The first issues which should be mentioned from the ISNA survey are the students' concern about their academic involvement. More than 50% of the students find it challenging to keep up with the reading and writing assignments as well as participating in academic discussions. Two- third of the students cannot relate well to the American students in their class. However, the survey also showed that less than 30% of the respondents have problems interacting with the professors and staff. What can be implied from this result is that the professors and staff do a good job creating a friendly environment for international students, but the number of assignments or maybe the approach is not quite appropriate as the students have to deal with other problems.

The survey also indicated that the Writing Center is quite unpopular among students. 43.75% of the students did not seek help from the staff, and as a result, 37.5% feels neither happy nor unhappy. It is important to know that the Writing Center is one of the best places for students to improve not only their academic performance but also their chance to get a job offer.

Problems related to socio-cultural and cultural experience also got a lot of attention. More than 80% of the students care about their financial performance, which includes having opportunities to have a job. They also care a lot about understanding US medical insurance and services as well as US tax obligations.

Respondents show a great concern about having friends from both their home country and America (more than 70%). Discrimination is not their biggest concern, but it is also notable as 4 out of 10 students are concerned. Communicating confidently in English, understanding American values, finding free time activities. are also among the issues of concern.

Problem Statement

Based on the ISNA survey results, we identified three major issues of international students in the School of Professional Studies– academic challenges, social isolation, and cultural adjustment. Having a different learning style in their home country as well as the stress of coping with a new language, the international students have challenges dealing with school work. The ISNA survey indicated that 20 out of 30 responses were concerned about keeping up with written assignments.

Away from families and friends in their home country, international students are eager to make new friends in the United States. Faced with language barriers and cultural background differences, it is not easy for international students to make friends here in the United States. For them, school is the main connection to this new world. However, the ISNA survey results confirmed that 22 out of 32 respondents hardly feel they belong to the School of Professional Studies.

Cultural adjustment will probably be the longest-lasting issue. Living in a new place with unfamiliar cultural patterns, international students have difficulty coping with daily life issues.

Things like ordering food, seeing a doctor, or reading bank statements are almost routine for American people while are difficult for international students.

Summary of state of research or practice

After identifying the salient issues of international students in the School of Professional Studies, we explored strategies of other universities and colleges in the U.S. hoping to find benchmarking solutions. In Chapter 3, we will elaborate our findings. We also analyzed the ISNA survey results in detail to find the concerns related to international student of the School of Professional Studies.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

We put forward our research questions and categorized them in five areas. These five categories are Demographics and Cultural Values, Technology, U.S. Universities' Campus Supports, School of Professional Studies Recent Strategies, and Communication. The research questions are provided below.

Demographics and Cultural Values:

1. What are the major types of problems for different international student groups?
2. What are the daily life problems that international students face?
3. Do the international student value goals change during their time before graduation in the United States?
4. Which generation does the majority of international students belong to?

Technology:

5. How are international students coping with Moodle, online course and other e-learning strategies?
6. What is the impact of technology on international students' questions?

U.S. Universities' Campus Supports:

7. What are other university's practices concerning the integration of international students?
8. Do universities adapt their approach to different international student groups? If they do, how do they adapt to the student cultural values?
9. How do the US universities help international students deal with stress while studying in the United States?
10. What is the impact of technology on international students' problems?
11. How do other universities organize effective free time activities in order to include international students in American culture or society?

School of Professional Studies recent strategies:

12. What are the historical factors that shaped the experience of international students in the School of Professional Studies?
13. How is the experience of the international students at the School of Professional Studies different from that of students at other enterprises at Clark University?
14. How is the experience of students in the School of Professional Studies similar to students at other enterprises at Clark University?
15. How did the School of Professional Studies staff manage to deal with this situation prior to 2016?
16. Have the ways changed? If they have, when and how?
17. What were the values of the School of Professional Studies before 2016? What are the values of the School of Professional Studies after 2016?
18. What are the values of Clark University?
19. Who is responsible for solving this problem in the School of Professional Studies?

20. How helpful are career advisors throughout student enrollment?

Communication:

21. How do other universities build effective communication like email, social media, Skype or in person between the university and students?

22. Which communication channels do the students think most suitable for them when communicating with the universities?

23. How do the international students build their university networks for future careers?

24. What are the barriers to communication between international students and domestic students?

Definition of Terms

In this research paper, we will be using some terms to support our research. Here we provide the operational definitions of these terms to assist in understanding our research findings and applying them to future research.

Our research questions were divided into five categories; these categories were based on our assessment of the research topic. The demographic and cultural values category indicates international students' generational and cultural background which we believe have a direct impact in shaping their transition issues while they are studying in the United States. Technology shows the influences of e-learning on international students. The reason we put technology in a separate research category is that in the United States, education greatly relies on telecommunication technologies – online courses, computer-based assignments, and online academic systems; while international students may have a different learning experience which is non-technological.

Communication is another research category; here it means the way universities interact with international students. For international students, the communication pattern is a significant difference between their home countries and America. E-mail is widespread communication tool in the United States, while in some other countries the story is different. In this research, we want to take a deep look at how international students adapt themselves to a new way to interact with the school.

Matrix is the next term we want to specify here. We did a research on the strategies of other universities campus support for international students. In order to better present the information we found, we put these strategies into seven categories. In each category, we use a matrix chart to showcase the target universities and the strategies each university uses. A matrix gives the reader a clear idea of how each target school is performing as well as what campus services other universities are offering.

Assumptions

This project assumes that the School of Professional Studies wants to know about international students' lives and is willing to improve their experience. We are going to focus on two-year international graduate students in the School of Professional Studies at Clark University. Our scope is the full-time international graduate students majoring in Master of Science in Professional Communication, Master of Science in Public Administration, and Master of Science in Information Technology; while international students from Poland, Russia , and Shandong Science & Technology University 3+1+1 are out-of-scope.

Purpose of the Capstone Project

The purpose of this capstone project is to provide operational and sustainable solutions for current international graduate students in the School of Professional Studies and attract

perspective international students. Our client is Dr. John Chetro-Szivos, the Associate Dean of Professional and Online Education. At the end of this project, we hope that the solutions we recommend will be functional for Dr. Chetro-Szivos to implement; we also look forward to seeing the effects of the solutions we have provided.

Significance of the Study

The objective of this Capstone team is to research the most common challenges international students in the School of Professional Studies of Clark University may face when they study abroad and experience an entirely new way of life, such as "culture shock", "academic difficulties", and "social problems". Although mainly focused on the School of Professional Studies at Clark University, our project is also going to research similar problems at other colleges around the United States. Finally, based on our research, we will provide a set of operational and sustainable solutions to solve the problems that the international students of the School of Professional Studies' are faced with.

What is included in subsequent sections

In the following sections, we will be presenting the recent adjustment issues of international students in the United States by analyzing peer reviewed literature in Chapter 2, exploring the strategies of other universities in Chapter 3, evaluating the School of Professional Studies' recent performance in Chapter 4, and providing our recommended solutions in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2 Trends in the literature

Introduction to Literature Review

In this chapter, we will present our research work on the transition problems of current international students in the United States. The research questions we will address are

1. What are the daily life problems that international students face?
2. What are the major types of problems for different international student groups?
3. Which generation does the majority of international students belong to?
4. How are international students coping with Moodle, online course and other e-learning strategies?
5. What is the impact of technology on international students' questions?
6. How do other universities build effective communication like email, social media, Skype or in person between the university and students?
7. Which communication channels do the students think most suitable for them when communicating with the universities?

International Students in the U.S.: Who Are They?

International students have been playing an important role for universities all around the world, especially in the US. As international students are in an eager search for higher education as well as intercultural experience, US universities are the most reliable and attractive destinations which provide exactly what the students need.

According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), an international student is "anyone who is enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, an immigrant (permanent resident) or a refugee. Farrelly and Tomas (2014) define the international student as "a student who moves to another country

(the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education, e.g., college or university".

The number of international students at US colleges and universities increased to 974,926 in the 2014/2015 academic year (Institute of International Education, 2015). According to the Open Doors 2015, international students accounted for almost five percent of the 20 million students enrolled in US higher education. A large number of international students pursue a degree in business and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.

International students are important to US higher education regarding their academic prestige and financial benefits (Altbach & Knight, 2007) as they actively support diversity and globalization during their time in class. Many international students, especially students from east and southeast Asia, achieved a high rank in their home countries, and they tend to bring new thinking as well as competition to classes. Therefore, they will improve the quality of lectures and motivate other students to perform better.

Besides, international students also contribute in developing cultural intelligence among themselves and faculty. Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) stated that "as one's experience of cultural experience of cultural difference become more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relationship increases." Embracing international students' values, therefore, will be essential for faculties to build an inviting environment that attracts more and more students from around the world.

Another notable thing that US universities should notice is that international students help them to generate higher revenue. In other words, international students can be considered as a huge international and economic investment for American universities (Institute of International Education, 2011).

International Students Life Experience

However, what has been troubling domestic U.S. institutions is that while they concentrate more on giving quality programs and lectures, international students also include their life experiences as a priority. Obstacles such as cultural issues or financial problems often disturb their experience and limit the results of their study.

For most international students, life experience at US universities and colleges is challenging and required a lot of cultural adaptation. There have been a lot of studies on the challenges and difficulties of international students during the time of their higher education in the US. These things include, but are not limited to, social experience, culture shock, discrimination, isolation and loneliness, homesickness, lack of communication with native speakers, stress, anxiety and appropriate adaptation to daily life. Specifically, based on the research about Asian students in American higher education (Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998; Sato & Hodge, 2009), we found that international students from Asia experienced academic and social-cultural challenges, such as comprehension of long lectures, class participation, discussion groups, presentations and academic advisors' expectation due to their unfamiliarity with the host classroom culture.

One of the greatest academic issue hindering smooth adjustment for international students is language (Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). The lack of sufficient language skills and confidence may lead to stress, isolation, and restrict daily life experience. Probertson et al. (2000) conducted a survey asking the university staff's experiences with international students. They found out that the staff showed little sympathy with the students' language proficiency, and it was international students' problems for not taking responsibility for their academic improvement. An important research by Terui (2011) showed that international students had to pretend to understand

conversation exchanged with native English speakers because of their insufficient language. This resulted in a negative impression from the professors as they think the students were not well prepared for the lectures.

The language barrier can also be a burden for students in their daily lives. L. Liu (2011), a former international student in Canada, used her own experiences as an example to discuss her problems. Liu expressed that her lack English of proficiency halted her participation in the host community. She could not understand the lectures and even everyday problems, such as taking the correct buses, grocery shopping, or asking for help were difficult.

