

International Students in U.S. Higher Education

Michael Ivy & Jill Romack

Overview + Terms

International students are identified by their visa type:

- **F-1 visa** for full-time students at a college, university, or high school, or who are enrolled in a language training program
- **M-1 visa** for full-time students at a vocational or other nonacademic institution
- **J-1 visa** for participants in an educational or cultural exchange program. This visa category includes college students as well as physicians, visiting professors, research and short-term scholars, teachers, and au pairs.
- Groups **not defined** as “international students” by federal standards include: permanent residents, undocumented immigrants, those with deferred action status, or refugees/asylees (IIE Open Doors FAQ's).
- **SEVIS**: System used by U.S. Department of Homeland Security to monitor and track international students in the U.S.

914,095 international students enrolled at U.S. higher education institutions and were on Optional Practical Training (OPT) in the 2020/21 academic year.

(Institute of International Education, 2021a).

Historic Overview

The international student population has been steadily increasing since data has been collected. The 2020-21 year, saw a 15% decrease in international student enrollment due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, recent data suggests international enrollment is increasing post-pandemic and will continue to rise.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, 1948/49 – 2021/22



In 2021/22, the total number of international students increased by 4% from the prior academic year.

(Institute of International Education, 2022).

The International Student Experience

- There are many varied challenges that international students face, ranging from the obvious to unexpected. In addition to general culture shock, international students might experience challenges relating to their new classmates, finding food that tastes familiar, accessing medical and mental health resources, and discrimination and prejudice in their new communities. (Trestler & Potori, 2020).
- International students must also adhere to federal requirements and report any changes to their academic program, personal data, and post graduation intentions, as monitored by their SEVIS record. This presents specific and unique challenges for international students that domestic students do not face, for example: planning spring break trips, applying for summer jobs and internships, and accessing health insurance and transportation.

Strategies & Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

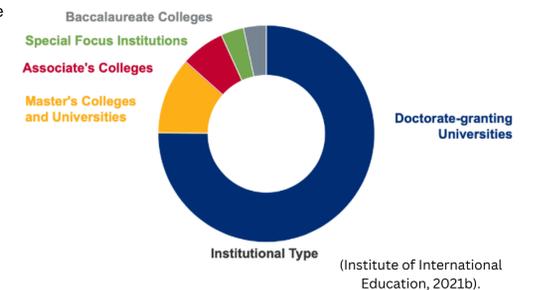
Strategies we recommend for working with international students include: (Ting & Morse, 2016)

- Offer language and academic support programs.
- Promote positive social relationships between international students and peers.
- Cultivate partnerships between international students and the community.
- Create inclusive career planning and development services.
- Establish campuswide partnerships to support holistic learning and development.

Additionally, NAFSA (The Association for International Education), is the professional organization for student affairs professionals working in international education and with international students and scholars. NAFSA conferences, workshops, training, and advisor manual are resources recommended for professionals working with international students.

Demographics

International students in the U.S. are a diverse population of students across racial, ethnic, and religious boundaries. While international students come to study in the U.S. from across the globe, the leading places of origin are China, India, and South Korea. The leading fields of study for international students are Engineering (21%), Math and Computer Science (20%), and Business and Management (16%).



(Institute of International Education, 2021d).

Student Development Theory

- **Tinto (1993) Model of Institutional Departure.** Explains the leading causes of departure from an institution (adjustment, difficulty, incongruence, and isolation) and the things students need to persist (integration into Academic and Social systems, both formal and informal)
 - International students arguably have a more difficult time with these four factors, which is why institutional support in the form of attentive advisors, active student organization, academic support, and other forms of formal and informal systems are crucial.
- **Schlossberg (1995) 4 S Transition Model.** Discusses the four factors that influence a person's ability to cope with transition (situation, self, support, and strategies).
 - International students face a variety of challenges during the transition to a U.S. institution. This model can be applied to coping mechanisms that may be used by international students and ways an institution can support them.

International Students at IU

Campus	Fall 2022
Bloomington	5485
Indianapolis	1737
South Bend	104
East	69
Kokomo	37
Columbus	21
Southeast	18
Northwest	17
IU Fort Wayne	2
Total	7490

