

The Opportunities and Challenges of Changing U.S. Campus Demographics: Implementing Pre-Collegiate Peer Mentoring

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Since 2008, declining state fiscal investment in higher education has created a parity of sorts with private schools, intensifying competition for out-of-state students. Concomitantly, institutions have begun to reignite the promotion of greater diversity and cross-cultural appreciation across campuses. In what had appeared to be a fortuitous conflation of remedial measures, U.S. schools embarked in an unprecedented quest to recruit the full tuition-paying international student. This has created both new opportunities for institutional growth while posing daunting obstacles to various campus stakeholders. This paper explores various programs U.S. colleges and universities have offered or are offering to deliver on the promise of graduating global citizens and sets forth a potential new solution – Pre-Collegiate Peer-to-Peer Mentoring for College Credit (PCM) – to address both stakeholder friction and the many challenges that a growing international population creates for U.S institutions and their surrounding communities.

INTRODUCTION

While seemingly advantageous without exception, the working realities faced by campuses across the nation demonstrate formidable challenges which threaten the very incentive used to attract foreign students in the first place: a quality, four-year, post-secondary education. The often-cited long-term benefits of integrating the diverse views of international students from a social, economic, and political perspective into our classrooms has achieved only partial success. Instead, different stakeholders—including domestic students, faculty and staff, administrators, and community members—are facing challenges that must be addressed in an effective and timely manner if U.S. institutions are to retain their global stature as the most sought after, premier, post-secondary education mecca of the world (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdah, 2013). One such manner proposed to address the challenges and seize upon the opportunities inherent in changing college campus demographics is PCM.

This paper will discuss (1) the benefits and the challenges posed by an increasing influx of international students on U.S. college campuses; (2) the accommodations—or the lack thereof—available to address changing campus demographics; (3) potential solutions which have been tried and tested to help ameliorate rising stakeholder friction; and (4) the logistics of PCM and general interest in peer language mentoring as measured by survey results obtained from both high school and college students.

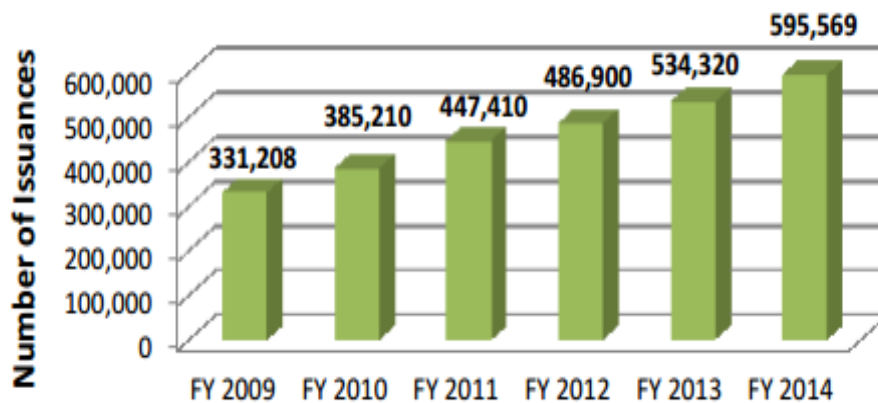
The paper then explains how the survey was disseminated, summarizes the results provided by each diagnostic venue, and discusses how the information gathered can be adopted into a college's curricular design to help encourage mutually-beneficial student interaction.

THE STATE OF U.S. CAMPUS DEMOGRAPHICS

With historically stable economies in the European Union—especially Germany, France, and Sweden – and growing economies such as Brazil—where post-secondary education is virtually free and subsidized by the taxpayer—why are so many international students enrolling in American colleges and universities uniquely known to have the costliest tuition and to be the least affordable alternative when measured by median income? America’s greatest export continues to be its higher education system which, in 2014 alone, attracted over 1 million international students representing 5.4% of U.S. nonresident students, paying 34.6 billion in tuition and related costs (Hua, 2015).

In November of 2012, the Institute of International Education (IIE) indicated that compared to the previous decade, there were 31% more international students attending U.S. colleges and universities. In November of 2014, the IIE released its “Open Doors” Report—funded in part by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs—indicating that the number of international students enrolled in U.S. universities and colleges increased by 8% to a record high of 886,052 in 2013-2014 as compared to the previous academic year. This is commensurate with the record number of F-1 international student visas issued in 2014:

CHART 1
WORLDWIDE F1 VISA ISSUANCES FOR FISCAL YEARS 2009-2014



This ongoing trend continues to confirm the lure of a U.S. higher educational degree, especially since data indicates that the U.S. hosts a larger portion of the world’s “4.5 million globally mobile college and university students than any other country in the world. Students from the top three places of origin—China, India, and South Korea (with Saudi Arabia rapidly displacing South Korea)—now represent approximately 50 percent of the total enrollment of international students in the United States. As of 2014, a total of 231 U.S. universities and colleges, both public and private, now host 1,000 or more international students compared to 135 in 2000, with the majority highly concentrated in the business and engineering programs” (IIE, 2014).

Public Schools

Beginning in 1980, the majority of U.S. states had experienced declining fiscal investment in higher education despite growing student demand for a post-secondary education (Mortenson, 2012). According to *U.S. News and World Report*, state appropriations for public higher education, on average, are predicted to reach zero by 2059. Every state spends less today on higher education than it did in 2007 (Bidwell, 2015). State funding decreased, overall, by nearly 12% between 2003 and 2012 while tuition rose 55% across all public colleges. In 2013-14, public colleges and universities received an average of

\$7,161 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student in state funding—23% less than the \$9,290 (in 2013 dollars) per FTE student received in 2007-08 (<http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/state-funding-per-student-per-1000-personal-income-state-2013-14>). Colleges have become so reliant on tuition that it now makes up a larger percentage of their annual revenues than all state sources, according to a 2014 report from the Government Accountability Office. Survival ostensibly rests with increased tuition charges, lower recruitment of students from lower-income families, and increased competition with private schools to attract students— particularly out-of-state—who are able to pay full tuition costs with institutional discounts. This situation has further been exacerbated by formidable foreign student recruitment efforts by other English-speaking countries, especially Canada and Australia (Hegarty, 2014).

