

A Comparison of International Students' Engagement and Faculty Perceptions of International Student Engagement

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Research Questions

1. How do faculty teaching practices for international students vary by faculty and course characteristics?
2. To what extent are students engaged at institutions where faculty more frequently engage international students?
3. To what extent are international students engaged at institutions where faculty more frequently engage international students?

Literature Review

- In a highly internationalized and globalized higher education environment, international students are considered to be one of the most diverse groups at U.S. colleges and universities and contribute to the cultural diversity on campus (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Andrade, 2006; Eland & Thomas, 2013; Lee, 2014).
- The engagement of students with diverse or nontraditional backgrounds and experiences has been widely studied (e.g. Carini, Kuh, & Klein, 2006; Denson, & Chang, 2009; Junco, 2012; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). However, only a few studies have examined international students' engagement in U.S. colleges and universities (Korobova, 2012; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005).
- Effective learning strategies and their benefits to student learning outcomes (e.g. Ames & Archer, 1988; Ormrod, 2011); the learning strategies used by international students (Ramsay, Barker, & Jones, 1999)
- Collaborative learning behaviors of international students (e.g. Lee & Rice, 2007; Yuan, 2011)
- The pattern, impact, and quality of student-faculty Interaction on student outcomes (e.g. Chickering, 1969; Kezar & Moriarty, 2005; Kuh, 2003; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005)
- The pattern and effective strategies of engaging international students (e.g. Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Gillett & Baskerville, 2010; Groccia, Alsudairi & Buskist, 2012; Lee, 2014; McFadden, 2014).

Data Sources, Samples, and Measures

- Data sources: 2016 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement, Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), and the experimental item set Teaching International Students (TIS) appended to FSSE at 14 institutions.
- There were 844 faculty from those 14 institutions where faculty responded to the FSSE 2016 TIS item set. The student sample consists of the 5,682 first-years and seniors at those 14 institutions.
- Dependent variables:
 - On FSSE, there were three scales that measure faculty interactions with international students outside of courses (TIS_SF) and how much faculty encouraged international students to use effective learning strategies (TIS_LS) and collaborate with their peers (TIS_CL).
 - On NSSE, there were three scales or Engagement Indicators that paralleled those on the FSSE TIS item set. They measure how often students interact with their faculty outside of courses (SF), how much they use effective learning strategies (LS), and how much they collaborate with peers (CL).
- Independent variables:
 - On FSSE, demographic items examined included faculty's disciplinary areas (entered as a STEM versus non-STEM field), gender identity, citizenship, racial/ethnic identification, course format, course division, and academic rank.
 - On NSSE, student demographics included were student major, degree aspirations, racial/ethnic identification, living situation, transfer status, class level, first-generation status, gender identity, estimated grades, and age.

Analyses

- RQ1: A series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equations were examined. The dependent variables were those three TIS scales. The independent variables included were same as the ones on FSSE shown above.

- RQ2: A series of OLS regression equations were examined. The FSSE TIS measures were aggregated to the institution level and entered into student regression models as an independent variable acting as an institution-level measure of faculty support for international students. The dependent variable in these models were the NSSE Engagement Indicators listed above, SF, CL, and LS. Other independent variables used as controls were same as the independent variables on NSSE described above.
- RQ3: A series of similar models were run as those in the RQ2 with the exception that the students examined were limited to international students.

Highlighted Findings

1. How Do Faculty Teaching Practices for International Students Vary by Faculty and Course Characteristics?

- Very few faculty characteristics predicted faculty engagement of international students, such as disciplinary area (STEM fields vs. non-STEM fields) and racial/ethnic identification. For example, faculty in STEM fields encouraged international students to collaborate with their peers more than faculty in non-STEM fields ($B = 3.455, p < .05$). Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander faculty and Black or African American faculty participated in more student-faculty interaction, encouraged more collaborative learning activities and effective learning strategies for international students than their White colleagues.

2. To What Extent Are Students Engaged at Institutions Where Faculty More Actively Engage International Students in the Classroom?

- At institutions where faculty more frequently engaged with international students outside the classroom, all students benefited from higher levels of Student-Faculty Interaction ($B=.318, p < .001$). Similarly, at institutions where faculty more frequently encouraged international students to use effective Learning Strategies, all students benefited from an increase in such engagement ($B=.461, p < .001$). Adversely, at institutions where faculty more frequently encouraged international students to collaborate with their peers, there was not a significant or notable increase in students' Collaborative Learning.

3. To What Extent Are International Students Engaged at Institutions Where Faculty More Actively Engage International Students in the Classroom?

- At institutions where faculty more frequently engaged with international students outside of the classroom, international students benefited from higher levels of Student-Faculty Interaction ($B=.675, p < .05$). Unfortunately, at institutions where faculty more frequently encouraged international students to use effective learning strategies and to collaborate with their peers, there was not a significant or notable increase in international students' Learning Strategies and Collaborative Learning scores.

Significance, Discussion and Recommendations

- This study helps international students and faculty establish mutual understandings about performance and expectations of student engagement. This study not only contributes effective practices to supporting international student engagement cross-culturally, but also can be transferrable to studying international student engagement in other countries that face similar questions about engaging international students.
- We recommend that institutions and departments include faculty support for international students in evaluation or consider supporting international students as an essential criterion in promotion.
- New faculty orientations, faculty learning communities, faculty reading groups, and teaching workshops are all great opportunities to bring faculty together to exchange ideas and concerns about engaging international students.
- Institutions and departments could also initiate programs that bring faculty and student affairs professionals together to support international students, such as living learning centers with a theme of global perspective.
- Future studies could add a qualitative approach, such as focus groups or semi-structured interviews, to explore more information about the variation in engagement among international students from different countries and regions.