Another noteworthy point is that racism and stereotypes towards international students still exist. Even though they bring a lot of positive things to the universities and native learners, international students still experiencing prejudice and discrimination. Charles-Toussaint and Crowson (2010) discovered that the American students worry about the threats that international students could bring to their countries including economic, education, beliefs, and values. The lack of intercultural communication causes doubt and tension when interacting with people from different groups. And as a result, this will create negative stereotypes of the newcomers. For example, Asian-American students have often been stereotyped by the media as “model minorities” who are educationally superior, always do well in school and suffer few academic difficulties. Their achievement has been commonly attributed to characteristics of “Asian culture” like hard work and living up to parental expectations (De Vos, 1973, 1980; Mordkowitz & Ginsberg, 1987; Sung, 1987). Hence, American students may apply that thinking to the Asian international students, whose first language is not English, and hesitate to help them with their academic experience.

This type of stereotype may be defined as neo-racism – a theory developed by Barker (1981) to define prejudice based on national origin and country relationships as well as cultural discrimination. Balibar's (2007) research showed that neo-racism is a new kind of racism in the French context, calling it an in-between stage as racism evolves from a system that consistently discriminates against the “Other” to a system that justifies such discrimination with faux-sophisticated measures. Neo-racism is as dangerous as racism, and to some extent, it is even more complicated and nuanced than racism.

International students also find socio-cultural problems challenging. They have to start everything from the beginning: finding good accommodation, opening a bank account, transferring money, finding transportations or buying cars, applying for credit card, or looking for their traditional food. A study was conducted by Yi, Lin and Kishimoto (2003) at a major university in Texas on the utilization of counseling services by international students. Over six years of collecting data, the researchers showed that international students when having difficulties or psychological concerns lean more on family and friends. The counseling services were only in use if a student did not have any friends or relatives. What could be implied from this study is that there should be more assistance from the university in helping international students adapt to their new life in the US, starting with explaining to the students their rights and privileges.

Surviving in a new culture, a new community is the very first lesson international students have to deal with before experiencing an even more disturbing problem: culture shock. This kind of problem happens everywhere and all the time during international students' lives in the US. Wan's (2001) study about Chinese students in the US shows that it requires a lot of courage, determination and persistence to be cross-cultural learners, and the faculty and staff should assist

international students by understanding and embracing their native cultures, different styles of learning and frustrations in academic life. It is important for professors to encourage interaction inside a classroom and help international students by creating relationships with them as well as among other students. Ngwainmbi (2004) also confirmed that that style of interactive teaching is being favored by Chinese students.

Communication Concerns of International Students

Problems of international students who are coming to study in the United States become more relevant as every year the number of international students are constantly increasing. People come to get the education here because of the quality of the education and job opportunities, which are better than in their home countries. The number of international students during the 2015-2016 school years increased to 7 % in comparison with previous year and surpassed 1,044,000 people (Institute for International education, 2016). However, the problems of communication are still relevant. Besides all of the advantages of being in the USA, the international students face a variety of challenges. International students distinguish two significant problems while being in the US: language difficulties and lack of cultural awareness (Antonio, Ofori-Dwumfuo, 2015). Coping with these problems leads to acculturation and intercultural maturity development.

Berry (2005) defines acculturation as “dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members,” it is a process of “cultural and psychological inclusion into new society” (Berry, 2005).

Due to King and Baxter-Magolda’s study, another essential framework is the model of intercultural maturity among college students (Berry, 2005). This model includes three

categories: cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal level. Cognitive implies understanding and interpretation of the information presented. The intrapersonal level refers to self-awareness and how the system of values and beliefs guides individual's process of decision making, and interpersonal focuses on an individual's sensitivity to others and self-identification in relation with society (Berry, 2005). Further, each category is divided into three subcategories: initial, intermediate and mature.

Communication is another aspect which plays a significant role in the understanding of the salient issues of our work. Communication channels are important because they transfer the information from the sender to the addresser and vice versa. The most popular channels are face-to-face, phoning, emailing and communicating through social media. At Washington State University, 87% of students prefer in-person communication (Berry, 2005).

Technology Challenges on International Students

International students' enrollment in higher education in the US has expanded considerably in the last decades. The international students' policy used by Clark University's School of Professional Studies should aim to help each international student adjust his or her new life efficiency, such as technology problem. The current international student services want to change this situation, and we separate each problem into different categories. Technology is one part of our research. We have two questions focused on the technology international students faced. One is how international students cope with e-learning. Another is what is the impact of technology?

To better understand the adjustment process of international students, it is important to understand the unique problems they face. Although international students are a diverse group of students, it may still be possible to make some generalizations. Similar to native students, they

experience problems such as "academic challenges, and the stressors associated with the transition to a new school or university" (Furnham & Bochner as cited in Ward, Bochner, & Furman, 2001, p.153). Unlike American students, though, they may face unique problems in cultural experiences, in academic studies, and in daily life activities.

The first question asked about their access to the internet and a range of technological hardware like computers, mobile phones, and digital equipment. (Kennedy, Krause, Judd, Gray. 2006). The second question focused on the influence of international students in technology. Over the past few years, social media have made their entrance on to the educational scene, often raising hopes that they would deliver novel learning experiences to students (Shaltry, Henriksen, Wu & Dickson, 2013), but questions have been raised about their capacity to facilitate debate (Friesen & Lowe, 2011). In this part, we want to examine social media use among international students and how it affects communication with others and international students' self-concept. Students completed a questionnaire which assessed personal use of social media.

In the United States, education style differs from other countries. E-learning is a major part for American students throughout their school years. For American students, it is the simplest learning style; though for international students it is the other way around. There are many problems that international students face while taking either online classes or hybrid classes or just simply finishing in-class assignment that are due online on e-learning modules. There has been lot of changes made in technology for human benefits with new inventions and discoveries. Technology plays an important part in international student's life.

Here, in the U.S. most assignments and exams/quizzes are due on school/colleges own websites like Moodle. Most international students are adapted with classroom teaching style where teacher/professor gives lessons in class and homework is due in class as well on paper

sheet. It becomes very difficult to adapt e-learning technique. The most known difficulties that international students face are computer literacy, technical issues and struggle with adaptation.

To make study life easy for international students, most universities and colleges provide assistance the best way possible. Here, I have researched the e-learning assistance provided in one of the well-known university in the U.S., University of Houston (UH).

This university has provided an online gateway called 'AccessUH' (<https://accessuh.uh.edu/appshelp.php>) for all students to maintain and to get immediate access to all type of services that are used daily. AccessUH provides many services such as Blackboard Learn, Skillport, Cougar Pathway, housing, software download, and many other (<https://accessuh.uh.edu/appshelp.php>) that related to student's life. Blackboard Learn (BB Learn) is the Learning Management System technology supported by the UH. Through BB Learn students receive all coursework material a week before the class starts. Most quizzes and exams are taken on BB Learn, which is the critical part for international students to cope with. UH provides online assistance for 24 hours every day to resolve student's problems. Most international students are unaware of e-learning and are not familiar with BB Learn. To help students UH provides special classes to make students understand the system. These helps students adapt the new style with the proper guidance. Moreover, they have provided a live chat option and in person office hours. This university provides much assistance that is really essential plus required to make international student's life easy to cope with e-learning.

It is required that other than providing technical assistance, universities should provide counseling and psychological services to students. To cope with new technologies and learning styles, most of the time students pass through mental trauma. Counseling can help students combat stress and trauma that they face in new country.

Technologies are very useful for students in their day-to-day lives and especially for those studying abroad in foreign countries. Technologies can be very helpful for international students before and after arrival, during their stay in the US and after their graduation.

Technologies play a huge part in international student's life during before and after arrival. If a student wants to go abroad to pursue higher education, he/she would have to find the best university through the internet. Today through technologies life has become easy for international students as they can find, view, compare and choose foreign universities with the reliable source personally. It is a fact that just few years ago when international students used to apply for the foreign universities, they had to trust their agents as there were no sources available back then as their agents used to select universities appropriate for applicants. Today students are able to choose and look up universities by themselves with the help of technologies. It is necessary to have accommodation ready to enter the country. It is very difficult to find an accommodation for international student from their native country. At this time, websites like jump off campus are very useful and reliable for international students. It gives more trustworthy options to find accommodation.

During their stay here in the US for higher study, international students most of the time use technologies for various of reasons through study to social networking. Since the US higher education involves e-learning, students have to use technologies. Whereas sometimes international students feel lonely and disconnected from their family and friends. To stay in touch with their loved ones; they can stay connected with their friends and family through e-mails, and social networking websites and apps like Facebook, Skype, Whatsapp, etc. Also, during first few months as an international students online shopping is the easiest way of buying necessary stuff. This is very common among international students that in a new country transportation becomes

difficult. Since international students are not familiar with the US transportation system, through use of internet international students can easily understand and use various transportation apps such as Google maps. Digital textbook and e-books are also available in lower cost than paperback textbooks. Internet is very useful for all educational resources.

After graduation, most students apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Here also technology plays its role. Through technology students may find their suitable jobs. There are many websites and app that are useful for students to find jobs, such as website like linkedin.com, indeed.com and apps like Glassdoor, CareerAmp, etc.

With these different technological advancements, international students' daily lives can be less troublesome. They can easily understand the law and order of the country. They can get help in their studies through online tutorials. They can choose the best career option with the help of it. Overall, technology can help from planning to execution right from getting higher education in abroad to their future carrier options. E- Learning opportunities should be provided in the curriculum for international students so that they do not fall behind their peers and for this, technological advancements play a key role to help students.

Conclusions

The problems above are the major ones that international students have been dealing with. Although they were discussed intensively, more studies are still needed to thoroughly examine these issues. And while that work is being carried out, a lot of researches on solutions have been established by the professionals. In next chapter, we will elaborate campus supports provided by other U.S. universities.

Chapter 3 Other Strategies for International Students Support

In order to find advantages and disadvantages of current international students at School of Professional Studies of Clark University, we researched about other universities practices related to international students. The following comparison matrices elaborate our findings and results in this sphere. We differentiate the matrix by themes and categorize them. The “+” symbol means “exist and work well,” the “-” elaborates “do not exist or very poor”.

