

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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International students are a growing population at many institutions of higher education in the United States, and they face unique challenges in navigating both higher education and the United States as a whole. Though there is significant research about international students, few studies have examined how international students perceive student services, and fewer have explored student services outside of international student support services. This qualitative study was conducted to better understand how international students at Oregon State University perceive campus services, specifically services received outside of the Office of International Services. Four participants participated in the study, and six common themes emerged from their narratives: campus climate, interactions with staff, effective communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships. From these results, four recommendations for practitioners were offered. These recommendations included building knowledge of and capacity to support international students across the whole campus, creating intentional and inclusive

communication practices, developing more inclusive programs, and collaborating with international educators on campus.

Key Words: International students, campus climate, campus services, student services, institutional support

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International Student Perceptions of Campus Services

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Jennifer S. Kuan, Author

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My first experience with the U.S. education system was in 2012, when I moved to Los Angeles to complete my undergraduate degree. Like many other new students, my college journey began with orientation. I attended international orientation, which promised to both provide the information I would need to navigate my institution and to offer spaces to make social connections with my peers. I didn't know a single other person at my university, so I was excited for the opportunity to make friends and get to know students from around the world. Unfortunately, the memories I have of orientation are not of new friends. While I no longer remember most of what was shared at orientation, one piece that stuck with me was a video shown to all international students about life in the United States.

I'm sure the video was shown with good intention. Parts of it were useful—there was a discussion of classroom norms in the United States and information about the jobs that we were legally allowed to work. However, a larger part of the video was pretty condescending. We were shown a lengthy clip about making friends in America, and the video made sure to let us know that Americans greet each other by nodding or waving, or else they might say “What's up?” or “How's it going?” In case this was too challenging for us, the video also offered that these questions can be hypothetical, and do not always need to be answered.

I can't be sure that all of my peers found the video as patronizing as I did, but my university certainly could have found more critical information about life in the United States to share during the short time they had with us at orientation. I learned after the

fact that the domestic orientation sessions included an hour-long skit about challenges new students might face during their first year of college and time to debrief with a current student afterward, which would have been much more useful to me. Unlike my orientation suggested, the challenges that I experienced during my first year were more than just learning the academic structure of the United States and understanding how Americans greet one another.

The dubiously helpful orientation video did little to prepare me for some of the other experiences I had as an international student, where seemingly simple tasks were surprisingly onerous. Starting on-campus employment was more complicated than just getting a job offer—I also needed to wait to get a Social Security Number and prove that I was authorized to work before I could start earning money. I also navigated other bureaucratic challenges: I needed to get a signature on a form once per academic year, attesting that I was enrolled full-time in order to receive the benefits I was eligible for from my home country's government. The Registrar's office would only stamp the form, but my government required a physical signature and would not accept the Registrar's stamp. Each year, I spent multiple hours going from one office to another trying to find someone who could sign the form instead of stamping it, and I could never seem to get the same person to stamp it two years in a row. Though I had many positive experiences at my undergraduate institution and most of the offices I interacted with were helpful, there were times when it seemed like no one knew how to address my needs as an international student.

Research Question

My experience learning to navigate my university and U.S. higher education informed some of my interest in this research project. My personal takeaway was that not all of the student support services on campus were attuned to the needs of international students. I was curious to learn more about other international students' perspectives at my graduate institution, Oregon State University (OSU), to see if their experiences aligned or did not align with my own. I was especially interested in learning how international students perceived student services outside of the Office of International Services because those services wouldn't necessarily have been designed and implemented with international students in mind. As a result, the questions I hoped to answer through qualitative interviews were as follows:

- What are international students' perceptions of student services at Oregon State University, aside from those received through the Office of International Services?
- Excluding the Office of International Services, which campus departments provide international students with the greatest sense of support? What actions, behaviors, or attitudes contribute to this perception of support?
- When considering departments outside of the Office of International Services, do international students feel that there are places on campus where they are not supported? If so, what behaviors, attitudes, or actions lead to feelings of non-support?

- What specific recommendations or suggestions do international students have for student services, aside from those provided through the Office of International Services?

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

The population of international students in the United States has been growing consistently for the past several decades and is likely to continue growing in the coming years (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Shalka, 2017; Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012). In addition, international students experience unique transitional challenges as they navigate the move from their home country and culture to the United States (Alberts & Hazen, 2013; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Xu, 2015). As a result, it is essential that professionals across the university are equipped with the knowledge needed to provide support that meets the needs of international students. Supporting international students needs to be the responsibility of the entire campus—these students interact with a wide range of departments (Collier & Rosch, 2016; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Xu, 2015).

Existing research has explored international student involvement and experiences on campus, but fewer studies have considered how international students perceive wider ranges of services on campus. The studies that did examine international students' perceptions of student services focused primarily on international student services and therefore left larger questions of campus climate underexplored (Chissoe, 2017; Guo, 2016). Though Guo (2016) also examined international student perceptions of a select number of campus services outside of international student support services, it was a

peripheral focus of the study, and they used primarily quantitative methods. One of the few studies that did engage international student perspectives of support services across the broader campus with qualitative methods was conducted by Roberts and Dunworth (2017). However, the study took place at an Australian university, which means that their findings may not be directly applicable to a U.S. context (Roberts & Dunworth, 2017).

My study employed qualitative methods to contribute to the literature about international student experiences with support services at U.S. institutions of higher education and to center the voices and experiences of my participants. My hope is that this study will provide more information about how international students experience OSU and offer suggestions that can improve the ways in which campus services support international students. My intention was to focus on campus services outside of the Office of International Services to gain a better understanding of the wider campus climate, since international students interact with the entire campus, not just the services that are designed for them. Through my participant's narratives, I identified common themes that contributed to positive and negative experiences with student services at OSU. Participants also shared recommendations for practitioners at OSU based on their experiences on campus.

Key Terms

International Students. A general definition of international students refers to students who are studying in another country with an academic visa (Sullivan, 2018). These students are generally on nonimmigrant visas, and the primary purpose of their stay in their host country is their academic study. For the purposes of this study, how

participants self-identified was the most important factor in determining eligibility for this study. The selection criteria as it related to international students was that students needed to self-identify as international students—additional information about their status was not required or collected. As a result, the international students who participated in this study may have held different kinds of student visas—the United States has multiple visa categories for international students. International students may refer to students who either enrolled directly in the university or who participated in OSU’s pathway program, INTO OSU, and I did not differentiate between direct entry and pathway students for the purpose of this study.

Campus Services. In this study, I conceptualized campus services as any of the multitudes of resources that either provide support for students or enhance their experience at OSU. Any resource outside of academic classes was considered a campus service for the purpose of this study, including but not limited to academic advising, university housing, student organizations, health services, affinity spaces, and on-campus jobs and research. The scope of campus services was purposefully broad in order to provide participants space to discuss whichever campus services were most relevant to their experiences. Throughout this text, I use the terms campus services and student services interchangeably to refer to the resources that participants discussed during the study. In addition, this study centered on experiences with campus services outside of services that are specifically designed for international students, so when I use the terms campus services or student services, I am referring to all resources except for those that are developed with international students as the primary audience.

International Student Programs and Services. Institutions of higher education that host international students often have support services that are specifically catered to their needs, which are known as International Student Programs and Services (ISPS). Guidelines for ISPS are provided by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2018). ISPS are responsible for ensuring that institutions are eligible to host international students by maintaining compliance with federal regulations, responding to crises, helping international students maintain their visa status, and helping students navigate cross-cultural adjustment and the U.S. as a whole (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2018). While ISPS are essential resources for international students, this study does not engage with international student perspectives of ISPS, as other researchers have attended to this question.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Understanding the perceptions that international students have of student services at OSU, both positive and negative, was an important aspect of my research question. The literature review in this chapter intends to present an overview and synthesis of relevant research about the experiences of international students in the United States, both with student services and more broadly. This review drew from scholarly literature on internationalization, international students, student development theory, and international student involvement and perceptions of student services in order to explore how international students engage with and perceive student services, as well as the context in which international students experience higher education in the United States.

Internationalization of Higher Education in the United States

In 1919, the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded in the United States, along with international organizations with similar purposes like the British Council (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). At the time, international academic exchange occurred primarily between scholars, serving political agendas born from World War I that sought to increase peace and mutual understanding between citizens of different countries (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). Following World War II, international education and academic exchange in the United States began to grow more rapidly, and increasingly included students, not just scholars (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2018; de Wit & Merckx, 2012; NAFSA, 2018). While European institutions of higher education struggled to recover from the destruction of World War II, higher education in the United States, Canada, and Australia gained standing around the rest of

the world (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). In the United States, national security and foreign policy became increasingly important rationales for internationalization, which led to the development of the Fulbright program in 1946 (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). The Fulbright program helped kickstart the growth of international student enrollment in the United States, and through this growth, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA), later NAFSA: Association of International Educators, was formed in 1948 (de Wit & Merckx, 2012; NAFSA, 2018).

Through the Cold War, political rationales for internationalization continued to reign in the United States (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). However, as the Cold War ended and globalization not just of higher education but of society at large continued to advance, drivers of internationalization moved from political to economic motivations (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). A memorandum released by the White House in 2000 underscored this rationale, citing the need for U.S. citizens to develop a stronger understanding of the world and its citizens in order to remain competitive in a global economy (de Wit & Merckx, 2012). In addition, many institutions of higher education began integrating internationalization into their overall strategic plans, both to increase revenue through international student tuition dollars and to increase cross-cultural exchange and relationship building on campuses in the United States (de Wit & Merckx, 2012).

As more institutions of higher education in the United States embraced internationalization, particularly as an economic and cultural benefit to the institution, the population of international students studying in the United States grew significantly, accounting for a large proportion of globally mobile students (de Wit & Merckx, 2012;

Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Shalka, 2017). Out of approximately 4.6 million students studying outside their home country, over one million attended institutions of higher education in the United States (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2018). The significant growth of this population on campuses in the United States means that it is increasingly important for professionals in higher education to understand the needs of international students and to develop programs that support international student success (Cho & Yu, 2015; Guo, 2016; Jameson & Goshit, 2017; Tas, 2017). Caring for international students should not be relegated to one department—instead, professionals across the institution must be able to identify and respond to the needs of international students (Collier & Rosch, 2016; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Xu, 2015).

Internationalization Drivers and Rhetoric About International Students. The changes in the rationales driving the internationalization of higher education have also created particular social imaginaries of international students in the United States, some of which have been either explicitly or tacitly supported by the U.S. government or by institutions of higher education. These imaginaries “provide both a descriptive and normative framework for what things are and what they should be” and form often unacknowledged background ideologies that may influence the frame of reference through which international students are understood by those interacting with them (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 228). As a result, they can have a significant influence on the experiences that international students have with student services. This section will

provide a brief overview of some of the most prominent imaginaries of international students in the United States that have emerged over recent decades.

Cash Cows. A common social understanding of international students relates to capital, positioning them as sources of revenue for their institutions and the U.S. economy (Lee, 2007; Robertson, 2011; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). This includes both the literal capital that comes from their educational expenses and their academic contributions to the knowledge economy, where cutting-edge research is increasingly significant in establishing and maintaining global power (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). The capital imaginary is particularly prevalent in public institutions of higher education as state funding declines. While domestic increases to tuition are often capped by legislation, international tuition increases are often less regulated, which means that increased international student enrollment can help institutions of higher education balance their budgets, and many university administrations put significant emphasis on international student recruitment. Sometimes, this narrative positions international students as victims of systems that exploit them financially (Robertson, 2011).

Threats. Other narratives cast international students as threats, particularly in economic capacities. This ideology rises when international students “threaten Western entitlement to resources and opportunities” and take advantage of the institution’s hospitality (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016, p. 233). This manifestation is especially common when it comes to desirable jobs post-graduation, which means that the threat imaginary is more pronounced when there are high rates of unemployment (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). This discourse emphasizes the temporary nature of student visas and the

expectation that international students return to their home countries following graduation if it would be inconvenient to their host country for them to stay (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016).

The threat mentality can also stem from fears related to national security, which disproportionately affects racialized international students and international students from the Global South (Lee, 2007). A study describing the transitional challenges that international students face found that increased Islamophobia after 9/11 had a significant effect on international students who were perceived to be Arab or Muslim (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Within this logic, international students who come from countries that are involved in conflict with the United States are potential threats to national security, which justifies patriotic citizens in surveilling them. This imaginary targets international students based on their perceived race and country of origin (Lee, 2007).

Designer Migrants. Certain narratives of international students position them as ideal economic migrants and frame them as “designer migrants” (Robertson, 2011, p. 2206). This rhetoric relies on international students’ consumption of Western higher education to place them as ideal citizens, as they are educated by prestigious universities, future contributors to the skilled workforce, and already familiar with the nation’s culture and customs (Robertson, 2011). This social imaginary relies on economic context to grow, as this discourse is only convenient to the state when there are labor shortages. In addition, this rhetoric privileges student migrants as deserving of migration, implicitly labeling the labor performed by other migrants as less valuable.

Backdoor Migrants. In addition to the designer migrant imaginary, another migration discourse that relates to international students is the “backdoor migrant” construction (Robertson, 2011, p. 2206). As the general public became increasingly attentive to and fearful of migrants, student migrants became implicated in these rhetorics as well (Robertson, 2011). Instead of being perceived as ideal candidates for immigration, international students were seen as opportunistic, taking advantage of student visas in order to obtain easier pathways to immigration (Robertson, 2011). This narrative is likely a response to public anxieties about the economic threat of international students to domestic job applicants (Robertson, 2011). This mindset is particularly prevalent in the United States—in 2015, the Department of Homeland Security created a fake university in an attempt to lure in international students without documentation who were seeking to remain in the United States and maintained the fake university through 2019 (Toppo, 2019).