Private Schools

The financial situation faced by most U.S. private higher institutions is acutely similar to publicly-supported schools. Moody’s Investors Services reports that in 2014, tuition revenue declined by 28% at public universities and by 19% at private institutions (2014). After the financial crisis of 2007-08, families of students became more prone to carefully assessing tuition and related rate hikes at all schools of higher learning. Currently, the primary difference between how in-state and out-of-state domestic students are financially assessed lies in the private school’s willingness to offset costs through endowments and scholarships. Thus, as full-paying international students have become so critical to the bottom line, both public and private institutions are scrambling for the more fiscally-attractive, nonresident student. Thus, both public and private schools have turned to a common solution: recruit the full-paying international student. Whereas the increase in international matriculation portends to be the panacea to resolve states’ budgetary woes while simultaneously adding to the value of a post-secondary education, the impact is still reverberating nationwide and areas of dissent are emerging.

As public universities limit the admission of in-state residents due to the higher tuition costs paid by out-of-state and international students, they are increasingly on par with private schools in their quest to resolve budgetary woes. For example, the number of nonresident students enrolled within the University of California system increased nearly 33 percent from 22,984 to 31,991 between 2009 and 2012 — indicative of a nationwide trend (Pratt, 2014). According to the *College Board’s* “Trends in Education,” resident students paid an average of \$8,893 for tuition and related fees at public, four-year institutions in 2013-2014, while out-of-state students paid approximately \$22,203. Approximately 74% of these students cover their tuition and other related collegiate costs through outside sources, including private loans, family contributions, and/or foreign government-sponsored initiatives (IIE, 2014).

FIGURE 1
INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (2014). OPEN DOORS REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE



*Source: U.S. Department of Commerce and is now at a record high.

BENEFITS OF A GROWING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRESENCE

A number of benefits have been derived from having students from all over the world study at U.S. institutions. These include significant economic benefits to U.S. institutions that face declining support from state coffers; contributions by international students to the U.S. economy through their purchasing power; knowledge and skillsets added to the workforce (particularly in technical disciplines); enhancement of cultural richness and campus diversity; and the strengthening of the learning process in the classroom as a result of varied global perspectives and experiences (Kim, Edens, et al., 2015). As evidenced by the data provided in the previous section, international students contribute in significant ways to maintaining the stability of institutional budgets at many public and private universities in the U.S. Additionally, from a fiscal perspective, the continued growth of the number of international students on U.S. campuses translated into more than \$27 billion for the U.S. economy during the 2013-2014 academic year (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014). Foreign students also contribute new perspectives in the classroom, throughout campus, and within the broader community. They are part of a growing network which, when used effectively, can help prepare domestic students for international business and trade opportunities after graduation. It strengthens true learning, cultivates world mindedness and cultural pluralism, builds lasting friendships, creates a globally-educated workforce, and yields economic benefits to both the home country and the host country. Furthermore, with intense assimilation and integration into campus life and local communities, the international student who returns to his/her country with new ideas, practices, and policies may even serve to mitigate prejudice and discrimination by assuming leadership positions from which improved relationships between countries are cultivated (Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010).

CHALLENGES OF A GROWING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRESENCE

While the impact of the benefits mentioned in the previous section are widely understood and appreciated by diverse audiences, little attention has been paid to how to systematically derive and sustain these benefits. The key question facing U.S. institutions is what should institutions do to ensure that key stakeholders—including international students, domestic students, faculty, and members of the broader community—derive these benefits in a consistent and sustainable manner, since evidence shows that without concentrated and visionary planning and execution, not only are these benefits elusive, but even worse, stakeholders can feel disenfranchised and become disengaged socially and emotionally. This, in turn, negatively impacts the cognitive development of students, both domestic and international, thereby short-changing the true benefits of a global campus. This section outlines the many challenges that institutions and key stakeholders face as international student presence on U.S. campuses increases.

One of the key challenges confronting U.S. institutions is the social integration of international students with domestic students in a systematic and sustainable way so as to derive the full range of benefits of a global campus. However, such partnering has proven elusive. According to a 2013 study, 40% of undergraduate international students on one American campus reported having no domestic friends—partially citing a perceived lack of interest on the part of the domestic student in other cultures (Redden, 2013). While the reasons are many, the concern is that true integration and learning between international and domestic students is lacking and, in some cases, completely nonexistent.

CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE ON DOMESTIC CAMPUSES

The primary challenge facing U.S. institutions, both in the immediate and long term, is how to integrate the American experiences of international students with that of domestic students so as to create a mutual meaningful and impactful learning experience. International students appear to be reluctant to engage with domestic students despite having a deep-rooted desire to do so. In fact, based on an interdisciplinary formal study, many international students—with good intentions otherwise—failed to connect with their American counterparts during the entirety of their academic tenure in the U.S. (White

& Rosado, 2014). The unfortunate result is that international students are unable to regard American students as an integral part of their acculturation or learning, thereby significantly reducing the impact and value of their study abroad experiences.

The excitement of coming to the U.S. is tempered almost immediately upon landing on American soil as the anxieties associated with acculturation are formidable (Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis, 2008). From finding the most affordable housing and compatible roommate, to navigating academic systems and requirements, to understanding the regional accent and local clichés, to adapting to unfamiliar food and customs, international students find it overwhelming to acclimate from the onset of their academic experience. Although the Internet and social media have greatly facilitated this phase, it has also made it easy for international students to find students from their home country and strike alliances with them even before they even set foot on campus (Stromquist & Karen, 2014). Thus, despite an unfulfilled desire to connect with domestic peers and learn to adapt to a new country and its norms, international students may tend to act as if they are on an “academic vacation,” and completely eliminate or significantly reduce the important and invaluable lessons that derive from being in a new country — embracing its culture, developing nuanced sensitivities, and reaching beyond their comfort zones.