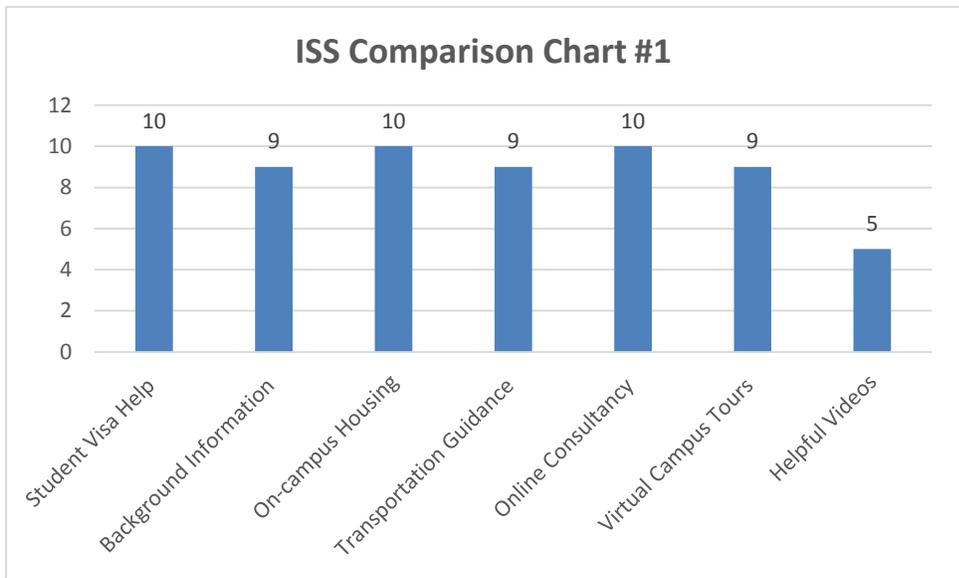
The seven matrices are Pre-arrival Support, General Counseling, School Opportunities, Cultural Adjustment, University Events, Visa & Immigration Help, and Career Services. In the matrix tables below, we use the abbreviation of each university for layout consideration. OSU stands for Oregon State University, USF is The University of South Florida, CSU is The Colorado State University, WPI is Worcester Polytechnic Institute, CU is Columbia University, UP is University of Pennsylvania, NS is The New School, NYU is New York University, BU is Boston University, and Clark is Clark University.

Matrix #1 Pre-arrival Supports

At the pre-arrival stage, many universities offer their international students a necessary guide including the important information such as: student visa information, background information about the school and surroundings, accommodation, transportation guidance, online consultancy, virtual campus tours, college video tours, etc.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Student Visa Help	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Background Information	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
On-campus Housing	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Transportation Guidance	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Online Consultancy	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Virtual Campus Tours	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Helpful Videos	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-

Figure #1 Pre-arrival Supports



The pre-arrival stage is extremely important to every new admitted international student because studying abroad is a big challenge for all of them. They need to adjust themselves to a

new environment before they attend the classes. Many universities, therefore, offer their international students important information about preparing for the arrival.

During our research, we were impressed by the approaches of Oregon State University which has a comprehensive introduction about the necessary preparations prior to the beginning of the term. We found that they have several international programs to help their students overcome difficulties.

Also, the website of Oregon State University provides important information including what international students need to bring and other aspects in which they are also interested, such as immigration and visa information, housing, travel and arrival, requirements for registration, etc. Besides, they offer the virtual campus tour and video tour to help international students to know about the campus better at any time from any location.

Similarly, the University of South Florida compiled a Pre & Post-Arrival Guide on its website. It includes a pre-arrival to do list, what to bring, what to expect when students enter the US, a list of university processes to complete, transportation options, etc. Compared to other universities, it did not provide an official college video tour; there are only two campus tour videos on the website that uploaded by students. Additionally, we found a pre-arrival guide and other useful videos at the Colorado State University's website, which are great resources to help international students.

As for Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies, and the University of Pennsylvania, before international students arrive at the campus, the three universities provide international students with student visa help, background information of the school, on-campus housing, transportation guidance and online consultancy.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the University of Pennsylvania offer students the campus tour to get familiar with the campus, while Columbia University only has this service for undergraduate students. However, the official pages of all these three schools do not contain the college video tours for international students to take a quick look at the environment they are going to blend in. Fortunately, there are many related videos on YouTube, which can provide a simple imagination of their future life.

The New School, NYU, and BU have a well-developed student visa help system. It is possible to have a look at the information, related to this sphere through the website, call or email to the university. The New School and BU distinguish the main aspects in the field of background information about the location, transportation and entertainment nearby. As to NYU, there was a lack of information about these points.

The New School housing pages provide students an opportunity to have a better view of floor plans, communities, entertainment in residences, apply for a room on campus, summer housing, students' disability services, safety issues and residence tours. The page also presents a piece of information, which is related to Global Village Residence, which is a collective of domestic and foreign students. The main goal of Global Village is international students' inclusion, cross-cultural communication, and cultural awareness.

BU on-campus housing conditions are the most comfortable for international students. Besides the university has developed housing system and many living residents, it also has language houses. Language houses were created with the goal to interact with the students' home people using their mother language and to maintain their traditions and cultures. Language Houses include French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and German communities.

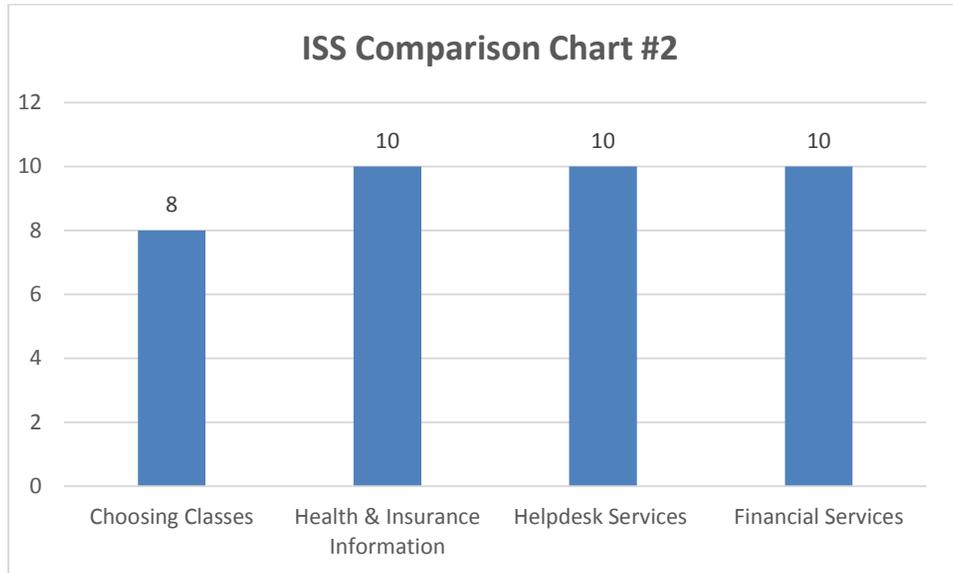
Transportation guidance in The New School is really clear. It describes the way how to get to campus from airport by train, subway, taxi and bus. The university also highlights rush hours and parking peculiarities. Boston University presents directions from Boston Logan airport to the university by means of public transport and taxi as well as parking conditions. The NYU arrival information is impossible to find. That is the reason why we possess the transportation information graph negatively. Online consultancy through email is possible at the New School, the New York University and Boston University. However, virtual campus tour does not exist in the NYU.

Matrix #2 General Counseling

General counseling covers almost all information about the concerns of international students. A lot of universities have paid more attention to the counseling process to help international students to overcome depression and have a clear understanding of their academic lives and other services offered by their universities. During the whole educational processes, many universities provide their international students a general counseling in terms of choosing classes, insurance coverage, help desk services, and financial supports.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Choosing Classes	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+
Health & Insurance Information	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Helpdesk Services	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Financial Services	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Figure #2 General Counseling



To some extent, having an objective listener can make all the difference, especially for international students who may have more problems in terms of depression, anxiety, cultural identity, and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, they face huge pressures from the intense academic life due to their deficient language skills.

Nowadays, many universities provide their international students a general counseling regarding choosing classes, insurance coverage, help desk services, and financial supports. Based on the research during the past few weeks, we figure that Oregon State University has an excellent performance in providing mental health counseling and academic advice. Specifically, the counseling and psychological services at Oregon State University include a variety of aspects, such as mind spa, sexual assault support, active minds, shaping a culture of well-being, group therapy, etc.

These services are instructive to students with different problems, and we believe these specific services would help students understand themselves better, create and maintain relationships, improve their academic performances and health and determine career choices.

Similarly, University of South Florida has a counseling center which provides training programs such as psychology, counseling, and social work. The center is dedicated to providing solutions for mental problems, social justice issues, and technology resources utilization among international students through these three training programs.

At the Colorado State University, they are also willing to help students who are experiencing situational problems, immediate crises, or longstanding mental health concerns.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and the University of Pennsylvania pay a lot of attention to General Counseling, which is the biggest concern of international students before they leave their home countries and study abroad.

As for financial services, the schools show the details of billing and payment information and provide necessary financial aids for some brilliant students with little money. And academic assistance contains the information of registration and enrollment, courses and professors, withdrawal and refunds.

To students' mental and physical health, the schools would provide related medical services, insurance help, health education, disability services and sexual violence prevention for students. Among them, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the University of Pennsylvania also have LGBTQ support service, which is a great model for other universities.

The New School in New York, as well as Boston University, provides online consultation about choosing classes, health insurance and presents a lot of information on the website in order to make this process easier not only for undergraduate students but also for graduate and international students. The New School has Student Financial Service page on its official site and provides the information about financial aid eligibility and Financial options, tuition and fees,

cost of living in New York City, managing students' personal finance performance, individual billing and payment issues.

Boston University elaborates financial information page for international students. It introduces references to a tool called Smart Money 101, which is a mean of Financial Assistance in BU. It works with the student's data and helps to calculate money for each month or week of studying in the university.

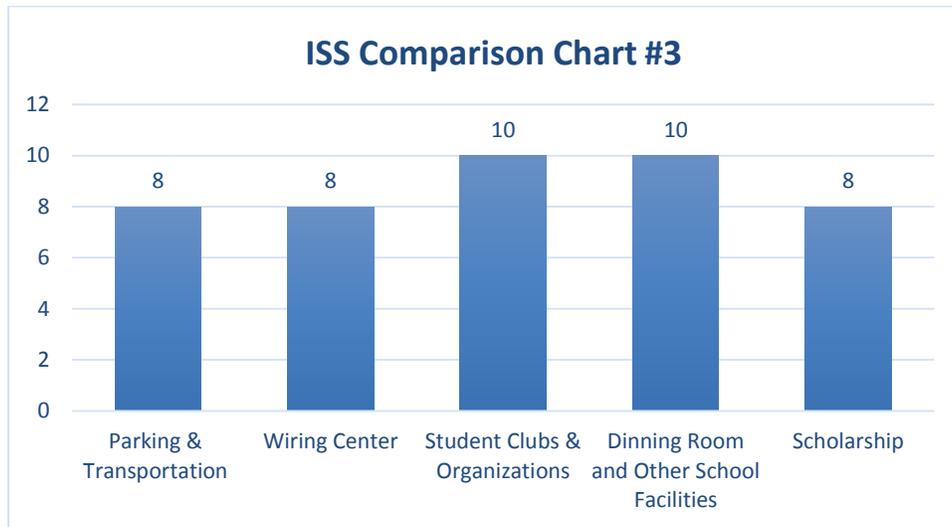
The NYU School of Professional Studies has all the information about health insurance, help desk services and financial support, but university website has no data about which classes to take.

Matrix #3 School Opportunities

School opportunities mean that school facilities and school resources are accessible to all students. The accessibility is very relevant to all the students, especially for international students that they have the equal opportunities to access to the school bus, writing center, student clubs, dining room and other school facilities and services.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Parking & Transportation	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
Writing Center	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Student Clubs & Organizations	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Dining Room and Other School Facilities	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Scholarship	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-

Figure #3 School Opportunities



It is obvious that school facilities and school resources are accessible to all students, but there are many international students have not been to the Writing Center and know a little about the services provided by their universities.