International Students in the United States

A report released in 2016 by the Student and Visitor Exchange Program returned a total enrollment of 1.18 million international undergraduate and graduate students across the United States—an increase of 55% from the previous decade (Shalka, 2017; Sullivan, 2018). Many scholars agree that these numbers are likely to continue increasing in the coming years (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Shalka, 2017; Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012). In addition, research has shown that international students are significant resources for both their host institutions and their home countries, both

academically and culturally (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Shalka, 2017; Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012).

Transitions into the Institution. Like other students transitioning into higher education, international students face challenges, which are compounded as they learn to navigate their host culture. Existing research has shown that adjusting to a new country comes with challenges throughout the acculturation process, some of which relate to cultural norms, language proficiency, social support, finances, food, and administrative processes (Alberts & Hazen, 2013; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Xu, 2015). A common theory used to describe the process of adjustment is Oberg's (1960) Culture Shock model, which consisted of four stages: honeymoon, or initial fascination, enthusiasm, or excitement about the host culture; crisis, or the frustration that arises from differences in values, language, or concepts; recovery, where learning the culture mitigates the crisis stage; and adjustment, where the visitor learns how to navigate and enjoy the host culture (Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Xu, 2015).

Early studies on culture shock had a tendency to focus on recovery from culture shock; however, more recent studies, including a longitudinal study by Wang et al. (2012) sought to better capture the complex and individual process of acculturation. Wang et al.'s (2012) study focused on the acculturation experiences of Chinese international students in the United States, and they hoped that in de-homogenizing the international student experience with culture shock, other researchers would go on to do the same for more populations within the international student community. Shalka (2017)

also challenged traditional views of culture shock recovery, suggesting that acculturation should be a two-way process of exchange between domestic and international students rather than forcing international students to integrate to Western cultural contexts. This push for two-way exchange is not necessarily shared by faculty—when asked about the unique challenges they experience when working with international students, the majority of faculty shared perceived student problems, such as language proficiency, rather than challenges that related to their teaching practices or cross-cultural understanding (Redden, 2019).

In addition to the environmental elements of culture shock, many international students also come to the United States from different educational structures and must adapt to new learning environments and expectations (Alberts & Hazen, 2013; Xu, 2015). Xu (2015) referred to this as “learning shock” (p. 5). Alberts and Hazen (2013) emphasized the differences between the United States’ “individualism” and several other cultures’ “collectivism” (p. 150) and examined how these values appear in spaces of education. They went on to discuss the roles of the instructor in both of these contexts: in an individualistic model, the learner has more autonomy in directing their study (Alberts & Hazen, 2013). They are expected to challenge and question the material (Alberts & Hazen, 2013). In a collectivist teaching model, the instructor’s goal is to pass knowledge to students, and students are expected to memorize what is taught (Alberts & Hazen, 2013). To challenge the instructor is to disrupt the class and demonstrate disrespect (Alberts & Hazen, 2013). In order to mitigate challenges from learning shock, Tas (2017), Xu (2015), and Slantcheva-Durst and Knaggs (2017) all suggested that culturally

relevant examples and internationalization must be included in the curriculum. Such changes would both include international students in the classroom and provide domestic students with more opportunities to learn about their international peers (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017; Tas, 2017; Xu, 2015).

As international students enter universities, research has suggested that the transition phase is essential (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017; Tas, 2017). A study conducted by Slantcheva-Durst and Knaggs (2017) emphasized the importance of ongoing academic orientation rather than a single event at the start of the student experience. They argued that continued connection with the student allows them to better adjust to Western institutions of education (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017). To an extent, Tas (2017) agreed with the need for ongoing orientation. He acknowledged that academic results are key to the retention of international students, but he proposed a more robust orientation program, which included the importance of welcoming students into the institution and creating a more holistic infrastructure of support for new students. Wang et al. (2012) also conducted a longitudinal study to investigate how Chinese international students adjusted during their first three semesters at U.S. universities. Their results suggested that students' prearrival factors for psychological distress and their post-arrival social support choices influenced whether or not students experienced psychological stress during the transition to university (Wang et al., 2012). They also found that a "balanced" social network—one that included both students from a student's home country and students from their host country—supported better adjustment (Wang et al., 2012). Though each of these studies emphasized different elements of the transition

period, they agreed that meeting both the academic and non-academic needs of international students is critical to their retention in American institutions of higher education (Cho & Yu, 2015; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012; Xu, 2015).

Campus and Community Climate. Transitional challenges are not the only barriers that international students face on campuses in the United States. Scholars have found that many international students experience discrimination related to their race or nationality, and international students tend to feel isolated from domestic students, often building social support with other international students instead (Alberts & Hazen, 2013; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Following 9/11, increases in Islamophobic rhetoric in the United States, and more recently, Trump's attempted travel ban, many international students reported increased feelings of discomfort and marginalization, not only on campus but also in the wider community (Jean-Francois, 2017; Lee, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Redden, 2019). The challenges that international students face in regards to discrimination and race dynamics included both navigating the United States' social context of race and racism and overt instances of discrimination related both to international students' skin color and country of origin (Hanassab, 2006; Jean-Francois, 2017; Lee, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Redden, 2019).

Lee (2007) found that many international students believed that discrimination was a cost they needed to bear in order to receive an American degree. One of her research participants even said, "we generally walk back home from campus, and it was not a big deal, but people threw bottles at us. Being international students, you get used to

it” (Lee, 2007, p. 29). Students also expressed hesitation in reporting experiences of discrimination due to the fear of being deported, which described some of the structural problems that international students face within institutions of higher education in the United States: maintaining visa status can take priority over addressing overt discrimination (Lee, 2007). In addition to overt discrimination, many international students also described experiencing “covert discrimination,” which stemmed more often from stereotypes or unconscious assumptions about the student once their nationality was revealed rather than conscious acts of bias (Jean-Francois, 2017, pp. 6–7). These experiences of covert discrimination came from university staff, faculty, and other students, which points to widespread issues of campus climate that international students face in the United States (Jean-Francois, 2017).

In addition, Lee’s (2007) study and an additional study conducted by Hanassab (2006) found that nation of origin affected international students’ experiences with discrimination. These studies found that students from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America generally experienced greater rates of discrimination than students from other regions (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Lee (2007) described this phenomenon as neo-racism: a form of discrimination that comes not only from skin color, but also from national origin, cultural norms, and the status of relationships between different countries. These studies demonstrated that there are multiple layers to the discrimination that international students face in the United States, which go beyond the ways in which race is constructed at an individual level (Hanassab, 2006; Lee, 2007; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). This discrimination includes structures and

policies in place at a national level; for example, Lee (2007) identified the Patriot Act and additional hurdles in visa processes as other examples of neo-racism that target students from specific countries. In addition, international students have described experiencing higher rates of discrimination off-campus (Hanassab, 2006). Because international students' experience in the United States includes both the university campus and the surrounding community, it is important for practitioners to recognize that these off-campus experiences may affect the ways in which international students are able to engage with their learning and the campus community.

Kim (2012) also noted that racial and ethnic identity development models are especially applicable for international students, as many are raised in environments where race and ethnicity are conceptualized very differently than in the United States. When students come to the United States, issues related to race and ethnicity can come to the forefront (Kim, 2012). There are many contemporary instances of neo-racism perpetuated by university staff and personnel, including an email from a professor at Duke University, who warned international students that they would be denied internship opportunities if they spoke languages other than English and an email about academic integrity from the University of Liverpool's international office, which was sent to all international students but singled out Chinese students (Redden, 2019).

Lee's (2007) findings about international students' reluctance to report instances of discrimination also addressed an important topic that fewer researchers have explored: the role of organizational support in the experiences of international students. Cho and Yu (2015) discussed this gap in the literature in their recent analysis of the role of the

university in supporting international students. They noted that the majority of the research in the field focused on interpersonal support, often leaving out the significant role of the organization with which a student is affiliated (Cho & Yu, 2015). The more support that members felt from an organization, the more likely they were to feel satisfied with their experience, and they became less likely to experience significant stress (Cho & Yu, 2015). This phenomenon is especially relevant for international students, as they rely heavily on the institution in order to maintain their visa status and to support themselves financially, as they are generally limited to on-campus employment per U.S. federal regulations for student visas (Cho & Yu, 2015). Cho and Yu's (2015) study underscored the importance of the university's role in building an inclusive campus climate that supports and values international students. Lee's (2007) research suggests that there is a long way for institutions to go in order to create this kind of environment.

Situating Student Development Theory

Student development theory is a scholarly field integral to student affairs and higher education—within this field, development refers to the process of becoming more complex (Patton et al., 2016). Theories of student development can help researchers and practitioners describe, explain, and predict experiences, behaviors, and outcomes (Patton et al., 2016). While theory is a useful tool, it is important to recognize that each student is unique, and it is incredibly unlikely that a single theory will describe all aspects of a student's development (Patton et al., 2016). As a result, integrating multiple theories can lead to a broader understanding of students' experiences, and caution should be used to ensure that student experiences are interpreted accurately rather than to fit an existing

theory (Patton et al., 2016). This section will provide a brief overview of international student identity development, developmental ecology, and involvement theory—all of which can provide a foundation from which we can better understand the ways in which international students experience student services at Oregon State University.

International Student Identity and Development. Within the research on student development theory, there are relatively few models that consider the specific and unique experiences of the international student population. One of the few models that examined international student identity development was Kim's (2012) exploratory study about the psychosocial identity development of international students in the United States. The results were used as a foundation for Kim's (2012) International Student Identity model, which built on racial and ethnic identity development models and cross-cultural adjustment models. International students experience an adjustment from one culture's racial and ethnic context to the U.S. racial context, which can create a disorientation and reorientation to race, ethnicity, and identity for international students (Zhang, 2015). Zhang's (2015) study focused on how this process affected Chinese international students and found that they experienced a confusing and stressful process of disorienting themselves from their normative identities and adjusting to being racial and ethnic minorities for the first time in their lives. This suggests that issues related to race and identity can come to the forefront as international students adjust to the United States in ways that are distinct to domestic students' experiences, highlighting the importance of identity models that consider this experience like Kim's (2012).

Kim's (2012) theory described six stages that international students in the United States may experience—noting that these stages were fluid rather than linear and that students may cycle through them as they experience the institution (Kim, 2012). These stages included pre-exposure, exposure, enclosure, emergence, integration, and internationalization (Kim, 2012, p. 108). These stages reflected the experiences that many international students have in the United States, and described a process where students moved from defining their cultural values from family influences to a broader understanding of themselves that incorporated elements from their home culture and host culture (Kim, 2012). This could also involve moving from forming relationships primarily with people who hold similar cultural backgrounds to building relationships with a more diverse group of individuals.

Developmental Ecology. Ecology models explore the ways in which students interact with the campus environment and how these interactions can either promote or stifle development (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). These theories also address how time, place, culture, and students' backgrounds influence their college experience (Renn & Arnold, 2003). Using the interactions among the four components of Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology model—process, person, context, and time—practitioners can assess the unique relationship between person and environment that forms the context in which each student develops and experiences the institution (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003).

The process and person components describe the interactions between person and environment, including both interactions between individuals and interactions that come

from engaging in activities and tasks (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). Renn and Arnold (2003) described how personal characteristics affected students' processes of engaging with the institution. These characteristics defined how students invite or inhibit responses from their environment, whether they prefer to engage in group or solitary activities, the leadership activities they seek out, and the ways that students perceive their agency in relation to their environment (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). In ecology theory, the person and the environment cannot be defined separately—this means that students will react differently in the same setting based on their unique backgrounds and developmental trajectories (Renn & Arnold, 2003).

All of the interactions in developmental ecology take place over time and in context. Context includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). Within the higher education context, an example of a microsystem could include a student's living environment, a student organization, and an on-campus job, each of which have features that can either promote or inhibit the student's development (Renn & Arnold, 2003). The mesosystem refers to the interactions between and among microsystems, including the conflict or congruence between microsystems and the impact that this has on a student's development (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). The exosystem and the macrosystem exist at a broader level (Renn & Arnold, 2003). The exosystem exists outside of the individual but influences their experience nonetheless. Examples of exosystems could include a parent's workplace, tuition policies, and particularly relevant for international students, visa and immigration policies (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). The macrosystem is the

broadest contextual influence and comprises the overarching pattern of systems that characterized the larger culture of the environment, including belief systems, values, patterns of socialization, and cultural understandings of identity (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). The final element of the ecology model is time—this refers to the individual, national, and global conditions and events taking place during the student’s lifetime and exerting influence on the other systems (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003).

Involvement Theory. Another element that must be considered before investigating international students’ perceptions of campus services is Astin’s (1984) theory of student involvement, where each avenue of involvement would form its own microsystem within ecology theory (Renn & Arnold, 2003). Astin (1984) defined involvement as the amount of energy, both physical and psychological, that a student invested into their experience in higher education—a student’s time became the currency with which involvement was measured. This included academic and co-curricular activities (Astin, 1984). This theory’s key hypotheses were two-fold: first, that student learning and development outcomes were “directly proportional” to the quantity and quality of the student’s involvement with any given program, and second, the effectiveness of an educational program was dependent on the ways in which the program sought to increase student involvement (Astin, 1984, p. 298).

To describe involvement theory, Astin (1984) considered several aspects of the student experience and the ways in which involvement enhanced these experiences. Living on campus, participating in honors programs, academic involvement, engagement

with faculty, on-campus employment, and co-curricular activities all contributed to increased involvement, and therefore increased the likelihood that institutions would retain students (Astin, 1984). In addition, he noted that institutional “fit” affected student involvement, as it was easier for students to devote time and energy to institutions with which they identify (Astin, 1984, p. 303). He considered factors like religious affiliation, minority-serving institutions, and the environment in which an institution existed in determining fit. With these findings, he recommended that instructors and administrators should focus less on content and pedagogy and more on what students are doing and how motivated they are to devote time and energy to academics and activities (Astin, 1984).