FIGURE 2
INTERCULTURAL FRIENDSHIPS: EFFECTS OF HOME AND HOST REGION
(GAREIS, 2012)



Language barriers also greatly stymie integration (Hegarty, 2014). While many universities require students to score well on standardized English proficiency tests, high scores on these tests are no guarantee that the student is proficient in spoken English. The University of Chicago, for example, requires that the international undergraduate applicant must demonstrate “a superior level of English language competence” for admission eligibility and requires minimum scores on either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the Pearson Test of English (PTE) (<https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/apply/applicants/international/#english-proficiency>). Even when the nonresident student communicates well orally, thick accents or different pronunciations of commonly-used words evoke quizzical or often frustrated looks from domestic students, and in some extreme cases, even ridicule. In class, when the international student asks a question or participates in class discussions, there is potential mutual public embarrassment as both domestic faculty and students, and the international student, struggle to communicate in a public forum amidst ever-watchful and critiquing eyes (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002).

Adjustment factors are not uniquely endemic to U.S. institutions of higher education; international students are similarly challenged in many other English-speaking countries. Canada and Australia constitute two prime examples where similar obstacles have been experienced (Andrade, 2009), (Hegarty, 2014). Research has shown the primary culprit, once again, to be low English language proficiency skills. Unresolved language adjustment issues undeniably lead to correlating scholastic underachievement; ultimately, the coupling has global implications for intercultural education and if left unattended, the fate of many schools, both public and private, may be in jeopardy.

Finally, many international students are perceiving themselves to be victims of economic exploitation — further widening the rift between them and their American counterparts and precluding full integration. In greater numbers, Chinese students, in particular, are complaining that U.S. universities are taking advantage of them by adding extra fees to the full tuition costs already assessed. At the current rate, Chinese students have become so concentrated on some campuses that in many ways it is as if they were attending separate schools within schools (Stephens, 2013).

CHALLENGES DOMESTIC STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS FACE WITH AN INCREASING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PRESENCE

In like fashion, domestic students have their own challenges to address in earning a degree. From job and family commitments and stressors to burdensome tuition and financial demands, many domestic students may simply not see the benefits of engaging with international students. In addition, while domestic students understand the importance of being “politically correct,” in informal conversations they identify several negative characteristics of international students as “turn offs.” These include lack of hygiene, tendency to speak in their native language in the presence of domestic students, propensity to cheat or lack of academic integrity, lack of verbal and written communication skills, unwillingness to pull their weight on projects, and a proclivity to use domestic students to advance their careers (Smith, 2008).

Domestic students may also perceive the international student as taking the place of qualified native students; in some instances, state laws and institutional policies have intervened. California represents one such state that is currently channeling a growing number of complaints regarding the influx of foreign students and the compromised ability of local students to attend their own state schools. While desirous of retaining seats for resident students and advocating changes in law and policy that would guarantee a local preference, administrators are concomitantly threatening to limit in-state enrollment absent the assurances of adequate state funding (Koseff, 2015).

Real or Perceived Threats and Biases

Many international students fail to assimilate with their surrounding campuses because of projected domestic biases which can sometimes force foreign students to stay, study, and live in groups with fellow countrymen for security reasons and to ward off homesickness. Riek, Mania, & Gaertner (2006) offer four postulates to help decipher the main stereotypes many domestic students harbor vis-à-vis their foreign peers: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. These perceptions are fueled by differences in culture, language, dress, religion, and modes of communication as juxtaposed to the U.S. student’s allegiance to perceived native norms, values, and beliefs. There is an overall expectation by domestic students of social conformity and security, especially in a perceived threatening and dangerous environment, competitive world, and collective challenge to their social status, and economic, physical, and educational well-being (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994).

Less Vetted

In efforts to achieve financial stability, both private and public institutions of higher learning are heavily recruiting overseas. In 2014, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) permitted collegiate administrations to pay commissions to recruiters for attracting international students—a practice that is forbidden with domestic students (Redden, 2014). This produces an added incentive to recruit new international students without necessarily assessing academic and/or language skills, further deepening cultural divides and preventing acculturation.

Today the families of many international students are able to pay for their children to study overseas. Therefore, international students from wealthy families often fail to take academic requirements seriously—either because they are reluctantly fulfilling their families’ wishes or were unable to successfully enroll in a flagship institution (Redden, 2014). As a result, there has been an overall decline in academic proficiencies of international students attending U.S. institutions.

Domestic Low-Income and Minority Students

Bradley Curs and Ozan Jaquette, professors at the Universities of Missouri and Arizona, respectively, released their research findings revealing that increases in overseas student populations at highly-sought after U.S. public universities negatively impacted matriculation rates of both low-income and minority students. They highlighted certain institutions concluding that while nonresident enrollment at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Illinois-Champaign -Urbana, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison increased, the number of black and Hispanic freshmen actually fell precipitously (Redden, 2014).

The exclusionary impact on low-income and minority students—partially generated by the influx of full-paying, international students and wealthier domestic students who disproportionately attract merit-based grants and scholarships—has additionally widened the income gap, making a four-year degree even further unattainable for low-income groups (Marcus & Hacker, 2014). This is particularly evident at private institutions where net tuition and related costs have increased more rapidly for poor and minority students than their wealthier counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Students are being pitted against each other for both the dollar and the classroom space. However, it is less noticeable between lower- and higher-income domestic students than it is with international students. This trend is likely to continue as these educational institutions award more merit-based aid, rather than assistance based upon financial need, to increase the reputation and academic standings of their respective campuses — in part to attract more full-paying international students (Marcus & Hacker, 2014). In an attempt to ease this disproportionate impact on low-income and minority students, the U.S. Department of Education announced in October 2014 that nearly \$96 million in grants would be disbursed to ensure every U.S. student would have the same opportunities to attend institutions of higher education (IHEs). If this infusion of federal funding does help alleviate the financial burdens placed more disproportionately on marginalized domestic students, any outcry against the rising rate matriculation of international students might be diffused.

New Teaching Challenges

English language and cultural deficiencies—as well as charges of plagiarism and cheating on examinations and other course assignments (O'Malley, 2016) – have left faculty members frustrated and beleaguered. Ostensibly, the challenge of classroom accommodations has unreasonably fallen to faculty members. Without administrative policy changes (i.e., high-level English proficiency tests, additional support services), the predictable result is failing the student or compromising course quality and the overall academic reputation of the school. In addition, as many foreign students emanate from countries that exclude women from various occupations, it creates an additional obstacle that female faculty members need to manage. Further, many foreign students maintain such a deference for their elders that they are reluctant to speak openly in the classroom or seek academic assistance from their instructors (Chudasama, 2014).