To ensure the accessibility of school facilities, many universities have set up different divisions on campus to manage specific students' affairs. For example, the Parking Office of Oregon State University stated that it does not just offer permits and issue parking citations, they also assist with events and other special needs, jump-start vehicles and so on.

Also, University of South Florida has more than 600 student organizations, including Greek, academic, religious, service, special interest, recreation and multicultural organizations. Under the category Campus Life on their website, you can see all the student activities and programs, including some events and organizations only for international students.

At Colorado State University, they have a Facilities Management Department which is committed to providing a better physical environment. It is responsible for utilizing university resources in an appropriate way and advocate innovative, industry-leading solutions to gain the goal of instruction, research, and public service. Basically, all the universities we mentioned above have good performances in terms of increasing students' awareness of school

opportunities, in the meanwhile, striving for more university running resources and utilizing them effectively.

When it comes to Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and the University of Pennsylvania, the schools are engaged in trying their best to provide college resources, such as writing center, student organizations, scholarship, transportation services, dining room and other facilities. Among those, since Columbia University School of Professional Studies is in the busy downtown New York City, where the public transportation such as bus and subway are convenient enough for students to go around, the school does not have extra transportation services, but it offers necessary maps and directions for students. Among them, Columbia University also has religious activities and services, which contains individual counseling, religious and nonreligious group support, referrals, and personal assistance.

The New School has parking service but no transportation service and no Writing Center. However, it has a lot of clubs and organizations in order to provide collaboration and interaction between all students. It also has dining facilities and meal plans, as well as the scholarship data.

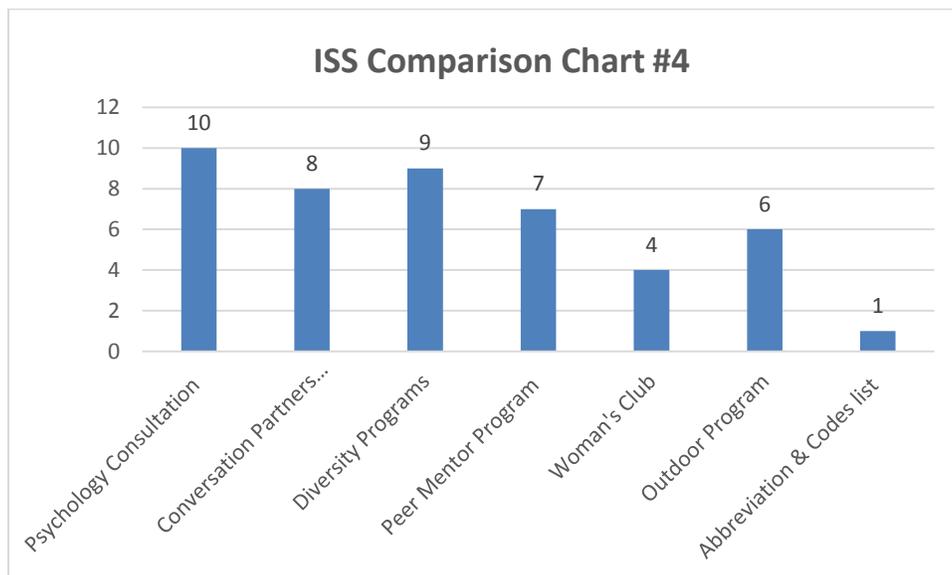
NYU do not ensure the parking and transportation service, it has no Writing Center and scholarship information either. But among school opportunities, it has student organizations, dining services, and other facilities. BU's opportunities are developed, all of the categories above are presented in the school. Writing center works by appointment by email, like in Clark University.

Matrix #4 Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment as the main challenge to most of the international students has raised concerns of many universities, so they came up with many solutions for the issues, including psychology consultation, conversational partners program, diversity programs and so on.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Psychology Consultation	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Conversation Partners Program	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
Diversity Programs	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Peer Mentor Program	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-
Woman's Club	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-
Outdoor Program	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+
Abbreviation & Codes list	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-

Figure #4 Cultural Adjustment



Cultural adjustment is one of the main themes in our project and it is also a core challenge to most of the international students. Facing this situation, more and more universities have paid

close attention to the cultural adjustment issues, they consistently perfect their psychology consultations, conversational partners programs, diversity programs, peer mentor program, etc.

Apart from what we mentioned above, the Colorado State University has created some special programs, such as Woman's Club and Outdoor Program. In particular, Colorado State University created a safe and inclusive environment for women from various cultures, countries, or religions. It is an excellent opportunity for international women to communicate with others and make friends with both international women and American women. We believe that creating such a unique community of women is a wonderful practice for international women to adjust to a new culture.

Furthermore, Colorado State University has a monthly outdoor activity for all interested students and community members. By traveling all the international students can not only get chances to enjoy the beauty of the campus and surrounding states but also acquire more knowledge about American cultures. At last, all these three universities do not have abbreviation and codes list that may cause the challenge for international students.

The ways that Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and University of Pennsylvania deal with the culture shock of international students are different, but have many similarities. Culture adjustment is one of the most common tasks of these schools. Aside from the psychology consultation and diversity program, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the University of Pennsylvania provide conversation partners program, and Columbia University School of Professional Studies and Worcester Polytechnic Institute offer peer mentor program. Within these programs, international students could get used to and blend in the America cultural environment via more and more communicating with native speakers.

In addition, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the University of Pennsylvania also have woman's program. By fostering community, expanding awareness, and enhancing the educational experience for women in schools, this can also benefit the experience and reduce the in the adaptation of the female international students.

New School's strategies to help international students with cultural adjustment is developed. It has psychological help services, conversational partners program, diversity program and outdoor program. The outdoor program includes excursions to famous New York museums and sightseeing places. Woman's club in New School does not exist.

NYU in cultural adjustment sphere is not succeed. It has psychological services in order to provide mental stability among students and outdoor program of visiting the places of touristic attraction. The other categories do not represent.

BU is successful in questions of the cultural awareness program. It presents all the aspects mentions in Matrix #4. We are going to describe Woman's Club ARROWS in order to show the ideal organization supporting females. ARROWS is one of BU communities which help to advance Boston University women working with Science, Engineering, Math, and Technology. There is also an opportunity to find funds through BU website.

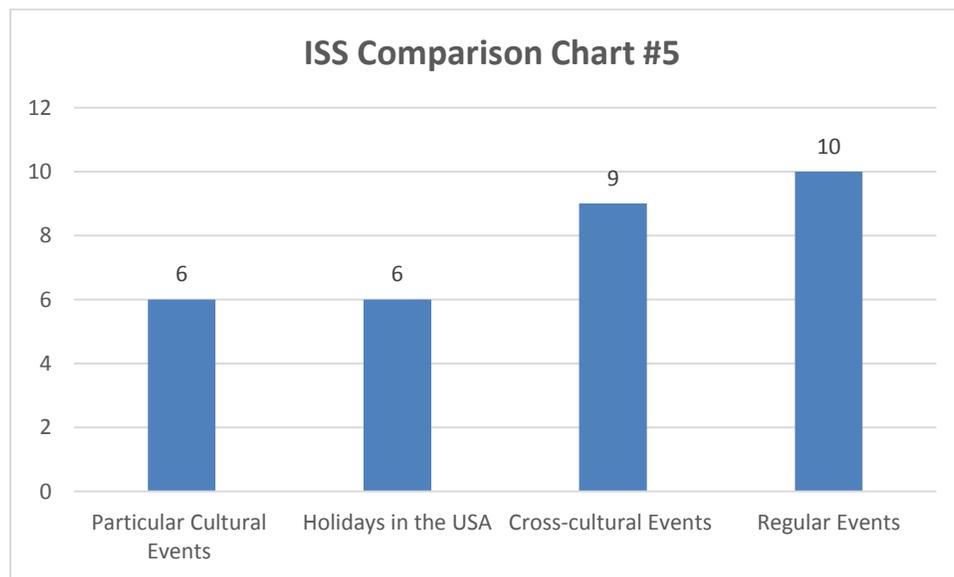
Abbreviation list of Clark University is also important for international students comfort. Boston University posted this list on its website and categorized it: course status abbreviation and information, meeting days, meeting times, credit type abbreviations, instruction types, the range of course numbering, school and college abbreviations, building abbreviations.

Matrix #5 University Events

A lot of universities are dedicated to making school events pleasurable and bringing more exciting guests, artists, and speakers to campus. To ensure all the holiday celebrations are inclusive, many universities offer international students the opportunities to celebrate the religious and cultural holidays, in the meanwhile, they organized some activities to celebrate the US holidays and cross-cultural events. Also, each university has its regular events in the University Year and each semester.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Particular Cultural Events	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+
Holidays in the USA	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	+
Cross-cultural Events	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Regular Events	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Figure #5 University Events



In order to make "there is something for everyone on campus" comes true, many universities offer international students opportunities to celebrate the religious and cultural

holidays. In the meanwhile, they organized some activities to celebrate the US holidays, cross-cultural events, and university regular events.

For instance, the Office of Diversity and Cultural Engagement at Oregon State University which consists of several programs including social justice living learning community, global diversity initiatives, and social justice retreats. The aim of these activities is to explore the concept of race and how race influences our lives. By promoting the dialogue between international students and native students, we figure these programs can push forward the process of reducing culture shock.

In terms of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and the University of Pennsylvania, all of them have cross-culture events, such as cross-cultural seminars and cross-cultural parties, which offer students opportunities of learning more about common and different cultural habits and blending into the diversified environment.

At the same time, all these three schools provide many regular events and opportunities, such as star lectures, leadership program, community services and so on. Among them, University of Pennsylvania also has many special campus events, such as family weekend, spring fling, heyday and ivy day. In addition, Columbia University School of Professional Studies contains Arts Initiative, which offers diverse programs to encourage students to experience the creative life of the campus and engage the cultural riches of New York City. Art has no borders for students with a different background, which is a panacea to cure the homesickness.

University events at The New School are presented mostly through an American perspective. There is no particular cultural event, such as Hanukah or Holly. However, they have some cross-cultural events and US celebrations. Cross-cultural events related to different

countries, such as Pakistan, Russia, India and others. It provides lectures, workshops, and meetings on the relevant topics. Regular events are also presented. It has the annual fashion show, supported by Sisters on the Runway school organization. This show helps domestic violence centers in New York city by means of getting money through sold tickets.