It is also important to understand factors that influence student involvement. Milem and Berger’s (1998) study considered how undergraduate students became involved during their first year of study, and this study is heavily rooted in Astin’s (1984) involvement theory. Milem and Berger (1998) found that students’ early involvement (during the first six to seven weeks of term) predicted their levels of engagement in following terms, as well as their overall perceptions of the institution. The study also suggested that students’ perceptions of support from the institution may have an impact on involvement and persistence. One particularly notable form of support that their research uncovered is building relationships with faculty early in a student’s academic career (Milem & Berger, 1998). Additionally, while social integration was found to be a significant contributor to institutional commitment and persistence, academic integration was not able to predict either of these outcomes (Milem & Berger, 1998). Milem and Berger (1998) also suggested that students whose backgrounds and worldviews differ

from the majority of the student body may find it more difficult to integrate themselves into the university's social structure. This supported Astin's (1984) finding that institutional fit contributes to student involvement.

International Student Engagement and Involvement. In considering the contemporary context of international students in the United States, we can understand the ways in which developmental ecology and involvement theory show up in their experiences. Milem and Berger's (1998) conclusion that early involvement is a strong predictor of persistence and future involvement resonated with findings from researchers studying international students, where orientation, transition, and acculturation processes played important roles in determining international student satisfaction (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017; Tas, 2017; Wang et al., 2012). A study of international student involvement at community colleges in the United States found that both academic and social involvement were heavily influenced by the student's comfort with the English language (Slantcheva-Durst & Knaggs, 2017). The same study also noted that international students may feel left out or ignored by domestic students and faculty, which created challenges to building the balanced social support structures that Wang and colleagues (2012) identified as important to psychological adjustment.

Other scholars found that academic resources, such as the library, tutoring services, labs, and study spaces, were the resources deemed most important by international students, and they became the resources to which international students devoted the most time (Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017). Though Astin (1984) believed that all involvement contributes to student development, Milem and Berger (1998) believed that

academic integration has fewer measurable benefits in comparison to social integration. Extensive academic involvement may also leave international students with less time to invest in co-curricular activities and social integration (Sullivan, 2018; Tas, 2017). However, Sullivan's (2018) study found that each of the 12 international student participants at small, private campuses had significant, positive experiences with faculty. The same study also concluded that organized activities on campus were key to socialization outside of their residence halls, as well as an important opportunity to engage with domestic students. Though this variable was one of the most important contributors to the participants' experience on campus, it was less common than other themes from this research (Sullivan, 2018).

Other researchers found that international students can have lower levels of involvement in comparison to domestic students, which can stem from negative perceptions or assumptions about international students (Collier et al., 2017; Lu, 2016; Matschek, 2018). One student expressed her and her peers' frustrations with the ways in which student organizations on her campus recruited new members (Lu, 2016). She wrote that many of the organizations on her campus were selective, with decisions about who is or is not allowed to become a member resting with the organization's leadership. In addition, language barriers during the interview process for club membership further hampered her ability to be competitive, particularly as these processes tended to take place early in the school year, when as a first-year student, she was still adjusting to the cultural realities of living in the United States (Lu, 2016). Lu's (2016) account suggests that international students, particularly those who have not yet adjusted to their new

environment, may experience barriers that prevent them from engaging on campus in the same ways as incoming domestic students. Milem and Berger (1998) emphasized the importance of early involvement in enhancing students' experiences at their institutions, and the challenges that international students such as Lu face may decrease the ability of international students to get involved early.

Another study conducted at Oregon State University found that several participants believed that their identities as international students created barriers to getting involved on campus or participating in certain activities (Matschek, 2018). In addition, the same study noted that some traditionally American activities that are often ubiquitous on college campuses, such as football games, could be isolating experiences, as international students do not have the same experiences to contextualize the activity and some were not sure how they were meant to engage in the activity (Matschek, 2018). The findings from this study and from other student accounts suggest that campus climate influences international student involvement, and actual and perceived barriers can limit the activities in which international students choose to participate.

International Students' Perceptions of Campus Services

Though several researchers have considered international students' involvement, fewer have looked specifically at international students' perceptions of student services and the ways in which these perceptions may influence involvement. Existing studies conducted in the United States that investigated international students' perceptions have focused primarily on perceptions of International Student Services (Chissoe, 2017; Guo, 2016). A study conducted by Chissoe (2017) investigated first-year international

students' perceptions of the International Student Services (ISS) office at their university. He found that the ISS office only had a significant impact on a few aspects of their experience, such as orientation and immigration paperwork, but these areas were essential to ensuring that students had a positive experience in the United States (Chissoe, 2017). Chissoe (2017) also noted that ISS staff described the role they played across the campus as a whole to support international student adjustment, and this aspect of their role may not have been known to his student participants. The student narratives highlighted the importance of ISS, as well as the acknowledgment that their interactions with ISS represented only a fraction of their experience with the campus as a whole (Chissoe, 2017).

Guo (2016) considered international student perceptions of both the Office of International Affairs and a list of select student support services at South Dakota State University by conducting a mixed-methods survey of the institution's international student population. Overall, they found that international students were more satisfied with the Office of International Affairs' services than they were with other university services. In addition, they noted that students experienced challenges with university staff who were not sensitive to their needs as international students (Guo, 2016). Participants expressed the most satisfaction with the Wellness Center and New Student Orientation, while they expressed the least satisfaction with Financial Aid and Academic Writing (Guo, 2016).

Roberts and Dunworth (2017) conducted an interview-based case study with both international students and university staff in Australia that focused on staff and student

perceptions of support services for international students. They found that students and staff agreed that student/staff culture was important, that promotion of resources would be more effective if it aligned with students' time of need, and that a more student-centered approach was needed (Roberts & Dunworth, 2017). In addition, both students and staff identified awareness of services as an issue, though they differed in how they conceptualized the problem (Roberts & Dunworth, 2017). Where student responses differed from staff responses was in students' focus on cultural factors that affected their ability to meet basic needs; staff seemed to focus more on students' development and sense of self (Roberts & Dunworth, 2017). International students also expressed frustration about staff's lack of knowledge of other institutional resources, which aligned with Guo's (2016) findings regarding the challenges of interacting with staff who do not understand the needs of international students (Roberts & Dunworth, 2017). Though this study did not take place in the United States, it is helpful as one of the only qualitative studies that addressed international students' perceptions of cross-campus student support services. In addition, the staff's focus on student development may indicate a shared institutional approach to the student experience.

Summary & Significance

The research presented in this section identified some of the significant challenges that international students experience, both as they transition into institutions of higher education and throughout their studies. These challenges include adjusting to their host culture, as well as discrimination and bias related to their nationality both on-campus and off-campus. This section also described international students' involvement patterns and

the perceptions they had of different student services. In addition, researchers stated the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity of the international student population, and developmental ecology described the many individual and cultural factors that influence the different ways in which students may react to similar systems. These findings and considerations were important influences in the design of this study, which the following chapter discusses.

In addition, this review also identified areas for additional research, one of which I hoped to address in this study. The existing literature exploring international students' perceptions of various services on campus were primarily based on experiences with international student programs and services or used surveys as the primary methodology. One of the few studies that examined international students' experiences with a broader range of student services with an interview-based methodology was conducted in Australia, so findings may not be generalizable to institutions in the United States. By looking specifically at international student experiences with student services that are received outside of international student programs and services at Oregon State University and by employing qualitative methods, I hope to contribute to the literature about international students' experiences with the campus as a whole and bring the voices of my participants to the forefront.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology that was employed in this research project, as well as the reasons for which it was used. I discuss my research question, the institutional context within which I conducted this study, why I chose to use qualitative methods, participant eligibility and recruitment, research integrity, and my positionality in relation to the research question and participants.

Research Question

The research questions that guided my study were:

- What are international students' perceptions of student services on campus, aside from those received through the Office of International Services?
- Excluding the Office of International Services, which campus departments provide international students with the greatest sense of support? What actions, behaviors, or attitudes contribute to this perception of support?
- When considering departments outside of the Office of International Services, do international students feel that there are places on campus where they are not supported? If so, what behaviors, attitudes, or actions lead to feelings of non-support?
- What specific recommendations or suggestions do international students have for student services, aside from those provided through the Office of International Services?

While my choice in research question came in part from my own experiences as an international student in the United States, the literature review in Chapter 2 also

identified the relevance of this question to the existing literature about international students in the United States.

Research Site

This study looked specifically at the experiences of international students who were enrolled at Oregon State University (OSU), a large public land-grant research institution in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon State University, 2020a). Given the significant impact that place and environment can have on students' experiences and development, it is essential to consider the institutional context of the research site (Patton et al., 2016; Renn & Arnold, 2003). In addition to being a land-grant institution, OSU also holds sea, space, and sun grants—one of only two institutions in the United States with all of these grants, which indicates the strength of the institution's research mission. (Oregon State University, 2020a). OSU's largest campus is located in Corvallis, Oregon, which has a residential population of 58,885; Corvallis is also around 90 minutes from both Portland, a metropolitan city with a population of approximately 650,000, and the Oregon coast (City of Corvallis, OR, 2020). OSU's total enrollment was 31,719 in the Fall of 2019, which means that OSU students form a significant portion of the Corvallis population when school is in session (Oregon State University Office of Institutional Research, 2019).

In terms of demographics, OSU has students from all 50 states and more than 100 different countries (Oregon State University, 2020a). OSU is also a predominantly white institution, as students of color made up just 25.4% of the student body in the fall of 2019 (Oregon State University Office of Institutional Research, 2019). OSU has also

internationalized the student body rapidly over the past 10 to 15 years—in 2004, OSU had just 944 international students enrolled, making up 4.9% of the student body (Oregon State University Office of Institutional Research, 2019). In the fall of 2019, the total proportion of international students enrolled at OSU had grown to 11.0%, or 3,492 students (Oregon State University Office of Institutional Research, 2019). Some of the most significant growth in international enrollment took place from 2009 to 2015 (Oregon State University Office of Institutional Research, 2019).

The growth in international student enrollment may be related to the founding of INTO Oregon State University (INTO OSU) in 2008 (Oregon State University, 2020b). INTO OSU is a partnership between INTO University Partnerships (IUP) and OSU, which intended to increase the international student enrollment at the university (Oregon State University, 2020b). In this partnership, OSU is responsible for decisions related to academics and admissions, while INTO OSU leads student recruitment, market knowledge, and provides experiential opportunities for current students (Oregon State University, 2020b). At the time of writing, IUP had over 20 partnerships with institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom, and INTO OSU was the first and largest partnership in the United States (Oregon State University, 2020b). INTO OSU also provides English language courses and academic preparation pathways into the institution (Oregon State University, 2020b).

It was important to be mindful of this context throughout the research process, as the demographics of Corvallis, OSU, and the rapid growth of the international student body can all influence the experiences that students have on campus and the ability of the

campus to support international students. In addition, OSU is one of just a few institutions in the United States with a partnership with IUP, and IUP's role in recruiting international students and in providing English language courses contribute to the specific institutional context of OSU.

Research Design and Methodology

In designing this study, it was important to me to center participants' individual voices, perspectives, and experiences, so I employed qualitative methods. Krefting (1991) identified the importance of the participant's subjective meanings and perceptions in qualitative research, which aligned well with my research question and goals. In addition, qualitative methods offered space to showcase diverging perspectives in more depth (Krefting, 1991), which was an important factor in selecting my methodology due to the heterogeneity of the international student population (Shalka, 2017; Wang et al., 2012).

Study Activities. The study activities included a short online demographic survey, in-person semi-structured interviews, and follow-up meetings to conduct member checking. The demographic survey served primarily as a screening tool—students responded to confirm that they met the eligibility criteria (self-identify as an international student, enrolled at OSU for at least two academic years, and 18 years of age or older). In addition, the survey collected information about the student's region of origin, which was chosen over country of origin in order to protect participant confidentiality, and their familiarity with the services available to them at OSU.

Students who completed the demographic survey and who met the inclusion criteria were then invited to participate in an in-person interview, which took place in a

study room on OSU's campus. I followed a semi-structured interview protocol—according to Galletta and Cross (2013), the semi-structured interview uses both open-ended questions and theoretically-driven questions to bring forward the participant's experiences while grounding data in constructs of the discipline. In addition, the semi-structured interview is versatile and flexible; it allows for participants to be drawn into the research topic and creates space for the researcher to follow threads that come up throughout the course of the conversation (Galletta & Cross, 2013).

At the start of the interview, I introduced myself and briefly shared my background and interest in the study. Then, I asked questions related to the participant's overall experience as an international student at OSU, which allowed the participant to start narrating their experiences. As the interview progressed, I moved into questions that related more specifically to the participant's experiences with services on campus and that addressed my research question more directly. Both of these strategies were recommended by Galletta and Cross (2013). The questions I asked that related to international students' experiences with offices on campus were intentionally open-ended. Rather than assuming I knew which offices students might frequent the most, I left it up to each participant to speak to the experiences that resonated the most to them. Through this approach, I hoped to be mindful of the diversity within the international student population and make space for participants to share a broader range of experiences. I also asked participants if they had ever felt unwelcome on campus. As I moved toward the end of the interview, I closed with lighter questions about the hopes

that participants had for the rest of their studies. The full interview guide can be found in the appendices.