The blame for the lack of meaningful interactions, communications, and engagements between domestic and international students cannot be placed on one particular group. By some measures, both doors are closed, albeit for different reasons. International and domestic students often prefer to remain and interact with “their own.” This is a matter of living within one’s comfort zone and often finding ways, even if counterproductive, to remain confident and sure to win the approval and understanding of a peer hailing from a similar background. This is a safe way to avoid ridicule or embarrassment, even if it comes at the expense of undermining goals of becoming global citizens, expanding horizons, and finding employment opportunities that demand the integration of skills and cultures from the home country as well as the host country.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

While there is much to admire about U.S. higher educational programs and schools—undergraduate and graduate, public and private, secular and faith-based, liberal arts colleges to large research

universities, for profit and nonprofit, accredited and non-accredited alike—the historical American “quality education” connotes the mastery of skills demonstrating field competency; of inquiry and analysis; of creative and effective communication; and of critical and reflective thinking (Bassis, 2015). Faced with declining budgets and the need to educate an ever-increasing diverse student body, campuses are expected to continuously assess and revise their policies, programs, and methodologies to instill the skills required by each graduate to move forward competently and effectively in a global society of constant change. Such an approach is definitely needed to tackle the growing population of international students on U.S. campuses.

But without meaningful concentration on strengthening language proficiencies, only marginal success can be expected as the connection between language acumen and academic performance is unquestionable. In this vein, any solution must address introducing and/or improving language abilities while exposing the domestic student to the richness of perspectives of his or her international peer. Mutual knowledge and understanding of the other’s language not only serves to bridge the cultural divide, but encourages social and academic engagement. As previously stated, many international students are apt to form academic sub-groups within universities, preferring to stay within a certain sphere of understanding and language skill. This notion of segregation is only exacerbated by the lack of meaningful university intervention designed to systematically integrate all students.

In this section, an array of approaches used by, or at least available to, institutions of higher learning to address the challenges previously outlined are discussed. Many university efforts which have been implemented to better integrate international students have not been entirely successful, however, nor without flaw: either the outcomes of a particular program are immeasurable, student groups have been too small to control and study, or domestic students have not fully engaged with their foreign counterparts (Andrade, 2006). In light of these programmatic concerns, Andrade does concede that “*peer-support* programs have achieved success” (Andrade, 2006, p.143, *emphasis added*) and that “university personnel can take steps to make their institutions a welcome place for international students.” However, they must first gain awareness “of the degree of success of their international students, not only as indicated by quantitative data such as GPAs and retention rates, but also by qualitative data derived from surveys, interviews, and focus groups” (Andrade, 2006, p.150).

Lastly in this section, understanding that there is no panacea for all challenges posed by an increasingly diverse college campus, perhaps a program could be designed and implemented to at least target the most salient obstacles: language deficiencies, cultural stereotypes, visa requirements, and college costs. In this light, the author proposes a new program, *Pre-Collegiate Peer-to-Peer Mentoring for College Credit (PCM)*, supported by an extensive study of respondents at both the high school and collegiate levels, and advocates that the introduction of a program incorporating the primary components of PCM may ultimately prove to be even more impactful over the long term.

Intensive English Programs

English proficiency is not only essential to international student recruitment and enrollment management, but to the process of campus and classroom integration. Without English proficiency, academic readiness and peer integration are jeopardized. Several campuses have employed such tools as language partnering programs, English language workshops, global engagement seminars, specialized English programs, and even conditional admissions to ameliorate these deficiencies and strengthen peer interaction (Tannette, 2015). Approximately 38,000 international students enroll each year in intensive English programs at U.S. universities and colleges, which are often supplemented by remedial classes (Rosetta, 2014). Writing Centers have also become a well-used tool by many campuses in an attempt to ameliorate students’ writing deficiencies.

Freshmen Immersion and Faculty Training

To offer prescriptions for change and a more integrated academic parlance, many institutions have also launched language-intensive and cultural pluralism programs immediately prior to the beginning of the freshman year or during the first semester of graduate studies (Smith, 2008). This is essential to create

the next generation of leaders capable of competently addressing universal dilemmas. Such immersion programs result in the birth of meaningful friendships, a key to success for all college students. By requiring all students to arrive at campus one week early to participate in a rigorous program of cross-cultural and language exposure, setbacks to learning such as social disconnect and language barriers may be avoided.

Institutions are also recognizing that faculty who deal with large numbers of international students may themselves need training and guidance, along with additional resources. Given the sensitive nature of academic and social challenges that international students face in the classroom and outside the classroom, faculty need guidance in how to maneuver these situations. For example, instructors can be asked to review established lectures to omit nuances and quips typically only fully comprehended by native speakers. Test questions may need to be similarly altered and reworded as well not to necessarily “dumb down” the material, but to question the international student in a way free from confusing terms and double entendres.

Student Ambassadors and “The Buddy System”

The idea of assigning a domestic student or a well-established current international student as an ambassador to new international students arriving on campus has gained considerable momentum (Klomengah, 2006). Many institutions now rely on their current students to interact with international students even before they arrive on campus through emails and social media outlets. These peers are trained to help the new overseas student address and overcome the anxieties associated with finding appropriate housing, completing necessary student documentation, opening a bank account, navigating academic systems and the campus’s international affairs office, learning basic laws and insurance requirements, as well as other related activities. The development and implementation of student ambassadors and buddy systems whereby an international student has another student to consult can also calm nerves upon entry to a new university. Hegarty (2014) explains that students who have regular contact with others are less likely to be alienated from college and the broader community experience than those more isolated. This conclusion buttresses the premise that increased levels of interaction with foreign students will ostensibly facilitate an easier adjustment to U.S. college life.

On-Campus, Pre-Collegiate Immersion Programs

To assist with the transition to campus residential life, independent living, more structured time and study demands, personal finances, student networking, and exploration of possible fields of major concentration, several schools have designed summer “bridge” programs. With stringent student visa requirements regarding length of stay in the U.S., on-campus programs such as the following may not be an option.