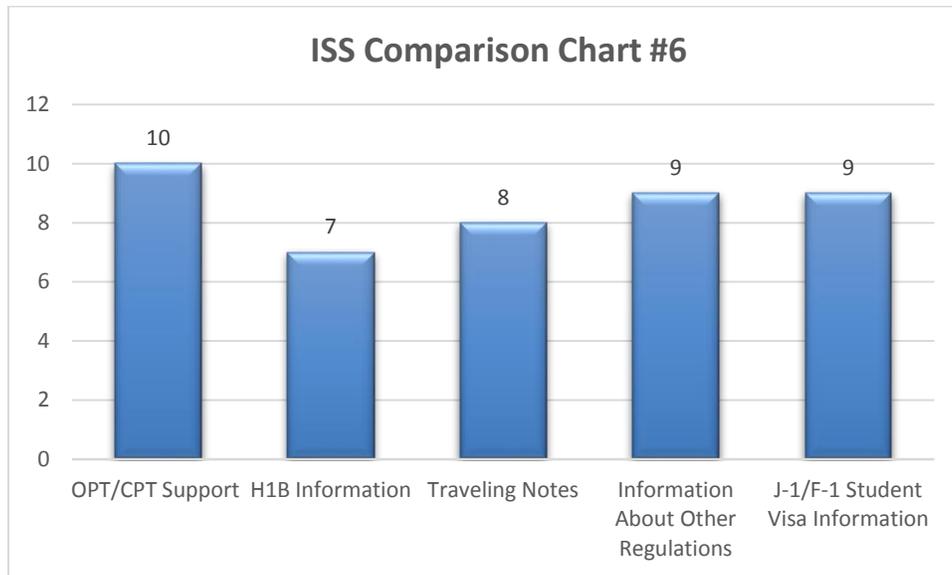
NYU provides internationally organized industry conferences every year. These meetings foster changing ideas and information among researchers and scholars. The school also celebrates US holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving with all of the students. BU is successful in this field. It has events of different countries as well as US celebrations.

Matrix #6 Visa & Immigration Help

Visa & Immigration help is the biggest problem for international students who close to graduation. Therefore, many universities help their international students to keep up-to-date with the newest regulations and access the free specialist immigration advice, such as the application of OPT, CPT, and H1B. Also, they provide the information about the visa requirements of AJ-1/F-1 students, traveling notes, and other relative regulations.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
OPT/CPT Support	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
H1B Information	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Traveling Notes	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Information About Other Regulations	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
J-1/F-1 Student Visa Information	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+ / - (No J-1)	+	+

Figure # 6 Visa & Immigration Help



Visa and immigration help are essential for international students who want to get a job and stay in the US after their graduation. Therefore, how to apply for OPT, CPT, or H1B are getting important to international students. According to the research we did, many universities provide the assistance for international students to keep up-to-date with the newest regulations and access the free specialist immigration advice. On the website of Oregon State University, we can see a guideline for international students to maintain their immigration status and they are willing to answer the relative questions about visa and immigration service.

Since many excellent students decide to stay and work in the United States after graduation, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and the University of Pennsylvania would like to provide necessary convenience for them. All three schools offer the support of J-1 and F-1 student visa, the help of OPT and CPT, and the information of H1B temporary worker visa. As for traveling supports and other regulations, they also provide students with a powerful backing. On the official page of these schools, it is not hard to get access to relevant rules and methods for students with different conditions. And there

are also marks of some special regulations for students to pay attention to, such as traveling to Canada.

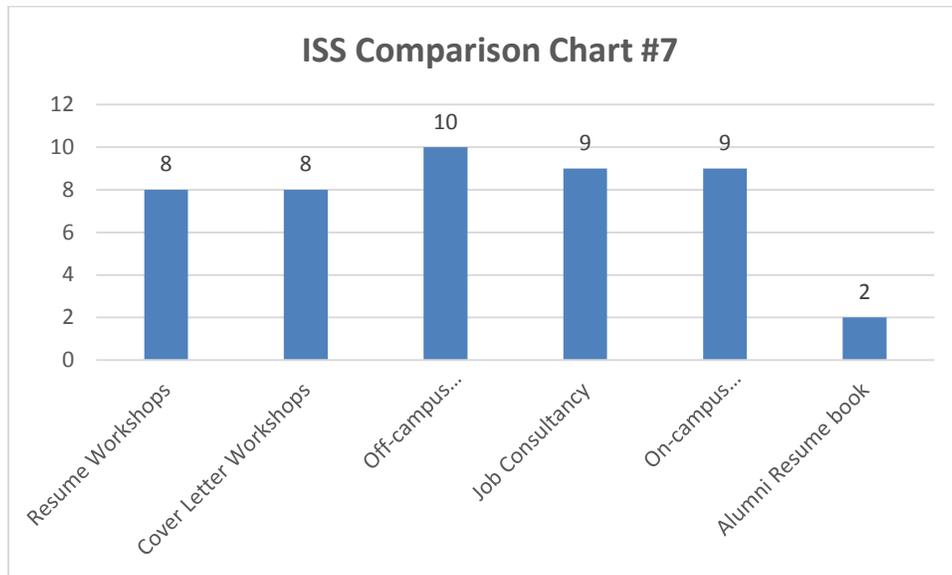
The New School, Boston University, and New York University did a great job in Immigration Information field. However, these three universities do not have H1B meetings and workshops.

Matrix #7 Career Services

In order to help students' clarity and attain their career goals, many universities offer them useful career tips and organize some workshop activities about how to write resumes and cover letters, and how to find on-campus or off-campus jobs.

	OSU	USF	CSU	WPI	CU	UP	NS	NYU	BU	Clark
Resume Workshops	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Cover Letter Workshops	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
Off-campus Employment/Internships	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Job Consultancy	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
On-campus Employment/Internships	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Alumni Resume book	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

Figure # 7 Career Services



With the increasing demands of career services, many universities pay more attention to clarifying and attaining career goals of students. In the meanwhile, they offer some useful career tips and organize workshop activities about how to write resumes and cover letters, and how to find on-campus or off-campus jobs. The Career Center of Colorado State University made a deep impression to us because it provides several assessments that can be helpful in exploring interests and making a career plan for the future. Moreover, it offers some training programs like Ram Career Ready which is an online training and learning approach to help students prepare for all the important career readiness topics. In this way, students will get a clear awareness about their strengths and weaknesses.

In the case of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Columbia University School of Professional Studies and the University of Pennsylvania, all of them care a lot about students' future career. Accordingly, there are resume workshops, cover letter workshops, job consultancy, on and off campus employment information provided free by the three schools. Among them, Worcester Polytechnic Institute has its special career development center to provide students rich resources to help search and apply for internships, co-ops, and full-time jobs. And the school also offer

corresponding career plan for first-year students, sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students, which can help students to consider their career all through their campus life.

The New School has some gaps in career services aspects. But university website presents enough job opportunities and internships on and out of campus. Boston University provides more opportunities to students: resume/ cover letter workshops, job opportunities on-campus and off-campus, job consultancy services. As to New York University School of Professional Studies, it gives access to a Career Network, which connects alumni and employees. It also has Alumni Resume Book online that can be helpful for students when they write their resumes.

Analysis

In each of the matrix above, we involved Clark University into the comparison. After comparing Clark University with other universities, we got a clear idea of Clark University's performance; here is the analysis.

In Pre-arrival Support section, expect for virtual campus tours and helpful videos, Clark University provides supports like student visa help, background information, on-campus housing, transportation guidance, and online consultancy. Before international students arrive at Clark University, the transportation is the biggest problem. Because the campus locates in Worcester city, while most of the international students arrive at Boston Logan Airport first, so the last-mile transportation is critical. The recent way of offering the text guidance listed on the website of International Students and Scholars Office is not efficient enough, considering it's not attention-drawing enough.

In the four aspects under General Counseling section: choosing classes, health & insurance information, helpdesk services, and financial services, Clark University provides all of the

services. Clark University provides information about choosing the suitable classes to study. Students feel free to ask for a help in order to take classes which are obligatory for their programs or choose elective subjects which are interesting for them. Health & Insurance information is clearly provided on the website and there is also a possibility to email or meet an insurance agent in Clark Alumni Center. As to financial services, Clark University website has links to information about scholarships, loans and fees related to graduate students. It is possible to contact Financial office through email and phone.

All Clark University students are obligatory to have a personal Clark email on the Outlook, the personal information manager. According to Appropriate Use of Clark's Information, there are a Clark Information Technology System (ITS) resources; ITS Help Desk provides the IT support for all Clark Students. The first and main mean of communication are getting Clark email. ITS Help Desk helps new students to create a Clark email. Clark email is not only the mean of communication between university department to student and student to student, it is also a key to personal information, Clark job opportunities, event information and many others.

Clark University offers parking & transportation, Writing Center services, student clubs & organizations, dining room and other school facilities. However, the Writing Center is not popular among the international students in School of Professional Studies. According to the INSA survey results, almost 50% respondents did not use the Writing Center before. This is not because of the services of Writing Center is not satisfying. Because among those who have used the Writing Center, 74% indicated that they were satisfied with it.

Clark University has lots of student clubs & organizations. However, the student clubs are undergraduate students-dominated. Graduate students have less opportunities to join in student clubs on the campus – some clubs claim that graduate students are not allowed to enter. Student

club is an ideal place to make friends and learn another culture. But the recent situation results the extracurricular life of international students in School of Professional Studies is boring.

The International Students and Scholars Office(ISSO) is doing an excellent job in offering visa and immigration help. Graduate international students can send email to Amanda Connolly, associate director of ISSO, who manages graduate international students' immigration issues, directly to consult. They can also pop in the Corner House, where ISSO locates in. ISSO holds CPT/OPT workshops on a regular basis, in which Amanda Connolly introduces the CPT/OPT policies and the application procedures. Speaking of ISSO, they are doing a good job in dealing with the immigration issues of international students. However, in coping with other international students-related problems, ISSO is not proactive. So, Clark University ISSO is more of an office for international students to consult immigration paperwork.

The career services in Clark University, like the student clubs, are undergraduate students-oriented. There is a Career Services in Liberal Education and Effective Practice (LEEP) Center, however they are focusing on providing services for undergraduate students. School of Professional Studies is making changes recently. It embraced a new position Academic & Career Advisor. Also, several career focused workshops like resume workshop and interview workshop have been held in the 2016 Fall semester.

Chapter 4 Methods

This chapter discusses the study purpose, research questions and methods, population and sampling methods, questionnaire validity and reliability, and the analyses and application of the research data and survey results.

Statement of Purposes

The purpose of the study is helping School of Professional Studies department in the Clark University solve and analyze the new adjustment problems during students' school life. The subjects of our research will help Master of Science in Professional Studies program, Master of Science in Public Administration program, and Master of Science in Information Technology of School of Professional Studies program.

Research Method

In this study, we utilized the International Student Needs Assessment (ISNA) survey report. The ISNA survey was conducted by the Career Advisor Stephanie Medden from October 12th, 2016 to October 29th, 2016 of international students in School Professional of Studies.

Our project has practical problems need to be solved and we focus on only School Professional of Studies' international students. It is small group so all the information can be collected from people in a short period time and in a relatively cost effective way. The survey can be carried out by the researcher or by any number of people with limited effect to its validity and reliability. The result of the questionnaire can usually be quickly and easily quantified by either a researcher or through the use of software package. Researcher can analyze our result more scientifically and objectively. When data has been quantified, it can be used to compare and contrast other similar research in another department who has international student program.