Following the interviews, I completed an initial data analysis. I then scheduled follow-up meetings with participants to conduct member checking. It was important to me to ensure that I represented the voices of my participants as accurately as possible, and member checking provided an opportunity for participants to review my initial findings and provide feedback. In addition, member checking increases the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Krefting, 1991). Participants were given both findings from their interviews and the themes that had emerged across all the interviews. They were also notified that if they did not reply within two weeks, I would proceed with my initial analysis.

Once data collection was complete, I transcribed the data, coded the data, and analyzed the data for themes. According to Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), coding is the process of taking portions of empirical data and labeling it with a word or phrase that describes the content of the data. Stuckey (2015) identified three steps in coding: reading the narratives, categorizing the data into codes, and adding clarifying memos to track the researcher's thought process. I followed these steps in my analysis, and I used emergent rather than predetermined codes. During my initial coding pass, I developed a large number of codes, and in subsequent passes through the data, I condensed codes and developed subcodes, which is a practice recommended by Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019).

Participants. In order to participate in this study, participants needed to self-identify as an international student, be 18 years of age or older, and have been enrolled at OSU for two or more academic years. Because this study focused on perceptions of services on campus, limiting enrollment to students who have been at the institution for two or more years helped ensure that students had time to experience a range of different services on campus and that they would be well-positioned to reflect on their experiences. Students who enrolled at OSU directly and students who participated in pathway programs through INTO OSU were both eligible. The target enrollment was five, and five students completed the demographic survey and were deemed eligible to participate in the study. All five students were invited to interview, and four students participated in the first interview and the follow-up interview. Participants were recruited through social media, email, snowball sampling, and in-person at OSU's Office of International Services with permission from staff. Participants were given pseudonyms to preserve their confidentiality. In order to mitigate actual or perceived coercion, I did not recruit participants with whom I had a professional relationship.

Research Integrity

Maintaining participant wellbeing was a central concern and priority throughout the research process. The research protocol for this study was approved by OSU's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and was found to meet the criteria for ethical research involving human participants. In addition, the research proposal was developed with feedback from my major advisor and committee to ensure the validity of the project.

Participants were provided with study information prior to completing the demographic survey, and informed consent was obtained prior to the first interview. Participants were also informed that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions. The consent process included a discussion of the risks of participating in the study, which related primarily to potential emotional distress or breaches in confidentiality due to mandatory reporting obligations or data security. In addition, participants were asked not to disclose information related to their visa status or the visa status of others. I followed IRB data security and confidentiality guidelines and ensured that there were protocols in place to mitigate risk to participants.

Researcher Positionality. I also believe that it is essential to consider my own background and perspectives as a researcher, both from an ethical standpoint and as a means of increasing the reliability of the research (Krefting, 1991). While I was conducting this study, I was an international student in the United States pursuing my master's degree. I also completed my bachelor's degree in the United States in 2016. My experiences with different departments on campus during both of my degree programs sparked my interest in my research question—I was curious if other international students shared my perceptions. I shared that I was an international student with participants prior to starting interviews, and I also discussed why I chose my research question. However, I was careful not to share specific examples of my experiences or my perceptions of student services in order to avoid influencing participants' responses. Through this practice, I intended to build trust between researcher and participant and avoid leading participants toward a certain narrative. Though I shared an international student identity

with participants, it is important to acknowledge that my specific background as a Canadian international student, growing up in the Pacific Northwest and with English as my first language, meant that I am hardly ever perceived as an international student by others. In terms of culture, Corvallis is quite similar to my own hometown. In addition, several people have asked me if Canadian students are actually international, presumably due to the proximity of and relationship between Canada and the United States.

In addition to my international student identity, other social identities that are important to share here include race, gender, and class. I identify as a woman of color, though as a light-skinned multiracial woman of color, I experience both the campus and my identity in ways that others do not, as I hold privilege as a light-skinned individual. I also have significant class privilege, as my family was in a position to support my undergraduate and graduate education. Securing an on-campus job was important to me, but not essential to financial well-being. Though this is not an exhaustive list of social identities that shape how I navigate higher education, they are important to reflect upon as I consider my role as a researcher in this study.

I share all of this to be transparent about the context of the experiences that shaped my curiosity about this topic and to identify some of the ways that I interact with the campus that participants may or may not share. I spent significant time reflecting on my relationship with OSU and with Corvallis in order to be able to separate my experience from those shared by participants throughout the study.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will report the findings from the demographic survey and the interviews I conducted. I will first provide an overview of each participant's narrative, and I will then discuss the common themes that emerged across the interviews. When I analyzed the data, six primary themes emerged: campus climate, interactions with staff, effective communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships. These themes helped respond to the research questions I identified going into this study.

Participant Narratives

Four participants completed the demographic survey, the first interview, and the follow-up interview. Each of the participants had a pseudonym that will be used throughout the discussion of the research activities in this study. In the interest of participant confidentiality, I will only share information about participants' region of origin rather than their country of origin, as some countries have only a small number of students at OSU.

Demographic Survey Results. Two of the participants' home countries were in Asia, one participant's home country was in Europe, and one participant's home country was in Africa. At the time of the study, two of the participants had been enrolled at OSU for between two and three academic years and two had been enrolled for between three and four academic years. I also asked about participants' familiarity with student services available at OSU in the demographic survey. One participant shared that their familiarity

was neutral, two participants said that they were somewhat familiar, and one participant said they were very familiar.

Participant 1: Amir. Amir was a third-year undergraduate student in the College of Engineering, and his home country was in Africa. His undergraduate studies were his first experience with the U.S. education system—he was homeschooled in high school. Learning to navigate the academic expectations in his program took some time, as classes at OSU build on one another in a way that was different from his homeschool experience. Overall, Amir said, “I think I find myself fitting in pretty well here...what helped with that was finding people with the same background.” This didn’t need to be other students from his home country or even other international students. What was most important to Amir was meeting other people “who have different cultural backgrounds.”

One of the avenues through which he was able to meet other people from diverse cultural backgrounds was through his on-campus job at one of the Cultural Resource Centers (CRC). The CRC he worked at was the first place he ever went to on campus, so it was a special place for him, and he valued the close relationships he had developed with his colleagues. Aside from his apartment, the CRC was the place he felt most comfortable in Corvallis. Amir described the events hosted by the CRCs and the other student staff as important ways to connect with other students and to have fun.

Though much of Amir’s college experience was going well, he also identified some challenges that have affected his experience. Though he has not felt unwelcome specifically, he immediately described unpleasant interactions with staff from the Office of Admissions when I asked about interactions on campus that he disliked.

I mean, I understand that they have to be strict to make sure that certificates and documents are real and not, like, fraudulent or anything. But there are better ways to get real documents and authentic pieces other than placing a hold and endangering the, like the [visa] status of the student...They don't really know what we have to deal with.

He added, “They leave you with no choices. They don't give you solutions. They just give you problems and no other choice but to find a way to solve it.” He recommended that the office employ more empathetic staff who have a better understanding of the processes international students need to go through to fulfill their requests. He also felt that the office could take on more responsibility for helping students rather than putting all the onus on the student.

In addition, Amir identified as a Third Culture Kid (TCK), or someone who spent the majority of their formative years in a country other than their parents’ home country, since he moved around a lot growing up. His experience as a TCK was a particularly salient identity at OSU because of the ways in which this identity was often left out by the institution’s resources. When I asked if there was anything missing from his college experience, he spoke to some of the challenges of meeting other students who shared his TCK background, since there weren’t resources on campus for this aspect of his identity. The lack of resources addressing this identity “gets us to feel like we're the only ones, and it's hard.”

The challenge of building relationships was not just because of his identity as a TCK. Amir also identified a perceived split between domestic students and international students and experienced different treatment as an international student. This difference was particularly pronounced to him because he can often “pass” as a domestic student.

I don't look like an international student, so people just assume I'm domestic. And then when they find out that I'm an international student, they start treating me a little differently. It's it's, it's annoying, mainly. So I don't know, I guess it's just the way they talk to me.

When I asked about what being an international student means to him, Amir shared that it is something temporary. He said that maintaining friendships is difficult because “it's always in the back of my mind that, oh, you might not be here forever. So I find myself just distancing myself away from people again.” He shared that he is frequenting Counseling and Psychological Services on campus to talk through this challenge, which he has found especially helpful in relieving stress. The temporary nature of being an international student also created unique stressors and pressure to be an exceptional student, which he described in depth.

I'm not going to be here forever. So we're always faced with the stress, like, ideally, I want to get a job here and be able to stay here. So we're always faced with the stress, oh, let's find that opportunity. Let's find internships. Let's do well in your classes so you can actually have a decent resume and apply for a good job, and you're also faced with the stress of maintaining visa status.

The challenges that Amir described throughout the interview did not make him feel unwelcome, but they did point to the campus climate that he experienced in his interactions with other students and staff. In addition, his narrative described some of the elements that contributed to positive or negative experiences with campus services at OSU.

Participant 2: Bella. Bella was a fourth-year undergraduate student from Europe, and she studied business and psychology. She was also part of the Honors College. Bella was preparing for graduate school, with the goal of getting her Ph.D. in cognitive

psychology. Before enrolling at OSU, she had spent some summers in Oregon with a friend, which piqued her interest in returning for a full degree. Though she had spent time in Oregon, she had not studied in the U.S. before her undergraduate degree. Most of Bella's experience was positive—she enjoyed the interactivity of her classes, the small class sizes, and the prompt communication offered by the Honors College.

A particularly meaningful aspect of Bella's experience was her involvement in undergraduate research—she described her research supervisor as a great mentor and her main resource as she prepared for graduate school.

He took me to conferences and introduced me to people, and it's been really nice to, like, have someone to like direct my specific questions to. Who kind of also understands what I'm trying to do and what's necessary for me to do as I'm trying to make myself a spot in grad school.

Her mentor was also a very accessible resource, as unlike advisors who have a lot of other students who they support, she was able to get plenty of advice from her faculty supervisor in his capacity as her research supervisor.

In addition to her experience in research, Bella found her first year housing and transition experience helpful in adjusting to OSU. She was placed in a residence hall with other business majors, which set her up to build relationships with domestic students and to be a successful student.

I know a lot of international students that have primarily international friends. And for me, it was only different because I knew people already, and then I was stuck in this dorm where I actually was the only international student. So that kind of changed my experience.

She also felt like she was well-prepared for her student experience through her assignments in the College of Business. She said, “It seemed like they were really trying

to help you, like, make the first year go well...I think looking back now, that really put me up for success later on where I can be like, hello, this is how you navigate college.”

Bella also discussed how identity played a role in her experience at OSU and provided a less challenging environment than the context her peers faced.

I think, for me, it was relatively easy compared to some of my international peers just because I'm like the basic white girl, I guess? I don't, like, stand out as much, maybe...I feel like I'm kind of stuck in the middle where it seems like at OSU, the two communities, like international and domestic, seem a little bit divided to me personally. And I think like some things like INTO OSU, and them being all in this one dorm together, plays a role with that. So I like to be the mediator sometimes. And kind of be like, you know, it's not all that scary and people actually can be really welcoming, but you also have to put yourself out there and kind of be willing to, you know, take the extra step and not be shy...So I always felt kind of very included. And I think the dorms helped with that. But I know that it is different for a lot of different people.

She speculated that her identity and her experience in a primarily domestic residence hall helped her blend in with OSU's predominantly white student body and make more domestic friends than many of her peers. She did experience some difficulty navigating the move from on-campus to off-campus housing because of the need to have a Social Security Number and credit history in the United States, which was difficult to do without a domestic cosigner.

Though many aspects of Bella's studies were going well, she also discussed some challenges that she encountered at OSU. One of the first challenges that came up was learning to navigate the U.S. college environment. Though both of her parents went to college, their experiences didn't necessarily prepare her for the U.S. education system.

Even though my parents both went to college, their experience is totally different. So there's, like, especially at first, a lot that I kind of needed to figure out. Like, oh, how does this work? What do you sign up for? Like, do they put me in a

research lab? If I need research experiences, is this something kind of I figure out for myself? Um, so I think at first there's just a lot of new stuff going on.

In her first year, her classes also had a large emphasis on writing and communication, which Bella felt like she was learning for the first time while her domestic peers already had this information “indoctrinated.” In writing and communication classes specifically, Bella identified some bias toward international students—she explained:

I think there's some prejudice going on sometimes. Like, you know, she doesn't speak English since she was born, so obviously, maybe if she writes the paper, we have to do extra work to fix, like, grammar errors or something.

She didn't feel as though these sentiments were directed to her specifically, but she did share that comments from students and professors about her accent or her home country, even when complimentary, kept her feeling like an outsider. She shared, “As an international student, if you're making an effort to fit in, and you're constantly being reminded that you're not from here, that's a little challenging sometimes.”

Outside of the academic experiences she described, Bella also spoke to some of INTO OSU's practices and how she believed they contributed to the divide between domestic and international students.

I think the idea is really good, but I think they need to implement it differently. So maybe, I don't know, you know, group them into the normal dorms and kind of help them to interact with Americans rather than creating more of a separation between the two groups.

In addition, her personal experiences with INTO left her feeling more like a business interest. Prior to her first year, she enrolled in a two-week summer course to become more familiar with the Corvallis area. When she arrived, she found that her English was

at a higher level than the course curriculum, and she described feeling as though the staff was trying to hold her back to keep her in the class.

It seems as if they're not always really acting in the interest of the student but more in like a business interest...I think that's, you know, a little difficult because it makes international students like feel as if they're almost just like a tool to get more money for the school and like help up the domestic students.