Emory College

One institution of higher learning that employs a pre-collegiate program is Emory College situated in Atlanta, Georgia. This program is offered on a voluntary basis and is generally spread over (3) two-week, noncredit sessions with approximately 100 Emory admitted students enrolled at any particular time. Embedded in these sessions is a required element of peer mentoring high school seniors to better equip them for the college investigatory and application process. International students, while not excluded, are not specifically mentioned. No data was indicated for their involvement and there does not appear to be an on-line component to aid their participation.

Harvard University

Seemingly focusing more on a greater diversity factor in its program description, i.e., “*Alongside peers from around the world*” the student will purportedly “*thrive in a dynamic, supportive academic environment.*” This noncredit, summer, campus residential program is offered in (3) two-week sessions and touts student exposure to academic offerings as well as engagement in various co-curricular activities in and around the greater Cambridge, Massachusetts area.

Carnegie Mellon University

Strictly geared to Advanced Placement high school juniors and seniors—without any reference to interaction with international counterparts—this Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania institution also offers summer bridge programs consisting of both credit and noncredit courses for (1) six-week long session.

Non-Collegiate Peer Mentoring Language Programs

When surveying the range of foreign language acquisition programs already on the market, the web-based program “i2istudy” garners special interest. This web-hosted program provides for both the “teaching” and the “learning” segments of language instruction between peers, however does not partner with any university and therefore does not allow for the procurement of university credit. The i2istudy program advertises that “nobody does homework” and that there is “no emphasis on grammar” (<https://www.i2istudy.com/en/lp8/>). Without overhaul, i2istudy would fail to meet university standards of rigor in order to attain university credit without diminishing the quality of the student’s education.

Additionally, while this program aims to aid in the learning of foreign languages through the use of technological means, i2istudy’s “time banking” principle—fueled by the earning and dispensing of “credits” which the user may disburse as desired—could be regarded as counterintuitive to the current pedagogies of individualized learning. By creating a videogame-like community that allows for the exchange of “time tokens,” the i2istudy team has successfully found a way to engage adult users in a fun and academic manner; however, this program would not be a suitable substitution for foreign language education at the university level as it fails to require that users both “teach” and “learn” while using the program. The i2istudy program, as currently structured, fails to meaningfully engage international and domestic students in a virtual platform which would allow both parties to exchange linguistic and cultural knowledge.

PRE-COLLEGIATE PEER-TO-PEER MENTORING FOR COLLEGE CREDIT (PCM)

University-level peer mentoring is not a novel concept as many collegiate programs pair an upper-class student with an incoming freshman to help mediate the learning environment; others promote this type of partnership to attain an online degree (Taylor & Zeng, 2008). However, as student demographics continue to change, something more immediate and rewarding must be implemented. The author proposes peer mentoring in language instruction for college credit as an important and valuable solution to address the challenges outlined in this paper.

The Need

The importance of higher education training in foreign languages cannot be underestimated. As a participant in a global economy—moreover, a global community—the United States can no longer afford to continue to underemphasize multilinguistic skillsets. In the European Union alone, there are over 24 recognized official languages (*Foreign Language Statistics*, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explain ed/index.php/>). These languages are representative of a range of peoples and cultures, and will continue to remain omnipresent for the foreseeable future. The European Union’s steadfast adherence to the importance of multilingualism was measured in a 2012 “Eurobarometer Survey”: over 98% of participants agreed that “mastering foreign languages will benefit their children,” 88% thought that “knowing languages other than their mother tongue [wa]s very useful,” 72% “agree[d] with the EU goal of at least 2 foreign languages for everyone,” and 77% opined that “improving language skills should be a policy priority” (*Multilingualism*, January 2016).

This same level of importance is not ascribed to U.S. foreign language programs. According to of the Center for Applied Linguistics, “Unlike many other countries, the United States does not have an official national language policy...Foreign language teaching has generally been restricted to languages useful for defense and intelligence purposes, with foreign language programs delinked from heritage language resources in communities” (*U.S. Educational Language Study*, 2016). This obvious difference in language

policy—one as a means of unifying a people, and the other as a defensive strategy—is perhaps only reflective of the cultures therein, and the ways in which the different nations interact with the world.

These deficiencies in multi-lingual acquisition were further delineated in a 2013 Modern Language Association Study which revealed that only 7% of students registered in higher learning institutions were enrolled in a foreign language class (Goldberg, Looney, & Lusin (2015). Furthermore, while foreign languages are taught in over 93% of all U.S. high schools, “less than 1 percent of American adults today are proficient in a foreign language that they studied in a U.S. classroom” (Friedman, 2016). This is in stark contrast to the roughly two-thirds of working-age European Union citizens who claim to know at least one foreign language (*Eurostat*, 2013). Unequal emphasis on language acquisition, if left unattended, will inevitably widen the cultural gap between domestic and multinational students.

As previously noted, according to the 2014 IIE “Open Doors” Report, the majority of international students are highly concentrated in business and engineering programs (IIE, 2014). In this light, it is incumbent on higher learning institutions to offer instruction in those languages most often used in the global marketplace. *Entrepreneur* recently rated the following languages as the most widely used in the business world after English: Spanish, Chinese (Mandarin), Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, and German (Shoshan, 2015). As Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg recently stated to college students in Beijing last spring, mastery of a language marks a fundamental step toward developing meaningful and lasting relationships and garnering the favor of key target business markets (Shoshan, 2015). U.S. institutions of higher learning might want to heed this advice accordingly.

Ostensibly, the United States must reassess and refocus its efforts on educational language instruction. But as with any systematic changes, the immediate effect may not materialize for years to come, elevating the need for immediate, and academically engaging, foreign language programs aimed at preparing higher education students to function fully and effectively in the global workforce.

Peer Value

Peer networking and mentoring can promote critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills from the onset — those same skills purportedly sought after by potential employers. Through early connection and networking, a new “culture of learning” can be attained which emphasizes active exchange throughout the student’s tenure, and may provide for a future career (Thomas & Brown, 2011). After following approximately 100 students for over 8 years, Chambliss and Takacs (2014) argue that such personal relationships help determine college success and further emphasize that it was the friendships made especially early in the college tenure process that ultimately proved critical — much more so than curricular and technological changes.