Survey Questions

Survey Questions for this study are as follows:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your age?
3. In what area was your undergraduate degree?
4. List of Countries.
5. What is your degree program?
6. How long have you attended Clark University?
7. Where do you currently live?
8. How satisfied are you with your current housing?
9. What is your future plan?
10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am concerned about.
11. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am concerned about.
12. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I find it challenging to.
13. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I find it challenging to.
14. What is the primary reason you chose to study at Clark?
15. After completing my degree, I hope to enter the following field:
16. Safety Issues indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:
17. Extra-curricular Activities During my time at Clark I have participated in or attended:

18. University-wide Services please rate the quality of the services provided to you by the following.

19. When it comes to finding information that you need to be successful at Clark, how happy are you with the following.

20. Rank the following by most effective way to communicate you about School of Professional Studies news and events (from 1 being most preferred to 6 being least preferred):

21. Please rank the areas that you would most prefer assistance with from the School of Professional Studies, 1 being most important, 7 being least important.

22. Rank the following events by preference (1 being your most preferred events and 6 being your least preferred).

23. Please use this space to provide us with feedback about your experience at Clark and what areas, if any, you would like to see improved. Please be specific - your ideas will help us provide you with the best experience possible for your remaining time at Clark.

Population and Sample

According to the International Student Needs Assessment Survey Result Report in October 29th 2016, we have 51 total respondents and 41 completed most or all questions. In our survey, 72% is female and 28% is male and 63% between ages 21 to 24. Because we pay our attention to School Professional of Studies department, 85% of respondents are from China (61%) and India (24%) and 88% of respondents are Master of Science in Professional Communication (54%) and Master of Science in Information Technology (34%) students.

Survey Results

Below we will present the International Student Needs Assessment Survey Results Report worked by Stephanie Medden, the Career Advisor of School of Professional Studies.

Housing

Most live off campus (73%) and feel generally satisfied with the location of their housing relative to Clark but have some concerns about safety, cost, and comfort. One respondent expressed how they hoped we could help with their initial adjustment in an open text response:

“I wish Clark can help international students better when they are about to arrive at Clark, especially in spring or summer semester. It is important for the students taking their first steps with more help in finding accommodation, transportation and coping with cultural issues.”

64% of respondents hope to spend some time working in the US after graduation for practical training. A few respondents expressed their thoughts about wanted more assistance in this area – "Need more help in finding internships and full-time jobs after graduation. Reach out to more alumni to improve networking. more contacts with local IT industries to help student placements.” “I hope our international students can have more accesses to the US work market. Like having more training or conferences or workshops.”

Engagement

Very low participation in on and off campus activities is closely correlated with feelings of isolation and being concerned about integrating with American culture.

81% worry to some degree about understanding American values.

42% worry to some degree about being discriminated against by Americans.

38% of respondents feel to some degree that they do not belong to the Clark community.

The desire of activities is integrated students into the Clark community that was expressed in an open text by respondents:

“More activities for masters student”

“In Athletics and sports involve Grad students also.”

Communication

English comprehension and communication are a main concern.

78% of respondents worry to some degree about understanding spoken English. 78% of respondents worry to some degree about communicating in English so that they can be understood.

Academics

General satisfaction with School Professional of Studies staff and faculty is expressed. However some degree of concern was expressed in how well faculty considers the needs of international students (38%) Some respondent comments:

"As a Chinese student, conference citing format is a big problem for me as the citing in China is in a different format. If you can have a short training or any document that can help us to figure out the citing format that will be great. Thank you!"

“I always believe master degree students should have the chance to jump out of the textbook and do some really valuable and hands-on projects. As an international students, I can find lots of interesting topics and potential project angles that we can move deeper into (like Clark university Moodle system improvement for IT students; differential analysis between US social media and Chinese media on the functions they provided for MSPC students; Banking system efficiency between China and US for MPA and business/finance students, etc.). But there are no tutors that we think we can find to seek the guidance. And no platforms for students who want to do some projects to form groups. Seems those current professors have no willing to find

the projects and lead the students as well. To be honest, one valuable project is much more important than the "lecture" classes for the whole semester."

Services

Career-related assistance is in highest demand, with respondents ranking Resume and Cover Letter workshops as most wanted, followed by finding jobs, using social media for careers, and networking. A respondent expressed this sentiment in an open text response:

"I believe SPS need to improve its career service and student events. It will be great if faculties can bring some job opportunities to students."

Respondent wants more career-focused events and job preparation and social gatherings to connect with students at Clark, as well as other graduate students. One respondent commented:

"I hope we can have more chances to communicate with students of other universities since there are many good universities in Boston." Contact: Email is the preferred means of contact for 87% of respondents.

Contact

Email is the preferred means of contact for 87% of respondents.

Data Analysis

We choose several representative questions can reflect international students' experience of international service. Firstly, we focus on what they are concerned about and compare the ranking of their satisfaction. We assumed that exceed 40% in each question is a higher percentage and we should give specific activities in our solution part.

From our level of agreement, we have "Agree" and "Somewhat agree" level, either of them exceeded 40%, we give them "H" label which means high and we should pay attention to that

problems. The agreement has between 20% to 40% level, we marked "M" label which means the medium level of problems. These problems only certain students have them, we could improve our service. The level of the 20%, we use "L" label which means several students have such problems, not majorities.

The first step of our data analyses is the order of priority problems for our sponsor.

13 - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am concerned about...

Question	Agree		Somewhat agree		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Total
having adequate financial support.	48.65%	18	35.14%	13	8.11%	3	8.11%	3	37
finding on-campus employment opportunities.	47.06%	16	35.29%	12	5.88%	2	11.76%	4	34
finding satisfactory housing.	37.50%	12	25.00%	8	15.63%	5	21.88%	7	32
managing my personal finances.	44.12%	15	29.41%	10	11.76%	4	14.71%	5	34
understanding US medical insurance and services.	45.71%	16	42.86%	15	2.86%	1	8.57%	3	35
keeping up with news or current events from home.	55.88%	19	23.53%	8	8.82%	3	11.76%	4	34
finding a community of faith in the US.	37.50%	12	25.00%	8	25.00%	8	12.50%	4	32
understanding US tax obligation.	44.12%	15	32.35%	11	14.71%	5	8.82%	3	34
obtaining a driver's license.	50.00%	17	29.41%	10	8.82%	3	11.76%	4	34
getting a credit card.	48.48%	16	15.15%	5	18.18%	6	18.18%	6	33
maintaining contact with my family at home.	52.78%	19	11.11%	4	13.89%	5	22.22%	8	36
the conflict between my personal goals and my family's expectations of me.	18.75%	6	31.25%	10	12.50%	4	37.50%	12	32
securing a job in the US after completing my degree program at Clark.	50.00%	18	33.33%	12	8.33%	3	8.33%	3	36
securing a job in my home country after completing my degree program at Clark.	28.57%	10	28.57%	10	22.86%	8	20.00%	7	35
obtaining a Social Security card.	52.94%	18	20.59%	7	14.71%	5	11.76%	4	34
obtaining work permits in the US.	61.76%	21	32.35%	11	2.94%	1	2.94%	1	34

Diagram 1.

14 - Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I am concerned about...

Question	Agree		Agree somewhat		Somewhat disagree		Disagree		Total
having enough friends from my home country.	41.94%	13	22.58%	7	12.90%	4	22.58%	7	31
communicating so that I am understood.	46.88%	15	31.25%	10	6.25%	2	15.63%	5	32
understanding spoken American English.	48.39%	15	29.03%	9	9.68%	3	12.90%	4	31
coping with homesickness.	6.45%	2	29.03%	9	29.03%	9	35.48%	11	31
making friends with Americans.	36.36%	12	42.42%	14	9.09%	3	12.12%	4	33
learning how to understand and respond to Americans of the opposite sex.	34.38%	11	34.38%	11	21.88%	7	9.38%	3	32
learning how to understand and respond to American behavior.	46.88%	15	43.75%	14	3.13%	1	6.25%	2	32
being discriminated against by Americans.	22.58%	7	19.35%	6	25.81%	8	32.26%	10	31
understanding American values (such as independence, privacy, etc.).	42.42%	14	39.39%	13	9.09%	3	9.09%	3	33
finding a good balance between school work and free time.	54.55%	18	21.21%	7	12.12%	4	12.12%	4	33
finding things to do in Worcester and the surrounding areas.	48.48%	16	21.21%	7	21.21%	7	9.09%	3	33
finding a place that serves food like that of my home country.	38.71%	12	29.03%	9	22.58%	7	9.68%	3	31
finding transportation.	42.42%	14	33.33%	11	12.12%	4	12.12%	4	33
finding places to shop for necessities like groceries.	24.24%	8	39.39%	13	18.18%	6	18.18%	6	33

Diagram 2.

According to Diagram 1 and Diagram 2, we have “H” label on:

- Financial Issue
- Career opportunities
- Contact Home
- Drive License
- Make Friends
- Culture Shock
- Finding Transportations
- Medical service.

“M” label on:

- Personal goals
- Security around campus

- Shopping
- Discriminated by natives

“L” label on:

- Homesick

Secondly, we let respondents rank the area that they would most prefer assistance with from the School of Professional Studies, 1 being most important, 7 being least important.

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Resume and cover letters	51.72 %	10.34 %	3.45 %	17.24 %	3.45 %	10.34 %	0.00 %	3.45 %	29
Using social networking to market my skills to employers	6.90 %	20.69 %	20.69 %	17.24 %	20.69 %	10.34 %	3.45 %	0.00 %	29
Preparing for job interviews	3.45 %	10.34 %	31.03 %	24.14 %	6.90 %	6.90 %	17.24 %	0.00 %	29
Dealing with US work visas and tax obligations	3.45 %	3.45 %	6.90 %	6.90 %	17.24 %	17.24 %	17.24 %	27.59 %	29
Navigating American work culture	0.00 %	3.45 %	0.00 %	10.34 %	13.79 %	13.79 %	31.03 %	27.59 %	29
Self assessments to identify skills and interests	10.34 %	10.34 %	10.34 %	3.45 %	10.34 %	13.79 %	13.79 %	27.59 %	29
Skills for finding jobs and internships	20.69 %	20.69 %	10.34 %	10.34 %	17.24 %	10.34 %	10.34 %	0.00 %	29
Finding networking opportunities	3.45 %	20.69 %	17.24 %	10.34 %	10.34 %	17.24 %	6.90 %	13.79 %	29

Diagram 3.

The result of international students prefer assistance from our school concentrating on:

- Resume and cover letters
- Preparing for job interviews
- Skills for finding jobs and internship
- Networking opportunities

Thirdly, we want to study the quality of university-wide service. So in Clark University, we have Registrar, Career service, Center for Counseling and Personal Growth, Healthcare service, payroll, Residential Life and Housing, Writing center, Student Accessibility service, Clark One Card Office, Safety Escort Services, Fitness Facilities, Academic tutoring, On campus dining, Goddard Library, Information Technology services, International Students Services Office (ISSO), ClarkYou Portal. We give five descriptions of our university-wide service provided to students: Excellent, Good, Average, Poor and Did not use. Most services have high scores and exceed 80% have Good and Excellent description.