The last challenge that Bella described during the interview was about communication, particularly about changes to the required classes in her degree program. While the communication challenges were not restricted to her identity as an international student, some of the new required seminars in the Professional Development series were not at all helpful because of her status as an international student. These seminars involved mandatory attendance of job fairs, where potential employers would give a presentation about their company and then speak with students about internship and employment opportunities. Bella appreciated the idea in theory, but in practice, the implementation often excluded the College of Business' large international student population, as many of the guest companies would not even consider hiring an international student because of the processes involved, so attending the fairs felt like a waste of Bella's time and energy.

Participant 3: Caty. Caty's home country was in Asia. She was in her third year of her undergraduate degree at OSU, and she was studying microbiology and involved in undergraduate research. Caty completed some high school in the United States, so her experience at OSU was not her first introduction to the U.S. education system. In discussing her college experience, Caty expressed that she was happy with the academic

side of her studies, but she was “not super fond of” some aspects of the social culture of OSU.

In terms of her academics, Caty appreciated the opportunities she’s had to participate in undergraduate research and the emphasis that OSU has on research, even though research culture “was hard to grasp at first because it's not a thing back home.” She spent most of her business hours in classes or her research lab. When it came to her social experiences, she found her main sense of community through a Christian student organization. She also shared some of the challenges she experienced in finding a student organization that was well-suited for her, primarily because of her identity. She had been expecting to find her “people” in the student organization based on her nationality, but to her surprise, the members were all domestic students. Though these students shared her ethnic background, she struggled to relate to them.

So like not, like not even a single international student is in there. So it was really hard. I thought when I came to OSU, I thought that was the place that I'm going to fit in. That's where, that's the place that I want to find my people, my community, but I did not—I did not fit in. So that was, that was like really hard. And so like, I had to go and look at different, like, clubs or community to, like, find my own community.

Caty also felt like her international student identity had a significant impact on how she experienced OSU. From the start of her orientation, she felt like it was clear that international students and domestic students were different populations.

From the beginning, like, it was very distinct that we are two different groups of people. Like straight from orientation, like, I am an international student, I go to an international student orientation. And then when I go there, there are more classifications.

She also shared that she felt like both a foreigner and an ambassador for her country.

Throughout her studies, she tried to call Oregon home, though she knew that she was not welcome permanently.

Caty's identity as an international student also had a significant influence on how she experienced campus services at OSU.

I would say that wherever I go on OSU, as long as I speak the same level of English I'm speaking right now, they treat me as a domestic student until they get my student ID and realize that I'm an international student. Then they would treat me differently because of the process that they have to go through.

She also expressed frustration with the added administrative barriers that she faced as an international student using campus services.

I think the thing that I dislike is that being international, you have way more paperwork that you have to go through for the same thing as domestic students. And I totally understand because of like, the immigration and stuff, but just it takes way longer for everything. That's the only thing that I dislike the most, and like it's, it's frustrating when you want, you need help, and they just straight reject you just because you're an international student and you have to go through OIS or something. And then OIS cannot help you, and they direct you back and you have to wait for the same person that you met for the first time and they rejected you to help you. So like they're just like a formality or something that you have to go through and that just takes so much time. It's just ridiculous.

Caty found that sometimes her international student advisor was able to help her by reaching out to the departments that said they couldn't help her and acting as an intermediary, leaving Caty to wonder if her international status was actually a barrier to seeking out campus services.

When I asked her about recommendations for campus services, she offered,

Just to help them as much as the department could. Instead of just, like, turning them away immediately, or just like assuming that they know exactly what they should do. Like, tell them what where they should go, like be more specific, like,

what they cannot help with and what they can help with. That will be more helpful for international students.

She also felt like some people on campus used her identity as entertainment, and though she could understand their enthusiasm, she didn't like interactions like the one she described here.

I know like a lot of international students really don't like it when people are like, oh wow. Are you an international student? But your English is really good! Like some people are just like, okay, is that a compliment? Like, like, just like help me with my problem like it's like, oh have you tried this kind of food or like, oh how do you say hello? Like, oh, I understand you're enthusiastic but like, not a very appropriate place like for this kind of thing.

She also hoped to see more opportunities for international students to get involved in campus committees and other programs that influence the student experience at OSU.

She expressed knowledge that these resources exist, but she didn't feel like they were offered to international students unless they already had connections with the right people on campus.

I think most people assume that international students just come here for education or they just come here to learn English. But... people...are super involved with things on campus and would like to speak, to change the experience that we experience on campus.

Participant 4: Diana. Diana was in her third year of her Bachelor of Fine Arts at OSU. Her current degree was her first experience with the U.S. education system, but not her first experience as an international student. She was born in one country in Asia but completed most of her pre-collegiate education in a different Asian country. Tired of the amount of stress she was experiencing with the education system she grew up with, Diana worked with an agent to seek admission to a university in the U.S. Part of the

reason she chose OSU was because she could enroll as a full-degree student immediately and bypass an additional year of language education before starting her degree program.

Diana had a positive experience at OSU, and she attributed that in part to her on-campus job in one of the colleges. She “really didn't expect to have that because [she] thought they're all kind of prioritized to American students.” She believed her ability to speak more than two languages helped her secure the position, as well as her diverse cultural background. Her job was also helpful in overcoming some of the cultural differences she experienced that made it harder for her to get along with her American classmates. She said,

Yeah, sometimes we have a hard time communicating, like when I say I only like to drink hot water, which is really normal for most of us over here. And they're like why, you're like an old lady. So yeah, some of those small habits that we have is totally different.

At the time of the interview, she had “a lot of good American friends,” but she did indicate that she tended “to go around with other international students,” since domestic and international students were “kind of separated.” Since getting her job, she said that she felt welcome and found herself “getting along with the Americans a little bit more.”

She also found that her identity as an international student had a positive impact on her experience as a whole, particularly her diverse background.

It's like a lot of my classmates, are like oh, you know how to speak a lot of languages. They are kind of really surprised by that, and they really love to ask me how to speak that...like, trying to create another topic to talk about. Yeah. So I think probably my background seems to be a little bit attractive to them. They really love to ask a lot of questions about how's the food...You know, they really, really, love to ask me to speak on that. Yeah. Although I don't find it offensive at all. I just find it, I love to share with them.

Despite Diana's overall positive experience on campus, there was one office that had a negative impact on her student experience, which was related to an academic integrity issue.

There is one time on my homework and I was being caught for plagiarism, which is, I totally don't have the idea of copying over doing work but yeah, because I didn't put the reference on there so I was being caught as for plagiarism... Which is a really bad experience because it's a online class. So I think the instructor doesn't know me that much. So she just reported me before she asked me any questions about that.

Diana went to the department and the instructor's office to try to resolve the issue, but she said that it felt like they were "pushing the responsibility away to one another."

It's like, I came over to this office, it was like, oh, we don't in charge of this. They have to go over to the other office. I went over to the other office and they're like, oh, actually, you have to go to the other office for this issue. So they are like kind of pushing it away. Yeah, yeah. Which makes me feel like you guys are not helping.

She also felt like she was stereotyped during this incident.

I went over to meet this person because it's a must to meet with her. Yeah, yeah. So I went over there and I show her the documents proving that I'm an international student and I just didn't put the reference on that homework and then search those reference online. Yeah. And I think she was kind of unfriendly, like standing herself on the situation being that you guys, students having misconduct because you are lazy or something, and which I don't think you should have that kind of stereotypes because not all the students are that situation and not all the students are that kind of characters, you know?

One of the resources that was especially helpful to Diana in navigating the academic integrity issue was the Office of Advocacy within the student government, Associated Students of Oregon State University (ASOSU). She was able to work with a student who shared her background to learn more about what the issue was, since "language is still a barrier for me because we use different terms, like totally different

terms.” The student worker who helped her was able to explain the actual meaning in her native language, which helped her a lot. She was able to also bring the student who was helping her to meetings about the issue.

It's kind of unfriendly when that officer said to me, and I brought one of the students, [student] from ASOSU over there together with her for the meeting so she's kind of a person that sees, seeing everything and she's helped—she helps me a lot. And she finishes that officer's really unfriendly, too.

Diana was able to resolve the issue with help from ASOSU, but she wished that the department would change their system since she heard that “a lot of students were being reported because of plagiarism and cheating.”

Aside from this experience, Diana was happy with her OSU experience. However, she did share some recommendations that would have improved her experience as an international student.

I think they should come out with, like, events that can—they can gather all the international students together to get to know more people on that. Yeah, because I think to me, because I enroll into OSU instead of pathway. so I actually didn't know much international students to be honest, and it's really hard for me to get along with the American students as well. So I find that my social circle is reduced because of that.

Themes

After analyzing the participants’ narratives, six key themes emerged from the interview data, which I will explore in more depth in this section. These themes were campus climate, interactions with staff, effective communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships. In addition, the campus climate theme also included four subthemes: the domestic and international divide; not unwelcome, but; passing as domestic students; and international students as temporary visitors.

Campus Climate. Each participant discussed their experiences with the campus as a whole, not just their interactions with student services, which yielded rich data about OSU's campus climate for international students. The themes within the campus climate are important context for this study—as I discussed in Chapter 2, time, place, culture, and students' backgrounds influence their college experience, and differences in students' backgrounds can often mean that students will have different experiences with the same systems (Renn & Arnold, 2003). As a result, attending to the themes that participants shared about the campus climate is essential to understanding the environment in which the participants were seeking student services. Within the campus climate theme, four common subthemes emerged across participants' narratives: the domestic and international divide; not unwelcome, but; passing as domestic students; and international students as temporary visitors. These subthemes were very much interconnected, and participants' narratives often fit multiple subthemes at once.

Domestic and International Divide. All four participants described a perceived split between domestic and international students as they discussed their experiences on campus. This observed divide often had an impact on how participants formed social relationships at OSU. According to Amir, “there is definitely a split between domestic students or in-state students and international students.” The divide between domestic and international students posed some challenges for Amir.

I still find myself distancing myself from Americans. I mean, I'm fine with talking to them and being friends with them and everything, but not as much as people with different cultural backgrounds or anything like that.

Though Bella felt more comfortable forming relationships with domestic students than other participants, she still noticed a rift between domestic and international communities. She saw herself playing a bridging role between both communities.

It's been kind of interesting because to me, I feel like I'm kind of stuck in the middle where it seems like at OSU, the two communities, like international and domestic, seem a little bit divided to me personally. And I think like some things like INTO OSU, and them being all in this one dorm together, plays a role with that. So I like to be the mediator sometimes.

She went on to add,

I know a lot of international students that have primarily international friends. And for me, it was only different because I knew people already, and then I was stuck in this dorm where I actually was the only international student.

Bella also felt as though the location of housing for INTO students exacerbated this divide since it is located to the south of most of the campus, even though it is part of a cluster of other residence halls.

Caty was surprised that she did not fit in with the student organization for her nationality, as it was composed solely of domestic students and she couldn't relate to them. She also felt like her early experiences as a student reinforced that domestic and international students were two distinct groups. She shared, "from the beginning, like it was very distinct that we are two different group of people, like straight from orientations like I am international student, I go to international student orientation."

Diana also described some of the challenges of the dynamics between domestic and international students, stating that she can find it "hard to get along with the Americans." Her on-campus job helped her bridge some of these challenges, and she said that her social circle now looks a little different: "I tend to go around with other

international students as well. Yeah, we are kind of separated, but I have a lot of good American friends as well.” However, she still found it challenging to connect with domestic students because of the “cultural differences.”

Not Unwelcome, But. Some of my interview questions sought to determine if participants had ever felt unwelcome at OSU or at a department on campus. None of the participants said that they felt unwelcome specifically, and when I asked the questions, many of them pushed back on the language I chose. Though none of the participants shared that they felt unwelcome, Diana was the only participant who explicitly said that she felt welcome at OSU. She said, “I feel welcome because ever since I got my job, I am actually getting along with the Americans a little bit more.” However, she did feel unwelcome at the office where she was trying to resolve the academic integrity claim.

The other participants clarified that they did not feel unwelcome, but they did share some campus climate issues that affected their student experience. For Amir, it was the split between domestic and international students. In addition, he described being treated differently once the people around him learned he was an international student.

I guess it's just the way they talk to me. I tend to notice that about people just like, oh, it's like a, a vibe? I guess that I get from them or like an energy that I get from them like, oh, this person is—this person is paying to get an education from us.

Bella said that she “wouldn’t say unwelcome,” but she did describe some of the interactions that she didn’t appreciate. In discussing people commenting on her accent, she said, “I think, as an international student, if you're making an effort to fit in, and you're constantly being reminded that you're not from here, that's a little challenging

sometimes.” She also found that some people would make thoughtless comments about her nationality.

Sometimes even like professors will, like make random comments. Like one of my professors was like, oh, I don't think you're from [home country]. Are you like? Have you been there? It's like, yes, obviously, I've been there. I grew up here. It's like, always, just like weird, like, they think I'm trying to trick them now. And I'm like, no, like, I'm not from here. I'm from there, and this is my perspective, but don't make, like, a funny comment about my country because it's not that funny, I guess.

Caty said that she knew she's “not welcome here permanently.” Aside from the temporary nature of her welcome, her experiences seeking out resources on campus came up during this question.

I don't feel unwelcome but just feel weird when people just want to move on their life when they just don't want to serve you because you're international student. Or they cannot—they say they cannot help you.

Passing as Domestic Students. The narratives of some participants also revealed that they were able to “pass” as domestic students, and when it was discovered that they were international students, participants identified a change in how they were treated on campus. Amir, Bella, and Caty all described instances where the people around them thought they were domestic students. They shared the following narratives:

I don't look like an international student, so people just assume I'm domestic. And then when they find out that I'm an international student, they start treating me a little differently. It's it's, it's annoying, mainly. So I don't know, I guess it's just the way they talk to me. I tend to notice that about people just like, oh, it's, it's like a, a vibe? I guess that I get from them or like an energy that I get from them.

I think, for me, it was relatively easy compared to some of like my international peers just because I'm like the basic white girl, I guess? I don't, like, stand out as much, maybe.

So I would say that wherever I go on OSU, as long I speak pretty the same level of English I'm speaking right now. They treat me as a domestic student until they get my student ID and realize that I'm an international student.

These participants also spoke to being treated differently from domestic students, which was especially prominent for those who were sometimes read as domestic students. Bella shared the following advice for international students learning to navigate how others treat them on campus:

Like obviously, if English isn't your first language, you're going to say stuff that's going to sound stupid and people are going to make fun of it, but it happens and kind of as you grow, and you know, get that experience it gets easier.

She also described some of her own experiences with peers and faculty that increased her perceptions of receiving different treatment than her domestic peers.

I have like tried to fit in with the people and not necessarily stand out for being an international students, especially in my first and second year. People be like, oh, I love your accent and you're not from here, blah, blah, blah. And I was like, dude always like, like, treat me as an outsider...Sometimes even like professors will, like make it random comments like one of my professors was like, oh, I don't think you're from [country]. Are you like? Have you been there? It's like, yes, obviously, I've been there.

Caty's experience was that she was only treated differently once she needed to disclose that she was an international student:

A lot of my interactions with, like, the departments usually like, I don't have to disclose my international status. So like, there is no different treatment, but like, in instances that when I do have to that, there are cases that there is.

International Students as Temporary Visitors. Amir and Caty both shared how the temporary nature of the international student experience affected the way that they experienced the OSU campus. Amir, who wanted to be able to stay in the U.S. after

graduation, spoke about the need to excel in order to be considered for hire over domestic students.

It's something temporary, I'm not going to be here forever. So we're always faced with the stress, like, ideally, I want to get a job here and be able to stay here. So we're always faced with the stress, oh, let's find that opportunity. Let's find internships. Let's do well in your classes so you can actually have a decent resume and apply for a good job.

Bella did not describe feeling like a temporary visitor only, but she did share some of Amir's frustrations with finding employment opportunities as an international student—the mandatory career fairs hosted by her college often had employers who would not even consider hiring international students.

In addition to the impact of the temporary entry granted by the student visa, the feeling of being a temporary visitor also impacted Amir's relationships.

I also identify myself as a Third Culture Kid because I've been moving around a lot and I've seen a lot of different cultures and interact with a lot of different people...It's definitely difficult because from our experience, or from my experience, at least, friends have or maintaining friendships has always been very, very difficult because most of my friends are, like, long distance friendships, so we never see each other. It's just texting or calling or anything like that. And when I make friends here, it's always in the back of my mind that, oh, you might not be here forever. So I find myself just distancing myself away from people again.

Though Caty planned to return to her home country after graduation, she also described some pressure to find a way to call Corvallis home and to be a good ambassador for her country while she studied at OSU.

I feel like it's like a foreigner, I guess we are a foreigner. But like, an ambassador for my own country, but at the same time trying to call this place where I'm studying at to be a temporary home. But at the same time, I know I'm not welcome here permanently. So it's kinda like, trying to settle down in the place that I'm not supposed to be, but at the same time, trying to represent my country in a good way. And then go back home eventually for something better.

Interactions with Staff. In terms of interactions with campus services specifically, participants shared how interactions with staff, both student staff and professional staff, had a significant impact on whether their experience with a campus service was positive or negative. Some participants spoke about seeking help from staff who were able to help explain terms or concepts in their native language, while others described working with staff who didn't seem to understand the needs and experiences of international students. In addition, many participants' recommendations involved addressing the challenges that they encountered when interacting with the staff of various campus services.

Diana was the main participant who described a positive interaction with staff from campus services. She spoke about the support she received from a student staff member at ASOSU, who provided her with significant support in resolving the academic misconduct claim. The staff member was "able to explain the meaning, the actual meaning, in [language] to me, which helps me a lot." The staff member also came to meetings with her to see everything that took place, which was really helpful for Diana. Bella also shared how her academic advisors were helpful, and she especially valued prompt communication from her advisors both within the College of Business and the Honors College.

Some participants' negative experiences with staff involved how they were treated by staff members. In describing his experience with the Office of Admissions, Amir said it was "like they're trying to drive you off." Diana shared Amir's

disappointment with how she was treated by some staff members of student services—she spoke about how “unfriendly” the officer who helped her navigate her academic misconduct issue was, and she also felt like the staff member was applying stereotypes to her by describing students as “lazy.” This was the only experience that left Diana feeling unwelcome on campus. She also did not want to name the office that she had this experience with, as she didn’t want to get in trouble or “be offensive.” In addition, Bella felt “belittled” by some staff—she felt like they were judging her for finding the general English course too easy for her skill level.

Amir felt like staff sometimes put too much onus on the student in solving problems that prevented them from seeking support from resources on campus. He said, “They leave you with no choices. They don't give you solutions. They just give you problems and no other choice but to find a way to solve it.” Caty and Diana described similar frustrations, where they struggled to find the office that could help them navigate their problems. Caty found herself referred to the Office of International Services and then back to the original resource from which she was seeking help.

It's frustrating when you want, you need help, and they just straight reject you just because you're international student and you have to go through OIS or something. And then OIS cannot help you, and they direct you back.

Diana struggled to find the right office to help her resolve the academic misconduct claim and ensure that it did not show up on her student record.

It's like, I came over to this office, it was like, oh, we don't in charge this. They have to go over to the other office. I went over to the other office and they're like, oh, actually, you have to go to the other office for this issue. So they are like kind of pushing it away. Yeah, yeah. Which makes me feel like you guys are not helping.

As a result of these negative experiences, participants had some recommendations regarding staff knowledge and behavior that would have improved their experience with campus services at OSU. Amir recommended that departments should “have a staff that knows the experience that we deal with,” especially the administrative pieces that are burdensome for international students, like document translations, but not needed for domestic students. Bella’s recommendation was for staff to be more mindful of how they respond to students and not to “belittle them.”

Participants also wanted student services to take more responsibility for helping them solve problems, as they were frustrated by the number of offices they needed to visit in order to have their question addressed or found themselves scrambling to meet deadlines for documents without sufficient support or understanding from staff. For Amir, he shared:

I mean, it's just that they're not really as helpful as they should be. I feel like they should be making it easier for us to get them those documents rather than placing a hold on your account and telling us go deal with it, get, get us the actual document...I think it's definitely employing better staff that is more understanding and that knows the process and can read like and can understand how difficult it is to get actual documents and stuff and sealed paperwork to them.

Caty wanted staff to provide more information about what different student services can and cannot help with and provide international students with more information about where they need to go next.

I think, like, just to help them as much as the department could. Instead of just like turning them away immediately, or just like assuming that they know exactly what they should do. Like, tell them what where they should go, like, be more specific, like, what they cannot help with and what they can help with. That will be more helpful for international students.

Effective Communication. Participants also identified communication as one of the factors that contributed to whether or not they had a pleasant experience engaging with campus services at OSU. Breakdowns in communication came up frequently when participants discussed negative experiences with resources on campus, and several participants identified improving communication in the recommendations that they would give to campus services at OSU.

Bella and Diana both described positive experiences, where effective communication improved the student services they sought out. For Bella, prompt communication was part of what made her academic advisors in the Honors College particularly helpful. She said, “But generally, it's been good and they're always useful and they reply pretty quickly to like emails and stuff. So that's useful.” For Diana, being able to speak with a staff member who could explain terms like plagiarism and what it meant in U.S. institutions of higher education in her native language helped her navigate the challenges of understanding technical terms in English.

English actually not that, not that big deal with me. But once I came over I realized that the language is still a barrier for me because we use different terms, like totally different terms.

More participants shared negative experiences, where a failure to practice effective communication created additional challenges for them when seeking out resources on campus. Bella described some of the confusion and frustration she experienced when her degree requirements were changed, but information about those changes was not well communicated.

They're useful, but sometimes they say things and then they don't end up being that way. And so I think there's some sometimes miscommunication going on.

With, like the schedule thing that I said, you know, they added my junior year they added like six classes to our plan, which is fine. They're all one credit classes. So it's not a big deal, but it just seemed like, hm, do they really care about what we think, or is this even fair, can they even do this, like, this is how our degree was supposed to look like and they just dump all this other crap on us. And so I feel like sometimes they could do a better job communicating...it was just really confusing, and they never actually, like told us about it.

For Diana, it was a failure to communicate with her that contributed to her negative experience resolving her academic conduct issues. She said that her instructor “just reported me before she asked me any questions about that,” which created a lot of additional challenges. From Diana’s perspective, she wasn’t trying to copy, she forgot to include her reference.

Caty described some initial confusion about navigating resources like advising, where she wasn’t sure who could help with what. However, these particular challenges were not recurring.

I think advising was confusing. Like, I don't know. It's like, who am I meet with? Like my department advisor say, I should go meet with my international advisor. But then my international advisor say they don't know what they're supposed to advise because those are like beyond what they know. So, yeah, that was confusing, but it was a one time thing.

Participants also provided recommendations about communication that would have improved their experiences at OSU. Bella wished that her college had been “a little bit more clear about changes.” In addition, she wanted to see more opportunities to get information about degree changes that affected her, rather than just in-person information sessions.

So they were like, oh, there's these events where you can go to and like, hear people talk about it. But I wish they would have just send out, here's maybe like a fact sheet or like an email that gives you information, you don't have to, like make an effort to go hear about it, because that's something they put on us, and so they

shouldn't just expect us to make an extra effort to find out more, but rather give us the information that we understand what's changing.

Caty recommended ensuring that international students are made aware of opportunities to get involved in committees, student government, and other campus activities that impact the international student experience at OSU.

I know there are like committees on campus that like domestic students could volunteer to be a part of. But like, those positions are never offered to international students. Like they're not made known to international students that they could be a part of a school committee that like makes decisions that impact their experience on campus. And I think that's a big thing that is not offered.

Identity. Another theme that emerged from the interviews related to participants' identity and how identity impacted how students navigated the campus and student services. Most participants shared incidents related to their identity that created negative experiences with resources on campus. However, Diana felt that her identity contributed to positive experiences on campus. Participants also shared some recommendations related to increasing the inclusivity of OSU's campus services.

Diana's perspective differed from the other participants, as she felt that her identity created positive experiences with campus services. She was initially surprised that she found an on-campus job since she believed them to be reserved for domestic students. She believed that her cultural background helped her secure her job.

And I'm kind of surprised because they chose me because I know more than two languages because I still take Japanese as well. So I'll probably say that actually having a diverse cultural background helps a lot in my college. Yeah. And my job.

Diana's perspective was more of the exception rather than the norm—the other participants described incidents that left them feeling like their identity created negative

experiences for them. For Amir, it was challenging knowing that there were no resources on campus that addressed his Third Culture Kid (TCK) identity.

I also identify myself as a Third Culture Kid because I've been moving around a lot and I've seen a lot of different cultures and interact with a lot of different people. But there's no actual office or student service or something like that, for students like that on campus. So it's, it's, it gets us to feel like we're the only ones and it's hard.

Bella described how other people's focus on her accent, even when they were trying to be complimentary, had an othering effect. She said, "As an international student, if you're making an effort to fit in, and you're constantly being reminded that you're not from here, that's a little challenging sometimes." Caty's negative experiences also related to not fitting in—in her case, it was because she found herself not fitting into the student organization that she had intended to make her home away from home because she was the only international student.

Not even a single international students are in there. So it was really hard. I thought when I came to OSU, I thought that was the place that I'm going to fit in. That's where that's the place that I want to find my people, my community, but I did not—I did not fit in. So that was, that was like really hard. And so like, I had to go and look at different clubs or community to, like find my own community. So that was, that was weird. It's like, what I expect and what I experience are very different.

Caty also shared that she disliked all of the additional administrative responsibilities that came with being an international student at OSU.

I think the thing that I dislike is that being international you have way, lot more paperwork that you have to go through. for the same thing that domestic students. And I totally understand because of like, the immigrations and stuff, but just it takes way longer for everything.

In addition, Caty had experiences where she felt like the staff at campus services would focus on her identity rather than the problem she came in to address. She took issue with staff using “someone's identity as your entertainment.”

I know like a lot of international students really don't like it when people like, oh wow. Are you international student? But your English is really good! Like some people are just like, okay, is that a compliment? Like, like, just like help me with my problem...I understand you're enthusiastic but like, not a very appropriate place like for this kind of thing.

She found this kind of behavior especially frustrating because she didn't think that a domestic student would be treated in the same way.

Most participants shared recommendations related to inclusivity and identity that would have enhanced their experience at OSU. Amir noted that though the Cultural Resource Centers are great resources, they don't address his TCK identity. For him, it would have been helpful to have “an actual office or a space where me and other students like me could just sit down and relate to each other.” Diana also identified having more events where she could meet other international students, both direct entry and pathway students, as something that would have improved her student experience.

I enroll into OSU instead of pathway. So I actually don't know much international students to be honest, and it's really hard for me to get along with the American students as well. So I find that my social circle is reduced because of that. So they should actually get an event for the students who are enrolling into OSU as well as international students and the pathway to get along...They can help with one another for the academic...because for the pathway student they have a problem with their language for their English. So we can actually help them yeah, yeah. So I think they should conduct this as well.

Bella and Caty's recommendations centered more on how existing campus services interact with international students. They didn't have issues with the services

themselves, but they did have ideas that would improve how international students experience these resources. Bella shared her ideas for INTO OSU.

I think with INTO, I think the idea is really great. I know there's a lot of international students that really struggle and don't speak the language and they need that support. But I do think they need to make it some more inclusive. So I don't think it's helping that it's kind of located at the corner of campus, and they're all kind of stuck there and they don't meet other people. So like obviously, if you don't know anyone, it's easier to connect with people from your country, because you have some things to talk about. And then obviously, you're not going to speak English to someone that you understand better if you just speak your native language. So I think the idea is really good, but I think they need to implement it differently. So maybe, I don't know, you know, group them into the normal dorms and kind of help them to interact with Americans rather than creating more of a separation between the two groups.

Caty recommended that staff focus on the issue that she came in to resolve rather than trying to engage her in a conversation about her identity. In addition, she felt like campus services that serve the whole campus could do more to engage the international student community as a whole, since she feels that “there's not really connections of, like, the student government to the international student in general.”

On-campus Involvement. Participants identified on-campus involvement as a key factor that made positive contributions to their student experience. This included on-campus jobs, student organizations, and involvement in undergraduate research. Each participant included some discussion about the ways in which they were involved at OSU and how their involvement improved their experience. Participants did not name specific recommendations in relation to on-campus involvement, but the narratives they shared about their involvement at OSU were positive.

Amir and Diana both spoke to the value they found in their jobs on campus, Amir at one of the Cultural Resource Centers, and Diana at one of the colleges. Both participants found that they were able to form meaningful friendships with their colleagues at work. Amir said, “As staff, we're all real close to each other. So it's just fun being around that space anyway. And after hour access is really fun as well.” For Diana specifically, her job was also one of the driving factors that helped her understand how to engage with domestic students.

Ever since I got my job, I actually more getting along with the Americans a little bit more. Yeah. Got to know about their cultural and their living habits and how they get social around with their friends.

Bella and Caty were both involved in undergraduate research and described the positive impacts of these experiences. Bella appreciated the guidance she got from her research supervisor as she prepared for graduate school since she felt like it was hard to find resources on campus that helped her with graduate school planning. She said, “It's been really nice to like, have someone to like direct my specific questions to who kind of also understands what I'm trying to do and what's necessary for me to do.” In addition, she reserved most of her afternoons for work on her research. Caty also identified research opportunities as part of the academic culture of OSU that she enjoyed.

Caty also found the most community through student organizations, just not the one she was expecting to connect with.

Social wise, like I'm in like, like a Christian club. And that's a very, that's like, the main place that I would call like, my second home and like, the place that the community that I connect to the most at OSU.

In addition, she shared her appreciation for events that celebrate international students and their presence in the U.S., as these events created spaces for international students to spend time with one another.

What I like is that there are things that are for you for international students...like, specific events that are catered to international students. Or like this week is international week. So I hope we have more of it...It kind of is fun to have...a celebration of being here.

Meaningful Relationships. The last major theme that participants shared during the interviews was the value of meaningful relationships with other members of the campus community. This included social relationships with both domestic and international students and mentoring relationships with faculty and staff. In addition, participants shared recommendations for campus services that included increasing opportunities to connect with other students, both domestic and international.

Bella and Diana both found mentoring relationships with staff members in student services—Bella with her research supervisor and Diana with the student staff member from ASOSU who helped her resolve her academic conduct issue. Bella named her mentor as the main resource she uses at OSU.

But right now honestly, my main resource is [research supervisor], being my mentor. He, like, gives me the most advice like right now, like, as I'm applying to grad school, he's like the main person that I usually talk to. And having a mentor like that has been really useful and more so than, you know, just someone who works, I guess in an office because they have so many students stuck in line...For me, like taking the step right now, from going to undergrad and to grad school, I feel like there's not a lot of advice on how to do that. You're just kind of on your own. And so if I wasn't working with my mentor, I think I'd have a really hard time to like, figure out the whole application process and make sure everything's set up.

Amir described the importance of relationships with his coworkers at his Cultural Resource Center, who are all “real close to each other,” as well as how much he enjoys attending the events offered by all of the CRCs, not just the one he works at.

I get away from the stressors of class and stuff like that, has always been my work. I work at a cultural center. So it's always just really fun there being around that space...it's my way to find something fun to do on campus when things get really, really boring. Because there's seven cultural centers, someone has to have an event at some point...you just find something to do there.

Diana also spoke about her relationships with her coworkers and how those relationships helped expand her social circle to include domestic students, which was important in helping her feel welcome at OSU.

Through their narratives, participants expressed how more opportunities to connect with other students, both international students and domestic students, would have improved their experience with student services. Caty and Diana both hoped to see more opportunities for international students to get together as a community through events like International Education Week. Bella’s recommendations centered more around ensuring that international and domestic students have opportunities to get to know one another early in their student experience to help bridge the divide between these communities.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In the concluding chapter of my thesis, I discuss my analysis of participant narratives and the themes that emerged, and I share the implications of their narratives and the recommendations that can be drawn from their stories. This chapter will provide a summary of the results from this research, interpretations and analyses of the results, the limitations of this study, areas for further research, implications and recommendations, and some concluding thoughts.

Summary of Results

Through completing this research project, my intention was to learn about how international students enrolled at OSU perceived campus services, specifically those outside of the Office of International Services. The research questions guiding this study were:

- What are international students' perceptions of student services at Oregon State University, aside from those received through the Office of International Services?
- Excluding the Office of International Services, which campus departments provide international students with the greatest sense of support? What actions, behaviors, or attitudes contribute to this perception of support?
- When considering departments outside of the Office of International Services, do international students feel that there are places on campus where they are not supported? If so, what behaviors, attitudes, or actions lead to feelings of non-support?

- What specific recommendations or suggestions do international students have for student services, aside from those provided through the Office of International Services?

I chose to focus on campus services outside of OIS because OIS' resources were designed with the international student population in mind, while other services on campus may or may not have been created with the same awareness of the particular experiences of international students in the U.S. The four participants I interviewed shared their experiences at OSU as a whole and interactions they had with resources on campus, both positive and negative. Their narratives generated six major themes: campus climate (with subthemes the domestic and international divide; not unwelcome, but; passing as domestic students; and international students as temporary visitors), interactions with staff, effective communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships.

Participants' narratives revealed a campus climate that international students experience differently from domestic students. Each participant noted that there was a division between international and domestic students, with the two populations interacting with one another infrequently. Some participants found it more difficult to relate to domestic students, and even the participants that had relationships with many domestic students spoke to the divide they saw between communities. None of the participants indicated that they felt unwelcome specifically; however, only one participant actively shared that she felt welcome on campus. Participants also shared that depending on the circumstances and how others perceived them, they could sometimes

“pass” as domestic students. Their ability to be read as domestic students seemed to hinge on their physical appearance, especially their proximity to whiteness. In addition, students with a less pronounced accent and who spoke conventionally American English also found that this contributed to others reading them as domestic students. The participants that described this phenomenon also shared that once those around them realized they were international students, they were often treated differently. The last subtheme within campus climate was international students as temporary visitors—participants spoke to the challenges that they faced in building relationships and finding a place to call home when they knew that they would not be able to stay permanently.

In addition to describing the campus climate that international students experience at OSU, participants also shared how interactions with staff, communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships influenced their perceptions of student services on campus. Staff who were attentive to participant needs and who took the time and effort to ensure that they got information in a way that was accessible contributed to positive experiences with resources on campus, while staff who were dismissive or who did not understand how their processes affected international students created frustrating experiences for participants. Many participants centered their recommendations around increasing staff training about the international student experience and ensuring that staff either take more responsibility for helping international students solve their problems or provide students with more detailed information about what their department can and cannot do.

Participants also discussed how the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of communication shaped how they experienced different resources on campus. Prompt responses to queries and additional support with defining technical terms that don't often come up in English language courses were forms of communication that improved international students' experiences on campus. On the other hand, participants described changes to their degree plan that were only communicated in one way and experiences where instructors failed to communicate decisions that related to their academic conduct to them, which contributed to negative experiences and additional challenges they needed to navigate. Participants recommended that communications should be made through multiple channels (for example, both information sessions and email) and to ensure that campus-wide opportunities like committee membership and student government are intentionally communicated to the international student community.

Another theme that was significant in participant narratives was the impact of identity on their student experience, both on their experiences with student services and more broadly. Participants shared different narratives here—Diana discussed how much she loved to share her culture and background with domestic peers and felt that this contributed to her success with her on-campus job. Bella and Caty were less appreciative of comments that distinguished them as international students, particularly when it interfered with them seeking out services on campus. Caty described this kind of behavior as using her identity as entertainment. She also expressed surprise that the affinity organization she was excited to join was composed of all domestic students rather than students like her who were from that country. For Amir, his TCK identity was

difficult to navigate at OSU because there were no resources for him to engage with that supported this identity. Many participants recommended increasing the inclusivity of student services at OSU, whether that was by addressing identities like TCK that have been left out of the conversation or by being more mindful of how well-intentioned curiosity about an international student's background may not be a welcome topic of conversation.

Participants also described on-campus involvement through jobs, research, and student organizations and the meaningful relationships they developed through engaging with student services as parts of their experiences with campus services that were almost exclusively positive. Participants described the value of the work they did in on-campus jobs and through their research engagement, as well as the importance of the relationships they developed with colleagues and faculty mentors. In addition, participants also developed their most important relationships through involvement in student organizations and student employment. These opportunities were instrumental to participants and formed a significant portion of the positive experiences they described during the interviews. Participants shared recommendations about increasing the opportunities for international students to form these relationships, both with other international students and with domestic students

Limitations

Though every effort was made to ensure the rigor and the integrity of this study, it did have some limitations, which are described in this section. One limitation of this study was in participant recruitment—though the target enrollment was met through the

demographic survey, a potential participant who completed the survey could not be reached to schedule an in-person interview, which meant that the total enrollment was one under the target of five. The narratives shared by the four participants who completed all the study activities were rich, but having fewer participants complete all the study activities limited the range of experiences represented in this research.

During the interview process, participants were asked to discuss their experiences with campus services, and the question was intentionally left open rather than providing a list of student services for participants to discuss. This was intended to avoid the assumption that there were particular student services that would have been most relevant to participants. Though helpful in this regard, this approach also introduced additional limitations. The openness of this question meant that participants discussed a wide range of services on campus, and the only campus service that multiple participants discussed was academic advising. Even then, their advisors were housed under different colleges. As a result, it was difficult to answer some of my initial research questions—there was meaningful data about actions, behaviors, or attitudes that contributed to perceptions of support or non-support, but I was not able to draw substantive conclusions about which specific departments participants found to be most and least supportive outside of individual narratives. While these individual narratives are still important to understanding participants' experiences at OSU and to this research, it would not be ethical to argue that one individual's experience with a department on campus would be representative of OSU's 3,000+ international student body, especially when other participants did not name interactions with the same departments.

In addition, though this research attempted to be mindful of the full diversity of the international student population through the interview design, it still contributed to homogenizing the international student body through participant recruitment and the study's design. In reporting results, I attempted to ensure that I showcased diverging opinions and experiences to demonstrate that the existence of common themes among participants does not mean that there is one typical international student experience. However, there was not sufficient attention to intersecting identities held by participants or to the ways in which differing identities influenced how participants navigated the campus to attend to the heterogeneity within the international student community at OSU.

Areas for Further Research

The process of conducting this research also identified areas for additional research. As discussed in the limitations section, this study contributed to the homogenization of the international student population through the research design and recruitment practices. Further research that examines the perceptions of different populations within the international student community, both by country of origin and by other salient social identities, would be welcome additions to the literature, would help to bring more attention to the diversity within the international student body, and would help attend to the shortcomings of this study. It would also be beneficial to conduct additional research that focuses on international student perceptions of particular campus services, as this research question went unanswered in my own work.

In addition, OSU is a large, public, land-grant institution with a pathway program and relatively large international student enrollment, so the findings from this study are

likely not generalizable to other institution types. Conducting similar studies at different institutions and different institution types would be a useful exercise, as this would allow for comparison between results and an assessment of the extent to which this research can be generalized to other institutional contexts.

Implications

The results from this study resonated with findings from existing research and pointed to the importance of understanding the diversity within the international student community. Lee (2007) and Hanassab (2006) both found that international students' country of origin had a significant impact on their experience in the U.S.—students from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America experienced discrimination and bias at much higher rates than their Canadian, European, and Australian counterparts. This problem was mirrored in the narratives from this study's participants. Bella, from Europe, felt that she was able to make more domestic friends and that she stood out less than her fellow international students, and she hypothesized that her identity as a white woman contributed to this experience. She also shared that many of the incidents of bias or prejudice she noticed about international students were directed at her peers rather than at her.

In addition, Wang and colleagues (2012) discussed the methodological challenge of studying international students as a whole, both because of the large number of countries that students come from and because methodologies that aggregate students into categories based on their home country do not account for individual difference within cultural groups. Though this study did experience the methodological pitfalls they

described, the diverging opinions that participants shared about how much they welcome questions about their background and culture confirmed the importance of recognizing the heterogeneity of the international student population that was identified in Wang and colleagues' (2012) study. Diana loved to share information about her home country and her native language, while Bella and Caty shared more hesitance to engage in these kinds of conversations because of how they contribute to othering experiences.