In order to make international and other nonresident students welcome to both college and community, more social and academic activities must be officered before actual campus arrival. In particular, early connectivity and mutually beneficial programs may serve to neutralize biases held by some domestic students towards their foreign counterparts. With peer-to-peer mentoring for college credit, higher educational institutions would undoubtedly incur costs of assessment and perhaps experience earlier graduation dates, but may also achieve higher retention rates and a more genuinely integrated campus.

The Logistics

The logistics may involve the same computer-based matching programs used by over 400 colleges and universities to pair freshmen roommates (*CBS News*, May 8, 2015). The questionnaires involved could be expanded to garner information regarding skill-sharing and desired peer instruction. Freshman pairings of domestic to international students through an in-home, free technology like *Skype*, *Google Hangouts*, and/or *OoVoo* could facilitate this effort. While all three modes are regarded as video chat applications and screen-sharing mechanisms, it is important to note that *Google Hangouts* and *OoVoo* allow for video sharing between multiple parties, allowing for both recordation and monitoring by trained faculty members and other instructors.

It is reasonable to speculate that increased opportunities for peer contact may decrease the trepidations of incoming domestic and foreign students alike. Entering freshmen could connect before arriving on campus by being paired, according to their linguistic and other academic needs, with a peer of a different nationality — to learn from each other for free college credit. The students' abilities could be assessed at the beginning of summer (usually already accomplished through pre-testing), monitored throughout the summer recess, and tested immediately prior to the beginning of the freshman year. There would be no travel expenses for the students and visa study requirements would not be jeopardized. Most importantly, friendships could take root even before the first day of class. By beginning early contact and instruction through peer-to-peer mentoring, the earning of college credit by both students would lessen tuition expenses and be an effective method to recruit new students. During the academic year, faculty members would find themselves instructing students who are better equipped to learn and who are already partially integrated into campus life.

As virtually all entering freshmen harbor some level of anxiety and homesickness—especially international and first-generation students—this type of connectivity could produce life-long friendships and indelible learning experiences. It seems reasonable to speculate that by providing increased opportunities for meaningful contact early in the student's tenure, the tendency of students to view those different from themselves with suspicion would be negated and might plausibly decrease the school's attrition rates.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Gauging student interest in a program such as PCM—and of peer language instruction generally—would ostensibly be essential before investment, advertisement, and implementation. In February, 2016, a Chicagoland regional study was conducted, the primary objectives of which were to investigate student support for a new pre-collegiate, summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program for free college credit as well as to generally assess interest in peer language instruction. Two universities were chosen, one public and one private, as well as four regional high schools in Northwest Indiana. Students were asked to indicate whether they would support different forms of domestic-international interaction through language mentoring. The categorical distributions of the students' responses are reported in Tables 1-6.

Valparaiso University (VU)

Valparaiso University (VU), Valparaiso, Indiana, is a private, faith-based, Midwestern university enrolling 3,251 undergraduates (74.16% white; 5.29% African-American; 6.67% Hispanic; 5.24% domestic “other”; 8.64% international, <http://Forbes.com>, 2015-2016). About 89.5% of respondents from this institution were domestic students and 10.5% internationals. Roughly 74.9% were freshmen/sophomores and 25.1%, juniors/seniors. Approximately half expressed support for multiple forms of language instruction between international and domestic students as noted by their choice of “agree” or “strongly agree.” The exact percentage figures were as follows: 63.7% for learning a secondary language from an international student; 60.8% for teaching English to an international student; 70.8% for earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student; 69.0% for earning college credit by teaching English to an international student; and 63.2% for earning credit for mutual instruction. Additionally, 43.9% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would *participate in a summer, online cross-teaching language program for credit*; 72% of upperclassmen responded that they no longer needed language credit.

TABLE 1
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING: VALPARAISO
UNIVERSITY – VALPARAISO, IN (4-YEAR PRIVATE UNIVERSITY)

N=171 (Females: 83/Males: 88) (aged 18-19:118 / >19: 53 (Domestics: 153 = 121 White, 15 African-American, 17 Hispanics / Internationals: 18) (Freshmen-Soph: 128 / Jr-Sr: 43) (2d Language= None: 46 / Novice-Beg: 48 / Intermediate-Fluent: 77)					
Query: To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	35	74	32	24	6
Interested in teaching an international student English.	28	76	34	38	5
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	40	81	32	14	4
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	42	76	29	19	5
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	36	71	35	24	5
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	29	46	46	41	9

Analysis

Domestic females and minorities as well as international students were more interested overall in foreign language, cross instruction while about 17% of white male, domestic freshmen with no secondary language skills rejected any form of instruction-based interaction with international students. Approximate 24% of white domestic females with no second language experience were unsure of the PCM program, but supportive of underlying objectives of peer instruction, especially when college credit was offered. The majority of domestic, African-American and Hispanic males with no foreign language exposure were interested in teaching English when college credit was offered. About 15% of the Saudi internationals were concerned about their teaching abilities and whether their government would support a PCM program, but expressed support overall. Nearly all Chinese student respondents were supportive of the various options proposed to interact with their domestic counterparts.

Purdue University–North Central (PNC)

Purdue University-North Central (PNC), Westville, Indiana, is a 4-year public institution, enrolling 6,142 undergraduates (80% white; 4.6% African-American; 12% Hispanic; 3.36% domestic “other”; .04% international, <http://colleges.startclass.com/>, 2015-2016). All of the respondents from this institution were domestic, upper- and lower-class men and women. Approximately half of the respondents expressed

support for a listed type of engaged language instruction between international and domestic students as signified by marking either “agree” or “strongly agree.” The exact percentage figures were as follows: 61.5% for learning a secondary language from an international student; 51.9% for teaching English to an international student; 78.8% for earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student; 86.5% for earning college credit by teaching English to an international student; and 65.4% for earning credit for mutual instruction. Additionally, 57.7% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would participate in a summer, online, cross-teaching language program for credit.