21 - University-wide Services

Please rate the quality of the services provided to you by the following:

Question	Excellent		Good		Average		Poor		Did not use		Total
Registrar	34.38%	11	46.88%	15	12.50%	4	0.00%	0	6.25%	2	32
Career Services	12.50%	4	31.25%	10	9.38%	3	12.50%	4	34.38%	11	32
Center for Counseling and Personal Growth	12.50%	4	25.00%	8	9.38%	3	3.13%	1	50.00%	16	32
Healthcare services	12.50%	4	46.88%	15	31.25%	10	0.00%	0	9.38%	3	32
Payroll	9.68%	3	45.16%	14	19.35%	6	3.23%	1	22.58%	7	31
Residential Life and Housing	15.63%	5	28.13%	9	18.75%	6	0.00%	0	37.50%	12	32
Writing Center	15.63%	5	25.00%	8	12.50%	4	3.13%	1	43.75%	14	32
Student Accessibility Services	12.50%	4	40.63%	13	9.38%	3	3.13%	1	34.38%	11	32
Clark OneCard Office	31.25%	10	46.88%	15	3.13%	1	0.00%	0	18.75%	6	32
Safety Escort Services	43.75%	14	25.00%	8	12.50%	4	3.13%	1	15.63%	5	32
Fitness Facilities (gym and fitness classes)	40.63%	13	37.50%	12	9.38%	3	0.00%	0	12.50%	4	32
Academic tutoring	28.13%	9	34.38%	11	12.50%	4	0.00%	0	25.00%	8	32
On campus dining	28.13%	9	25.00%	8	25.00%	8	9.38%	3	12.50%	4	32
Goddard Library	62.50%	20	31.25%	10	6.25%	2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	32
Information Technology Services	43.75%	14	40.63%	13	9.38%	3	0.00%	0	6.25%	2	32
International Student Services Office (ISSO)	43.75%	14	40.63%	13	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	15.63%	5	32
ClarkYou Portal	40.63%	13	46.88%	15	6.25%	2	3.13%	1	3.13%	1	32

Diagram 4.

Last but not least, we want to know which type of event and activity attracts international students. This question has the most practical meaning because holding events and activities is the best way to strength international students' connection with the school. We give six events and let respondents rank them by preference (1 being the most preferred events and 6 being least preferred).

25 - Rank the following events by preference (1 being your most preferred events and 6 being your least preferred):

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total						
Social gatherings (such as casual dinners or film screenings)	17.86%	5	14.29%	4	21.43%	6	39.29%	11	3.57%	1	3.57%	1	28
Educational outings (such as trips to local jobsites or museums)	10.71%	3	10.71%	3	25.00%	7	14.29%	4	32.14%	9	7.14%	2	28
Arts and entertainment outings (such as trips to local art and entertainment venues)	17.86%	5	7.14%	2	17.86%	5	17.86%	5	14.29%	4	25.00%	7	28
Career preparation seminars or workshops	14.29%	4	21.43%	6	10.71%	3	25.00%	7	28.57%	8	0.00%	0	28
Academic research conferences	17.86%	5	10.71%	3	10.71%	3	3.57%	1	17.86%	5	39.29%	11	28
Job and Career Fairs	21.43%	6	35.71%	10	14.29%	4	0.00%	0	3.57%	1	25.00%	7	28

Diagram 5.

More than half respondents of this question interested in Social gatherings (such as casual dinners or film screenings) and Job and Career Fairs.

Chapter 5 Discussion, Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

Why the study was done.

In recent years, School of Professional Studies has been embracing more and more international students. Different from the students School of Professional Studies used to have, the new comers need a comprehensive campus supports in helping them overcome transition problems. Therefore, a series of services for international students are needed.

Our Capstone project aiming at helping School of Professional Studies better respond to new demands created by the international students. Before we solve the problems, we need to identify them. Based on our meeting with client and pre-assessment research, we identified three main salient issues related to international students: academic challenges, social isolation, and cultural adjustment. After we defined the salient problems, an in-depth research has been established by our group members.

How the Study Was Done

First we did a research on the peer reviews about the analysis on the adjustment problems of international students in the U.S. We found that similar with the international students in the School of Professional Students, international students in other American universities are also undergoing transition problems; it is a national-wide issue. Also, the problems are basically the same: academic challenges, social difficulties, cultural shock, discrimination, daily life problems, language, and so on.

Following, we explored the strategies taken by other universities; we wanted to find out good ones that School of Professional Studies could learn from. After that, we analyzed the International Student Needs Assessment Survey conducted by Stephanie Medden, the Career

Advisor of School of Professional Studies. At last, we will present our recommendation of solutions for School of Professional Studies below.

Recommendations for Action

In the recommendation part, we will be providing three solutions and for each solution, we will specify the support for the recommendation, the likely cost/benefit of it, and the suggested timeline for major milestones to implement the strategy. The three solutions are International Students Page, Buddy Program, and Academic Training Program.

Solution One: International Students Page (ISP)

Our first recommendation for the solution is that School of Professional Studies should create an International Students Page (ISP), on which provides useful information, list departmental services, and point to the campus services that are particularly for International students. The ISP icon can be added to the icon list on the right hand of the recent School of Professional Studies home page. Figure 1 shows the recent SPS home web page and figure 2 is the SPS home web page after adding the ISP icon.

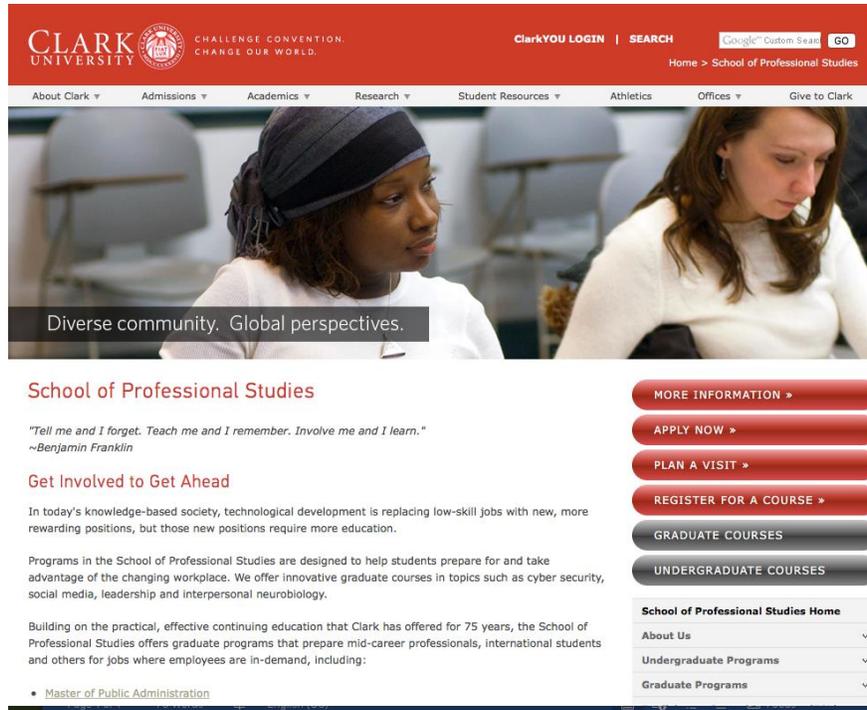


Figure 1: Recent SPS web page

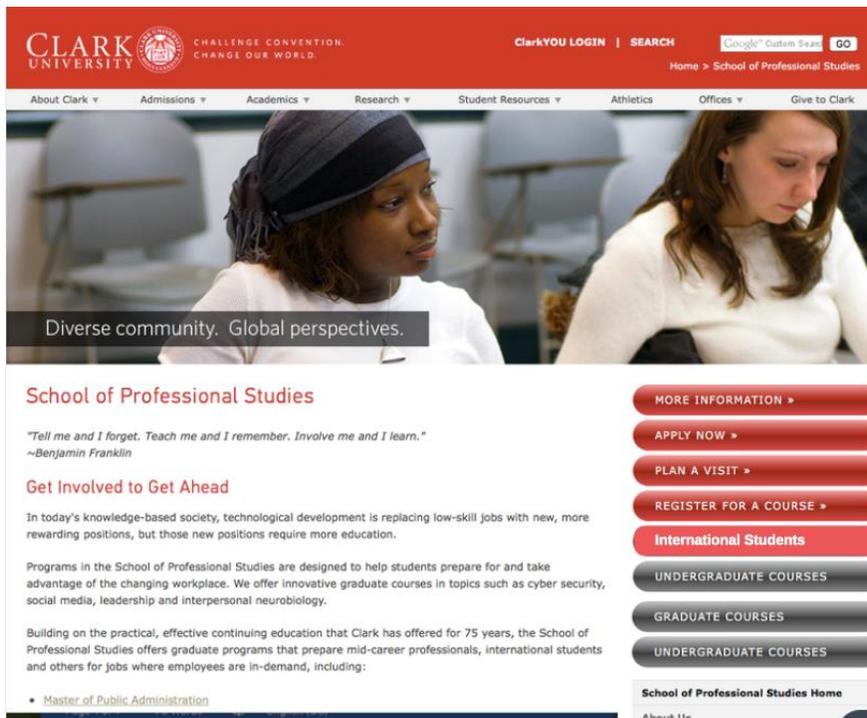


Figure 2: SPS home page after change

After students click the “International Students” icon, there will be five sections on the International Students Page: pre-arrival guidance, campus resources, School of Professional Studies services, explore Worcester city and living in the United States.

Section One: Pre-arrival Guidance

In the pre-arrival guidance section, four subsections are going to be provided: immigration, housing, recent student representatives, and airport transportation.

Subsection one: Immigration

Immigration information the International students care about before they came to the United States includes I-20 and others. In the International Students Page, the link of International Students and Scholars Office will be offered.

Subsection two: Housing

The second subsection is housing. This section will provide useful information to help incoming international students find accommodations. For students who want to find an on-campus apartment, this section will gear them to Residential Life and Housing for detailed information. For students who are looking for off-campus housing, related information will be provided. The information is reliable house-searching resources Clarkies use, which are Jump Off Campus website, Facebook Clark housing group, Craigslist and through friends. Notice that for International students, it might be a challenge to be added into the Facebook Clark housing group, so a step-by-step explanation of how to join in the group also needs to be provided.

Subsection three: Recent student representatives

Recent student representatives section is the third subsection. The incoming international students have tons of questions before they came to the United States; they want to have a picture of how their Clark life would be. So apart from providing them information that they can

only read, help them start conversations with recent students would be more appealing to them. The incoming students can get help in finding accommodation, getting furniture, learning academic information, etc.

School of Professional Studies has international students from all around the world, and among recent international students, the number of students from China and India is the top two. Different country has different preference or access to different communication tools. For Chinese students, WeChat is an effective way to reach them. At present, WeChat has a student group of School of Professional Studies with 85 Chinese students. Offering the QR code of this student group on the International Student Page can help future students join in it. For international students from other countries, corresponding communication tools could be satisfied in respond to their demands, but email is the priority choice.

Subsection four: Airport transportation

In this subsection, transportation information will be provided. When international students just arrived in the United States, it is reasonable that they would feel lost in the airport. This part offers transportation information of how to reach Clark University from the airports.

Section Two: Campus Resources

In the matrix provided in Chapter four, compared to other universities Clark University provides most of the resources they are providing. The reason why recent international students believe they have no access to enough resources is the imbalanced information. On the School of Professional Studies International Student Page, we are going to list the campus resources, show students how to use them, and point the international students to relevant sites.

Subsection one: Campus abbreviation list

Before we jump into the campus resources page, there is a critical component in this section that must be put before it, which is the campus abbreviation list. In Clark University, students prefer to use abbreviations to name some buildings and departments, and this really makes the newcomers feel stressful. For example, students use "ac", abbreviated from Academic Commons, to name the place where they can discuss group projects and hang out with friends. There is no official campus abbreviation list yet, so we think it is very necessary to make it and post it on School of Professional Studies International Student Page. The list is provided below:

AC, Academic Commons

UC, Higgins University Center

JC, Jonas Clark Hall

SPS, School of Professional Studies

MSIT, Master of Science in Information Technology

MSPC, Master of Science in Professional Communication

MPA, Master of Science in Public Administration

ALCI, American Language and Culture Institute

GSOM, Graduate School of Management

IDCE, International Development, Community and Environment

ISSO, International Students and Scholars Office

Subsection two: Campus resources

The campus need to be provided are:

1. Writing Center, provide the Writing Center website for students to make an appointment and a step-by-step instruction guide. According to the International Student Needs Assessment

(ISNA) survey result, 14 out of 32 respondents indicated that they did not use the Writing Center; while among those who had used it, 13 out of 18 liked their experience with Writing Center. Thus, a detailed instruction guide is needed in this part. The Writing Center Instruction Guide is provided below:

Writing at Clark



About the Writing Center

Our Goals

The Writing Center is intended to be an educational resource. We want to help you become a better writer. We hope that individual conferences will help you make progress on specific pieces of writing and learn, or practice, general skills to apply to future writing projects.

Scheduling an Appointment

You may schedule an appointment online. Please click on the following link:

<https://clarku.mywconline.com/>

You also may call the Writing Center at (508) 793-7405 (on campus x7405) to schedule an appointment. Because we are a small Writing Center, you are allowed one appointment per week.

Frist go to the Writing Center page.
<https://www2.clarku.edu/departments/writingatclark/center.cfm>



Clark University Writing Center

First visit? Register for an account.
Returning? Log in below.

EMAIL ADDRESS:

PASSWORD:

CHOOSE A SCHEDULE:

Check box to stay logged in:

Having trouble logging in? Reset your password.
Using screen reader software? Access the text-only scheduler.

Please be sure to bring your assignment sheet in when you come for a consultation.

Welcome to WCONLINE 5! To get started, register for an account by clicking the link to the left.

Log in to your Clark ID

	9:00am	10:00am	11:00am	12:00pm	1:00pm	2:00pm	3:00pm	4:00pm	5:00pm	6:00pm	7:00pm
Nov. 28: MONDAY											
Despina Liotou											
Emma-Rose Sonberg											
Hafsa Hanafia											
Haley Henneberry											
Hannah Rosenblum											
Thomas Caywood											
Nov. 29: TUESDAY											
Andrew Beless											
Hafsa Hanafia											
Haley Henneberry											
Hannah Rosenblum											
Kate Alexander											
Thomas Caywood											
Nov. 30: WEDNESDAY											
Despina Liotou											
Emma-Rose Sonberg											
Hannah Rosenblum											
Kate Alexander											
Thomas Caywood											
Dec. 1: THURSDAY											
Andrew Beless											
Despina Liotou											
Emma-Rose Sonberg											
Hafsa Hanafia											
Haley Henneberry											

Click one of the white blocks to make an appointment

2. Student clubs Collegiate LINK. A lot of international students do not know how to find a right student club at Clark University. Even though most of the student clubs are run by undergraduate students, there are some clubs that graduate students can join in. Provide the way that Clark students find a club is another critical campus service.

3. Dining service. In dining part, we can point the international students to Clark University Dining Services site.

4. Escort service. Clark University provides the Escort van service, and almost every student living off-campus used the service. What can we provide here is the escort number, running time, and the telephone language when calling the escort. The example is provided below:

Clark Escort Service, 508-793-7777

Running time: 4 pm-4 am

Suggested language when calling an escort:

Can I have a ride from (pickup location) to (drop off location) for one person/ ___ people please?

5. Other campus services can be listed on the page are ISSO immigration service, LEEP Center student employment site, mentor consular site, etc.

Section Three: School of Professional Studies Services

In this section, services that School of Professional Studies can provide should be listed.

Subsection one: Faculty

School of Professional Studies faculties is doing an excellent job in assisting international students. The ISNA survey result indicated that 29 out of 33 respondents feel satisfied with School of Professional Studies office staffs; none of the respondents feel unhappy. The recent

Faculty page in School of Professional Studies site is superb with all the information that need to be provided, so here in the International Student Page, all we need to do is point to the Faculty page.

Subsection two: SPS student activities page

A student activities page should be created to showcase the activities that we have held before as well as announce future department events.

Section Four: Explore Worcester City

Two years' life in Worcester is long enough to explore this city. Provide international students useful sources to get to know fun things happening around them will be very helpful to them.

Subsection one: Worcester City introduction

Introduce Worcester city to international students.

Subsection two: Provide resources to find fun things to do in Worcester

1. www.worcestermass.org
2. thepulsemag.com
3. Facebook events
4. www.Meetup.com
5. Corq mobile app
6. Others

Section Five: Living in the United States

After come to a new nation, most of the international students feel it is hard to adapt to this new world. Providing useful tips related to their daily life activities will help international students better adjust to United States. The aspects could be included in this part are:

1. American Food and Restaurants
2. American Banking
3. Phone Cards
4. Shopping
5. American taxes regulation that international students should know
6. Others

Benefits of Creating ISP

Creating the International Students Page helps the international students get to know the information they need before they come and during their study life here in Clark University. Also, it is a way to show that the School of Professional Studies is international student-friendly and it is welcoming towards international students.

Solution Two: Buddy Program

In the ISNA survey, 26 out of 33 respondents indicated that it is hard to make friends with Americans and that 27 feel it is stressful to understand American values such as independence and privacy. In order to help the international students get to know American culture and make friends with American people, organizing a conversation program might be a good strategy.

In 2016 Fall semester, School of Professional Studies launched Buddy Program, which is a Clark University community based initiative to assist international students in exploring American culture with native English speakers. In this program, one native speaker and one international student have had one hour's conversation each week; only English was allowed to be used. Apart from the one to one conversations, group activities have also been held.

The Buddy Program gained good reputations from the participants and was keep attracting new members to join in through the 2016 Fall semester. Below is the recall of the program as well as improvement suggestions for future implement.

Advertise Buddy Program

The ways to advertise the program were send out e-mail blast, distribute posters, and face to face advertise.

The advertisement of the Buddy Program was one month prior to the beginning of Fall semester. English native speakers were targeted before the international students; considering the conversation must be one to one and that the number of international students would exceed English native speakers. It turned out that the concern was not unnecessary. There were 14 Americans registered the Buddy Program while the number of international students was 20. The exceeding 6 international students were on the waiting list, so there were 28 members at the beginning.

Implement Buddy Program

1. “Meet and Greet Session”

After the members of Buddy Program were decided, they were gathered together and played ice-breaking games in the “Meet and Greet Session.” According to the members’ feedback, they think the session is very useful for them to get to know other members of the Buddy Program. There were 10 members decided who their buddies were in the “Meet and Greet Session”; the organizers paired buddies to the rest 18 members.

2. Conversations

The buddies were supposed to have one hour’s conversation each week throughout the whole semester. Among the 14 pairs, 5 pairs were insisting the conversations on a weekly basis,

4 pairs did not continue as they became busy in the second half of semester, 5 pairs quit after several conversations.

Those who were insisting meet with buddies every week indicate that they were benefits from the program. For the 4 pairs who did not continue weekly meeting, they were keep in touch with their buddies and meet on an irregular basis. The reasons of the 5 pairs to quit were: have no interest to continue conversation, cannot coordinate their schedules, and have no time.

3. Group Activities

Apart from the individual conversations, the Buddy Program also called together all the members to have group activities. In September 24th, there were 14 members went to the Big E Event. In October 7th, one of the member held a Russian Food Party in her apartment and around 10 members showed up in the party. In November 3rd, Buddy Program held an International Potluck Dinner and 6 members shared their ethnic food.

Reflection and Recommendation for Future Implementation

Overall, the participants indicated positive feedback to their Buddy Program experience. Here provides reflections and suggestions for future.

1. How to get feedbacks of the participants?

As planned, the way to get to know the members' evaluation is to have them report an Evaluation Form and a Conversation Journal. However, it turned out that the members do not like to report in this way. So here provided another way to get to know members' feedback – the organizers ask the members individually. The members are very open to the organizers and are willing to share their feelings. By talking with the members, the organizers have a clear idea of how is each pair going.

2. What can be done to improve the Buddy Program?

First, more group activities should be held. Buddy Program members indicated that the various activities gave them a chance to get to know new people and they are interested in attending these events. Second, rather than assign the members a fixed buddy, let them change a buddy every other month also enables them to get to know more people.

Solution Three: Academic Assistance/Study Groups

Coming from another culture with a different learning style, the international students feel it is hard to adapt to a new studying environment. In the ISNA survey, 20 out of 33 respondents implied that they find it challenging to keep up with writing assignments and 18 indicated it is hard to access academic support services like proof-reading and editing.

Our third solution is to offer Academic Assistance services to help international students succeed in the classroom. The services include guidance in time management, note taking, textbook reading, and exam preparation.

School of Professional Studies can set a fixed time and place to gather a group of students who need the services; food can be offered. In the session, students are encouraged to ask questions and the tutor solve the doubts or lead group discussions.

Supports for the ISP

Tutor supports could be School of Professional Studies faculties, Graduate Assistances, and Academic Advisor.

Conclusions

This capstone project explored the salient issues of international students in School of Professional studies. The recommendations provided in this project would be good initiatives for School of Professional Studies to implement.

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Appendices

Add any data, or information that does not belong in the body of the capstone, at the very least add your project data sheet and your responsibility matrix/ project plan into these appendices

Appendix 1 Project data sheet

Appendix 2 Responsibility Matrix and Project Plan