

Exploring the College Experience of International Students at a Large Research University

Backgrounds

- Took a leadership class in 2015 Spring semester and I proposed the “Goodwill and Cultural Ambassador Scholarship” in the class.
- designed to present opportunities for international students to strengthen connections with domestic students before they arrive to the University of Minnesota.
- Research also shows international students are struggling to merge into the new U.S culture and feel a sense of belonging to their home campus (The University of Minnesota Office of Institutional Research, 2015).

Purpose

- Research question : what would be the challenges that international students are facing on campus and how they overcome them, how it would impact on their life.
- The purpose of this research is to
 - 1) understand the challenges that students are facing on campus ,
 - 2) understand different ways they overcome these challenges, and
 - 3) understand how the overcome impact their life.

Research Procedures

- Current Chinese students and students recently graduated
 - Advertised 6 students of 2 focus groups
 - 5 research questions
1. What concerns did you have before you come to the US? (Follow-up: how did you overcome?)
 2. What was your culture shock?
 3. What was your favorite experience and/or frustration?
 4. What kinds of resources did you use on campus?
 5. How does studying abroad at the U impact your life?

Findings

1. Language is the primary challenge for international students
 - “**Language**” implies different meanings: interaction with American students, speaking in public, speaking/pronunciation, and listening and understanding classes.
 - “**Language**” problem is derived from different reasons
2. The cultural involvement and understanding needs to be continuous educated and opportunities should be provided by school. Personal effort is “hard” and “suffering”

practice pronunciations, prepare presentations, recording classes, reading materials and textbook before each class.

Dormitory roommate, Rec-center, orientation, class - especially group assignments and projects

3. Affect student’s personality and confidence
 - to “Open-minded”, goal-achieving, responsible, better problem solving, the way to think and discuss

How does studying abroad at the U impact your life?	<i>“It changed my mind, the way I think, the way I interact with people”</i>	<i>“It influenced me a lot”. “Become independent”</i>	<i>“Open-minded” “understand cultures, how to learn myself, how to talk people, how to understand ideas”</i>
Would you recommend studying abroad?	<i>“Yes, for sure. It definitely worth.”</i>	<i>“I strongly recommend”</i>	<i>“Yes, definitely”</i>

Potential Research Questions/ Discussions

- 1) The different meanings of language barrier and reasons why students are suffering,
- 2) It is obvious studying abroad affects international student life. How much and which way does the study aboard affect student personality



Reference

The University of Minnesota Office of Institutional Research, 2015

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA