



Choices, Expectations, and Experiences of UB International Students

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Abstract:

- This study examines the choices, expectations, and experiences of the international students who currently study at the University of Bridgeport.
- The paper can serve as the background for future research and may provide some references to improve internationalization at the University of Bridgeport.
- The research also intends to examine the role of policies and regional socio-economy in international student mobility from the perspective of UB and to have an in-depth understanding on the sheer trend of international students mobility.

Research Questions:

- What are the factors that drive international students to study at the University of Bridgeport?
- How do the international students make decisions and what are their expectations and experiences at campus.

Conceptual Framework & Method

- Push-pull models are the most common frameworks used in educational research on international students choice and expectations. The models refer that students' choice to study internationally occurs when they are "pushed" from their home country by factors like lack of educational and employment opportunities and political instability, and are "pulled" toward destinations by specific educational opportunities and general economic and social dynamism.
- Data were drawn from "the Survey of International Students' Experience and Satisfaction (SISES)", which 60 randomly selected international students on UB campus completed. The sample consisted of 60 randomly selected students, comprising 20 students from India, 20 students from China, and 20 students from Middle-East countries which include Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya. Participant from other countries were designed to drop from the sample because the sample size was too small. (n < 20)

Finding 2: Expectations

The expectation variables include "motivations for studying in the U.S" and "future plan". As shown in Table 2, improving competitiveness in a certain academic field and preparing for a better job are the primary motivations for the majority of international students. In terms of future plans, international students are overall more likely to pursue work than further education after graduation. Chinese students have stronger ambition than other groups to immigrate to the U.S, or at least to work in the U.S for a period before going back home country.

Table 2: Comparing mean scores of international student motivation and future plan (n=60)

Variables	International Students From:			
	All (n=60)	China (n=20)	India (n=20)	Middle-East (n=20)
<i>Motivations for studying in the U.S (a)</i>				
To improve competitiveness and find a better job	0.84	0.85	0.88	0.80
To better understand exotic culture	0.82	0.85	0.85	0.75
The major in American University has a higher Academic status than that of my home universities	0.77	0.80	0.80	0.70
To improve English language skills	0.83	0.90	0.75	0.85
Follow the will of parents and family	0.47	0.35	0.40	0.65
<i>Future plans: (b)</i>				
Immigrate to the U.S	0.42	0.75	0.25	0.25
Work in the U.S for a period	0.67	0.90	0.85	0.25
Pursue further education in America	0.62	0.75	0.65	0.45
Go back home	0.68	0.50	0.75	0.80

Note:
 (a). The survey question for this is "what's your motivation for studying in the U.S?" The indicators of "motivation for studying in the U.S" in the table are composite. For example, I combined two items-"to improve competitiveness" and "to find a better job" into one variable. No=0; Yes=1
 (b). The survey question for this is "what do you plan to do after your study?" The indicators of "future plan" in the table are composite. For example, I combined two items-"go back home country for work" and "pursue further education in home country" into one composite variable "go back home". No=0; Yes=1

Introduction:

- According to Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, the number of international students at colleges and universities in the United States has reached a record high of 819,644 students in the 2012/13 academic year. Compared to 2011/12, the number increased 55,000. (7%) This marks the seventh consecutive year that expansion in the total number of international students in U.S. higher education. (Open Doors Report, 2013)
- As a medium-sized private university, UB campus accommodates foreign students from more than 80 countries. There are around 1,200 international students studying at UB. The range of international students makes up 20-25% percent of entire student body. The three countries with the most international students at UB over the past five years are India, China, and Saudi Arabia.

Background:

- "Opening doors. Building future"
 • UB has a long tradition of bringing international students to campus. Starting in 1950s, the president of UB at that time traveled to India, meeting with the government officials. UB is one of the first universities in America to make a significant outreach to build an international learning community.

Finding 1: Choices

Table 1 summarizes the choice variables. The two most important factors for students making decisions to study at UB are cost and the requirement of admission (78%). Half or less than half of students report "recommendation from student-abroad agency" and "family influence" as key considerations in decision making process. Compared with other students, Indian students are more concerned with the factors of personal safety and ranking of the University.

Table 1: Comparing mean scores of international student choices (n=60)

Variables	International Students From:			
	All (n=60)	China (n=20)	India (n=20)	Middle-East (n=20)
<i>Importance in choosing to study at UB</i>				
Cost	0.78	0.65	0.85	0.85
Reputation & Ranking	0.69	0.58	0.88	0.60
Safety & Security	0.68	0.60	0.90	0.55
Location	0.75	0.70	0.85	0.70
Friends & Family	0.48	0.30	0.55	0.60
Admission Requirement	0.78	0.75	0.85	0.75
Recommendation of Agency	0.50	0.40	0.50	0.60

Note:
 • The survey question for this is "How important are the following factors when deciding to study at UB?" The original scale is a 4-Likert scale. Options include: very unimportant=1, unimportant=2, important=3, very important=4.
 I transformed each item into a binary variable: unimportant=0; important=1
 The indicators of in the table are composite. For example, I combined two items-"reputation" and "ranking" into one variable. No=0; Yes=1

Finding 3: Experiences

Table 3 presents a summary of the experience variables analyzed in the study. Students are most satisfied with academic support provided by the library and least satisfied with residency experience. In term of social interaction, international students are likely rate highly their relationship quality with peers who come from the same country or the same area. Most international students found faculty are available for out of class learning and staffs are helpful.

Table 3: Comparing mean scores of international student experience and satisfaction (n=60)

Variables	International Students From:			
	All (n=60)	China (n=20)	India (n=20)	Middle-East (n=20)
<i>Satisfaction: (a)</i>				
Registration & Orientation experience	2.82	3.00	3.05	2.40
ISS experience	2.78	2.85	3.00	2.50
Residency experience	2.58	2.50	2.50	2.75
Learning experience	2.85	2.85	3.00	2.70
Academic support (Library) experience	2.88	2.80	3.20	2.65
Environment experience	2.62	2.90	2.65	2.30
<i>Interactions on campus (b)</i>				
Relationships with peers from home country	5.65	5.95	5.80	5.20
Relationship with residents	5.10	5.50	5.65	4.15
Relationship with faculty	5.30	5.35	4.90	5.65
Relationship with staff	5.10	5.05	5.35	4.90
Relationship with community	5.05	5.50	5.65	4.00

Note:
 (a). The survey question for this is "how satisfied were you with the services experience?" very dissatisfied=1; dissatisfied=2; satisfied=3; very satisfied=4
 (b). The survey question for this is "which best represents the quality of your relationships with people at campus?" Relationships with peers from home country/residents/community: unfriendly=1; friendly=7; neutral=4. Relationships with faculty: unhelpful=1; helpful=7; neutral=4. Relationships with staff: inconsiderate=1; considerate=7; neutral=4

Conclusion:

The majority of international students who study at UB are in their 20s. Some impressive difference are based on their region of origin, which demonstrate socio-economy and cultural structures shape international students' choices, expectations, and experiences.