TABLE 2
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING
PURDUE UNIVERSITY-NORTH CALUMET – WESTVILLE, IN
(4-YEAR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY)

N=52 (Females: 27 / Males: 25) (Domestics: 52 = 35 White & 17 African-American/Internationals: 0) (Fr.-Soph.: 18 / Jr.-Sr.: 34) (2d Language = None: 26/Novice-Beg: 21 / Intermediate-Fluent: 5)					
Query: To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	9	23	19	2	1
Interested in teaching an international student English.	7	20	10	13	2
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	15	26	9	1	1
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	13	32	3	3	1
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	12	22	15	2	1
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	9	21	18	2	1

Analysis

The older the student and the more exposure that the individual indicated he or she had to foreign language training, the more likely such student favored peer language instruction. Freshmen females and minority students tended to favor PCM and peer language tutoring in general. Male domestic males with little exposure to other languages were, nevertheless, more attracted to teaching English for free college credit.

Hebron High School (HHS)

Hebron High School (HHS), Hebron, Indiana, is a predominantly small, rural, grades 9-12 public institution, with a student census of 337 students (87.2% white; 1.2% African-American; 9.2% Hispanic; 2.4% domestic “other”; 0% international, <http://public-schools.startclass.com/>, 2015-2016). All of the respondents from this institution were domestic junior and senior males and females. Approximately 23.6% of the respondents expressed support for both learning a foreign language from an international student and teaching English for no college credit by having chosen either “agree” or “strongly agree.” These figures increased to 36.1% for learning a foreign language for credit and 40.3% for teaching English for credit. Exactly 25% of the respondents indicated interest in both learning and teaching for free college credit. Only 11.1% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would participate in a summer, online, cross-teaching language program for credit. HHS had the least diverse study body as compared to the other three high schools surveyed. HHS is also located in a more remote, rural community in Northwestern Indiana.

**TABLE 3
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING:
HEBRON HIGH SCHOOL – HEBRON, IN (4-YEAR SECONDARY SCHOOL)**

N=72 (Females:40/Males:32) (Domestics: 72 = 65 White, 1 African-American, 6 Hispanic) (Sr: 70/Jr:2) (College Bound=Yes:65/No:7) (2d Language = None: 30/ Novice-Beginner: 35/ Intermediate-Fluent: 7)					
Query: To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	3	14	26	15	14
Interested in teaching an international student English.	4	13	17	19	19
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	8	18	18	17	11
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	6	23	17	16	10
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	4	14	27	15	12
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	1	7	22	19	23

Analysis

Domestic white males and Hispanic students with no foreign language training (and especially those without college plans) were overwhelmingly resistant to any listed form of interaction with an international peer. Both female and male students with minimum exposure were more inclined to teach

English for free college credit, but rejected learning a foreign language from an international peer and expressed no opinion about PCM. The responses collectively indicated that greater exposure to foreign language training correlated more closely to acceptance of mutual instruction and the introduction of a PCM program.

Lake Station (Edison) School (LSHS)

Lake Station (Edison) High School (LSHS), Lake Station, Indiana, is a mid-sized, Chicago metropolitan area, grades 7-12, public school, enrolling 623 students (54% white; 5% African-American; 35% Hispanic; 6% domestic “other”; 0% international, <https://k12.niche.com/>, 2015-2016). LSHS was the only secondary school surveyed outside of Porter County, Indiana (Lake County) and is closer in proximity to Chicago. It boasts a diverse student body with the majority of the students coming from low-income, working class families.

TABLE 4
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING: LAKE STATION (EDISON) HIGH SCHOOL – LAKE STATION, IN (7-YEAR MIDDLE/SECONDARY SCHOOL)

N=57 (Females:28/Males:29) (Domestics:57 = 65 White, 1 African-American, 6 Hispanics) (Sr: 30 Jr:27)(College Bound=Yes:47/No:10) (2d Language=None: 23 / Novice-Beginner:19/ Intermediate-Fluent:15)					
Query: To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	8	20	17	8	4
Interested in teaching an international student English.	7	17	18	20	5
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	10	18	17	10	3
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	9	16	22	8	2
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	8	14	25	8	2
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	6	7	24	16	4

Although the school instructs grades 7 through 12, only junior and senior female and male students were surveyed. Close to one-fifth of these respondents indicated no plans to attend college upon graduation. The survey results are as follows: by choosing either “agree” or “strongly agree,” approximately 49.1% of the respondents indicated support for learning a foreign language from an international student without earning college credit while 42% supported teaching English in this manner.

These figures were almost exactly mirrored when college credit was offered. Nearly 38.6% of the respondents indicated interest in both learning and teaching for free college credit while 22.8% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would participate in a summer, online, cross-teaching language program for credit.

Analysis

The majority of white and minority females with minimum foreign language training were more prone to advocate most forms of interaction with an international peer; both female and male students with any degree of exposure were more inclined to advocate learning English from an international student for free college credit, but expressed no opinion about PCM. The respondents as a collective indicated that more exposure to foreign language training correlated more closely to acceptance of mutual instruction and the introduction of a PCM program.

Chesterton High School (CHS)

Chesterton High School (CHS), Chesterton, Indiana, is a mid-sized, suburban, grades 9-12 public secondary school, enrolling 2,028 students (86% white; 2% African-American; 9% Hispanic; 3% domestic “other”; 0% international, <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/>, 2015-2016). All respondents from this high school—situate approximate 45 miles southeast of Chicago and only about 5 miles from the

TABLE 5
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING:
CHESTERTON HIGH SCHOOL – CHESTERTON, IN (4-YEAR SECONDARY SCHOOL)

N=83 (Females:28/Males:29) (Domestics: 83 = 71 White, 4 African-American, 3 Hispanic, 2 Asian-American, 3 Other) (Sr:83) (College Bound=Yes:81/No:2) (2d Language= None: 10 / Novice-Beginner:36/ Intermediate-Fluent:37)					
Query: To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	13	39	15	11	5
Interested in teaching an international student English.	13	26	16	15	13
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	25	25	20	6	7
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	26	29	16	7	5
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	17	31	17	10	8
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	10	29	17	18	9

southern tip of Lake Michigan—were domestic seniors: 81 indicated that they were college-bound while only 2 stated that they had no immediate plans to pursue a post-secondary degree upon matriculation. The respondents were almost evenly split along gender lines. While predominantly white, this sample also included 4 African-American, 2 Asian-American, 3 Hispanic, and 3 mixed-race students.

In choosing either “agree” or “strongly agree,” approximately 62.7% of these respondents indicated support for learning a foreign language from an international student without earning college credit while 47% supported teaching English in this manner. Nearly 60.2% favored learning a foreign language from an international peer while 66.5% supported teaching English – both when free college credit was offered as an option. Approximately 57.8% of the respondents indicated interest in both learning a foreign language and teaching English for free college credit and 47% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would participate in a summer, online, cross-teaching language program like PCM for credit.

Analysis

The surveys were grouped into senior honors, Advanced Placement (AP) students, and general education students. Nearly 80% of all senior honors females, with intermediate to fluent skills in a secondary language, expressed support for all forms of peer interaction in language instruction while their male counterparts were evenly split. Additionally, honors students were more hesitant to teach than they were to learn. These patterns were generally repeated with both AP and general education students. Two of the three blended race students were highly supportive of all categories of peer language instruction. African-American males expressed more interest in gaining college credit for teaching English, but expressed no opinion about PCM. The overall trend indicated that with females and students with some training in a foreign language, an increased eagerness to participate in a form of peer mentoring was demonstrated.

Neighbors’ New Vistas High School (NNVHS)

Neighbors’ New Vistas High School (NNVHS), Portage, Indiana, is a small, grades 9-12 alternative charter high school – with an adult education and remediation component – enrolling 184 students (47% white; 22% African-American; 23% Hispanic; 7% domestic “other”; 1% international, <http://www.publicschoolreview.com/>, 2015-2016). Portage, Indiana is a predominantly working class city and touts the most diverse student body in terms of age and ethnicity of any of the high schools surveyed. There were 48 respondents, 42 of whom indicated plans to attend a post-secondary institution upon graduation. Of the 46 domestic respondents, 20 were white, 14 Hispanic, 7 African-American, and 5 mixed race. Two students were non-resident aliens.

By choosing either “agree” or “strongly agree,” approximately 66.6% of these respondents expressed support for learning a foreign language from an international student without earning college credit while 58.3% supported teaching English in this manner. 66.6% favored learning and 70.8% supported teaching English – both when college credit was offered. Approximately 60.4% of the respondents indicated interest in both learning and teaching for credit and 54.2% of the respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they would participate in a summer, online, cross-teaching language program for credit.

TABLE 6
STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LANGUAGE MENTORING: NEIGHBORS' NEW VISTAS HIGH SCHOOL – PORTAGE, IN (4-YEAR SECONDARY & ADULT EDUCATION CHARTER SCHOOL)

N=48 (Females:28/Males:20) (Domestics: 46=20 White, 7 African-American, 14 Hispanic, 5 Other / Internationals: 2) (Freshmen: 6 / Sophomores: 9 / Juniors:13 / Seniors:12 / Adult Ed: 8) (College Bound=Yes:42 / No:6) (2d Language= None: 18 / Novice-Beginner:15/ Intermediate-Fluent:15)					
Query: <i>To gauge interest in international/domestic peer language instruction and particularly in PCM, please answer the following:</i>					
PEER LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Interested in learning a secondary language from an international student.	17	15	8	2	6
Interested in teaching an international student English.	19	9	10	3	7
Interested in earning college credit by learning a secondary language from an international student.	21	11	9	2	5
Interested in earning college credit by teaching an international student English.	21	13	9	0	5
Interested in earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	18	11	12	1	6
Interested in participating in a summer, online peer-to-peer language mentoring program earning college credit by BOTH learning a secondary language from an international student and teaching an international student English.	16	10	14	2	6

Analysis

Unlike the three other high schools surveyed, there appeared to be no significant gender, age, ethnic/racial background, or level of foreign language training differentials reflected in the responses to the listed options. Overwhelmingly, these respondents favored a listed type of foreign language instructional offering with more than two-thirds of the students advocating teaching English to an international student for college credit. About half expressed support for a PCM-like program while 14 were unsure and had no opinion.

Collective Results

Overall, more than half of university freshman and high school seniors favored some form of peer instruction while nearly a third supported the idea of introducing a program similar to PCM. International students and students with above average exposure to a foreign language overwhelmingly supported the concept of peer mentoring with a majority of domestic females and domestic minorities supporting the mentoring program when the factor of free college credit was offered.

If successful, this program could also be administered during semester breaks and cover other skills, including knowledge acquisition in the fields of history, geography, arts, and information technology —

the possibilities are vast. This acquisition of college credit could also be used to satisfy required internships—especially for foreign students.

CONCLUSION

A growing discord on university campuses has surfaced, particularly within the last decade, as campus demographics have changed, reflecting a more accurate view of the global society in which the student is expected to function. Certain challenges have been identified: widespread failure to integrate the international student into the mainstream study body—often resulting in isolation and provocative reactions; disparate standards of matriculation, teaching, and testing; and unequal allocation of financial assistance. Changing dynamics have necessitated comprehensive evaluation to rectify the schisms between domestic and international students at all U.S. institutions of higher learning. However, could change threaten the historical quality of traditionally-configured educational programs that initially attracted international students to the campus?

It is difficult to question the valuable opportunities for cultural exchange, appreciation, and diplomacy that international education provides. It is indisputable that full tuition payments from international students have greatly ameliorated cash-strapped public and private universities and colleges as a growing percentage of U.S. institutions of higher learning find themselves in serious financial trouble and overleveraged by focusing on greater amenities rather than meeting educational needs. One way to confront the situation and be true harbingers of reform is through strategically investing in innovative models involving technological, pedagogical, organizational, and structural changes — all of which would require a thorough networking of students. Collaboration cultivates relationships and provides education about, and insight into, national, regional, and global challenges for which skillsets should be developed during the collegiate tenure.

Historically, perceptions of educational quality and excellence have been measured on a school's reputation, the size of its endowment, faculty scholarly output, and standardized admission scores of new students (Astin, 1985). The focus, instead, should center on each student's acumen and talents for higher education's future viability. For it is the intellectual and moral development of the individual which serves the fundamental institutional purpose. Thus, a shift in paradigm from resource-based to talent-based must be adopted in order to educate the nation's most diverse groups of students.

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