This study's findings also supported Astin's (1985) theory of involvement, particularly his finding that involvement with honors programs, academics, faculty, on-campus employment, and co-curricular activities were positive forms of involvement that improved students' perceptions of the institution. Each participant described positive experiences in at least one of these areas, and they spoke to the importance of the relationships with students, staff, and faculty that they were able to develop through activities like student organizations, on-campus employment, and undergraduate research. Participant narratives about OSU's campus climate also emphasized Milem and Berger's (1998) discussion that students whose backgrounds are different from the majority of the student body may find it more challenging to find community and seek out involvement opportunities within the institution's social structure. Participants described the division between the domestic (majority) and international (minority) student communities, and some participants shared that they found it more difficult to connect with domestic students. The emphasis that participants placed on the value of their on-campus activities and the challenges they experienced interacting with a majority-domestic student body demonstrate the critical importance of ensuring that

opportunities for involvement are inclusive of and accessible to international students. Practitioners who work in student activities and involvement are well-positioned to address this critical need.

An analysis of participant narratives also suggested that, perhaps inadvertently, domestic students may be considered the default at OSU. One of Bella's suggestions was to ensure that INTO OSU students are grouped in the "normal dorms" rather than the International Living Learning Community. Her description of the other residence halls as "normal" revealed an implicit assumption that resources designed with international students in mind were seen as exceptions rather than the norm. In addition, Diana expressed her surprise that she had been able to secure a job on campus, as her belief had been that on-campus jobs were reserved for domestic students. She did not share where this belief had come from, but this understanding was surprising to me considering that international students' employment options are generally limited to on-campus positions. Caty shared that she was aware of opportunities for involvement in committees and student government, but she felt that these kinds of spaces for advocacy and impact on the overall student experience were for domestic students. Her experience was that only international students with "very special connections with people in the system" were able to access these opportunities. Participants in this study already described how the temporary nature of their welcome to OSU impacted how they built relationships and interpreted their environment, so it is important to recognize campus climate issues such as these when considering the experiences of international students and the impact of this understanding on students' sense of belonging.

Participants' descriptions of how they learned to navigate the U.S. education system, the college experience, and Oregon State University identified a significant learning curve that participants needed to navigate when they enrolled, regardless of the educational background of their parents. Bella said specifically that both her parents graduated from college, but their experiences at European institutions of higher education did not prepare her for the nuances of the U.S. college experience. She spoke of needing to learn English writing conventions, the process for getting involved in research, and the purpose of different resources on campus. Amir and Caty also described some of the learning curves they encountered when enrolling at OSU and starting classes and advising processes that were unfamiliar. The stories that participants shared suggest that regardless of whether or not OSU might consider them first-gen students, certain aspects of the international student experience may mirror the first-gen experience, particularly the ways in which both international and first-gen students may have fewer mentors who can share knowledge about the U.S. college environment to support their transition and help them navigate resources (Hicks, 2003).

Finally, participants in this study shared many recommendations, several of which centered on increasing opportunities for international students to connect with one another, with domestic students, and with the wider OSU community. It's important to recognize that many campus services with these goals likely already exist at OSU; however, the existence of a campus service does not necessarily mean that the service is accessible or well-known, particularly at large, complicated, and decentralized institutions like OSU. In addition, this study centered on international student perceptions

of student services at OSU, and the results indicated that participants did not perceive sufficient campus resources in this area. Regardless of whether or not these resources existed at OSU at the time of the study, from participants' perspectives, such resources were absent. This implication is particularly important in the context of this study, as none of the participants reported that they were unfamiliar with the campus services available at OSU when they completed the demographic survey—two participants reported that they were somewhat familiar, one participant was very familiar, and one was neutral. In addition, each participant was involved in activities that could also serve as venues through which they could become more familiar with resources at OSU. This finding is an important consideration for student services administrators at OSU.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Though this research project was not necessarily designed to produce generalizable recommendations, an analysis of participants' narratives and the recommendations that participants themselves provided can still serve as useful starting points for practitioners to consider as they continue to refine student services, both at OSU and beyond. These recommendations are outlined in this section and include building capacity and knowledge to work with international students, being mindful of communication and messaging choices, building programming and involvement opportunities that are more inclusive of international students, and leveraging the expertise of international education professionals on campus. At the end of this section, I also include a framework that may help practitioners implement these recommendations in both new and existing student services.

A particularly critical recommendation that emerged from this research is the importance of practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the international student experience. The absence of understanding and compassion regarding the challenges that international students learn to navigate was a significant behavior that left participants with negative perceptions of services at OSU. It is vital that practitioners across the whole campus take responsibility for increasing their knowledge of and capacity to serve this population. As other scholars have rightly discussed, the support of international students needs to come from all areas on campus, not just from specialists (Collier & Rosch, 2016; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016; Xu, 2015). Practitioners across many sectors need to understand how international students are impacted by their processes and what they can do to support this community within their role. They should also recognize what support and services they can provide without a referral to the Office of International Services. This does not mean holding specialized immigration knowledge, but it does mean engaging in an ongoing learning process to remain informed about processes and current events that have disproportionate impacts on international students.

In addition, as practitioners seek to continue building their capacity in this area, they must remain mindful of the diverse experiences and identities within the international student population—as demonstrated in this study and in existing research, one international student can have a very different perspective and experience from another, including students who come from the same country (Wang et al., 2012). Building meaningful relationships with international students is an important aspect of developing knowledge of this population. However, it is critical to ensure that

practitioners understand that individual international students will have unique experiences and that relationships with international students do not replace intentional learning about the breadth of experiences within this population. If the professionals who participants from this study interacted with had developed a robust knowledge of the international student experience, some of the negative experiences that participants shared may have been avoided.

A second recommendation centers on communication and messaging practices, both for processes managed by the department and for referrals to other departments. Participants recommended that important information that affected them should be communicated through multiple methods (for example, an information session, a fact sheet, and an email) in order to offer students more opportunities to learn about critical information. In addition, consider how the use of jargon, highly technical language, or figures of speech may pose additional barriers to understanding for non-native speakers, and only employ this kind of language when it is unavoidable. This is a good practice even when working with exclusively native speakers of English.

Practitioners can also ensure that there is clearer and more detailed communication when they need to refer students to other resources. Multiple participants spoke to the frustration of trying to understand which resource on campus could help them solve their problem and the time they spent moving from one department to another and another. One of the participants who had experienced this frustration recommended that services on campus provide students with more detailed information about what the service can and cannot help with, as well as what the student can expect after a referral to

another department. Taking a more active role in helping students determine what next steps they need to take would be beneficial not only to international students but also to any student who is learning to navigate a large and complex institution like OSU.

Practitioners who are engaged in programming and who facilitate involvement on campus should also evaluate their practice and ensure that services do not inadvertently assume that students are domestic until proven otherwise. Professionals should also ensure that active efforts to be inclusive of international students are incorporated into program development and implementation. A particularly salient example of a service that (perhaps inadvertently) assumed domestic students were the default was described by Bella when she discussed the mandatory career fairs offered by her college as part of a for-credit professional development series. She was frustrated that the college hosted employers who had a policy against even considering international hires, as it excluded her from these professional development opportunities and wasted time that she could have spent elsewhere. Though it's unlikely the college deliberately set out to exclude their international students from this opportunity, this scenario could have been avoided if program coordinators had made sure to ask employers about their hiring policies before inviting them to campus.

It is important to understand that international students may not have the same eligibility or benefits afforded to domestic students, and whenever possible, it is important to mitigate policies that exclude international students. One way in which practitioners might implement more inclusive practices is during hiring processes for new student staff. While preparing for hiring processes, staff should consider whether

work-study needs to be a requirement for employment. While work-study certainly supports domestic students with financial need, international students are generally not eligible for such positions and it further limits the employment opportunities available to them. It's possible that this is something that contributed to Diana's belief that on-campus jobs were reserved for domestic students. Thinking carefully about the balance between work-study and non work-study positions can help ensure that international students are able to access meaningful opportunities for involvement and relationship building like student employment. In addition, consider how cross-cultural communication and relationship building can take place during existing programming, and recognize that cross-cultural learning requires intentional facilitation. The presence of both international students and domestic students does not mean that cross-cultural learning will take place automatically—participants in this study shared the division they perceived between international and domestic students, and practitioners will need to attend to the campus climate and broader dynamics in order to facilitate cultural exchange.

A final recommendation involves learning how to collaborate with international education professionals, particularly those who are already engaged in supporting international students on campus. These professionals are already heavily engaged in the international student experience and in facilitating international student success. Practitioners in other areas should become familiar with the resources offered by international educators on campus, as this information can prove incredibly valuable in ensuring that campus services are well-equipped to support international students. For example, OSU's Office of International Services has hosted on-campus trainings

designed to provide OSU staff with more information about the international student population on campus and to discuss how units on campus can contribute to their success. They also provide online resources to inform the campus community about how to hire international employees. In addition to OIS, international educators whose expertise can be beneficial include faculty involved in cross-cultural communication or intercultural empathy.

Working with international educators can also include seeking out opportunities to support one another's programming and exploring opportunities to develop collaborative programs, especially ones that foster connections between international and domestic students. Building and maintaining healthy relationships between international student programs and services and other divisions on campus can help ensure that a broader range of services remain conscious of how international students might interact with their programs.

In order to implement these recommendations, I suggest that practitioners work through the following steps as they develop and implement programs and services:

1. Reflect on your knowledge of the international student population at your campus. Where are the gaps, and how do you intend to fill those gaps?
2. Identify key partners on campus who can help you engage more effectively with the international student population on your campus. Work on cultivating those relationships and learn how you can collaborate well with campus partners.

3. Consider your program, resource, or service. What do you know about the ways in which international students experience your resource? Ensure you enough information to answer this question, and collect more data if needed.
4. Make adjustments to your program as needed. If you are developing a new program, be sure to reflect on how your processes or procedures may impact international students (and other student populations) in the development phase.
5. Draft your communications intentionally and use multiple channels to conduct outreach or to promote your program.
6. Revisit your knowledge, relationships, and programs regularly.

Conclusion

Prior to enrolling in graduate school, the majority of my understanding of the international student experience stemmed from my personal experiences at my undergraduate institution. I believed that some of the challenges I encountered when I was navigating my institution came from my own lack of understanding of the education system I had joined, and in many ways these challenges felt like an unavoidable side effect of studying in a country other than my own. As I became more familiar with the body of literature exploring international student experiences in the U.S., I began to question my perception both that the challenges I experienced were unavoidable and that they were a result of my own inexperience. Learning to navigate the U.S. education system again, this time as a graduate student, sparked my curiosity about how other international students were understanding their experiences and how they were coping with a system that was not necessarily designed for them.

This curiosity led to the research questions driving this study, which focused on understanding and unpacking international student perceptions of campus services at OSU, and more specifically, campus services that were not received through the Office of International Services. I hoped to learn what contributed to positive experiences and what contributed to negative experiences. Though my personal experiences informed my interest in this study, I was mindful of how my personal experiences might introduce bias into my interpretations of the results and attended to this possibility carefully throughout the study activities.

I am grateful to my four participants—Amir, Bella, Caty, and Diana—for their candor and for their immeasurable contributions to this study. Through their narratives, I identified issues of campus climate that formed the backdrop against which they navigated the campus and interacted with resources on campus. I also identified how interactions with staff, effective communication, identity, on-campus involvement, and meaningful relationships contributed to the perceptions they held of different campus services at OSU. Each participant contributed recommendations that scaffolded the implications I drew from the data and the recommendations I made for practitioners. These recommendations included building knowledge of and capacity to support international students across the campus as a whole, developing intentional and inclusive communication practices, developing more inclusive programs, and collaborating with international educators on campus.

As internationalization continues at institutions of higher education in the United States, I hope that this research has demonstrated the extent to which international student

support is the work of everyone in higher education. Though there are many resources that provide international students with exceptional support, there remain many resources that create additional barriers for international students to navigate. It is vital for professionals in all sectors of higher education to understand both the diversity of the international student body and to recognize their role in facilitating an inclusive, supportive, and transformative college experience for these students.

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Appendix A: Demographic Survey Questions

1. Name:
2. Email:
3. In order to participate in this study, you must self-identify as an international student. Do you self-identify in this way?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Are you 18 years of age or older?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. How long have you been a student at Oregon State University?
 - a. Less than two academic years
 - b. Two to three academic years
 - c. Three to four academic years
 - d. Four to five academic years
 - e. More than five academic years
6. What region is your home country in?
 - a. North America
 - b. Central America
 - c. South America
 - d. Oceania & Pacific Islands
 - e. Europe
 - f. Africa
 - g. Asia
 - h. Prefer not to answer
7. Approximately how familiar would you say that you are with the student services available to you at Oregon State University?
 - a. Very familiar
 - b. Somewhat Familiar
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat Unfamiliar
 - e. Very Unfamiliar
 - f. Unsure
 - g. Prefer not to answer

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Could you please tell me a little about yourself and your background? Where do you call home?
2. Why did you choose to study in the United States? What brought you to OSU specifically?
 - How long have you been in the United States? Is this your first educational experience in the United States?
3. How has your experience been so far?
 - What's going well?
 - What challenges are you encountering?
4. What does being an international student mean to you?
5. How has being an international student impacted your experience as a student at OSU?
6. What does your average week look like? How are you spending your time?
 - Ask for elaboration if needed
7. Apart from the Office of International Services, what offices on campus do you engage with the most?
 - If asked for clarification, offer some sample departments (Career Services, Cultural Resource Centers, University Housing and Dining Services, Academic Success Center, Student Leadership and Involvement, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Writing Center, Sports and Recreation, etc.)
8. What are your experiences with these offices? Do you believe that you are receiving the support you need as an international student?

- Ask for each office that the participant mentions
- What do you like and dislike about your interactions with these offices?

9. Have you ever felt unwelcome at OSU? If so, could you please tell me about that experience?

10. Have you ever felt unwelcome at an office on campus? If so, could you please tell me about that experience?

- What recommendations would you give to improve your experience with this office?

11. Do you think that there are any student services that are missing from your student experience? If so, how would you want the university to address this?

12. Where do you feel most comfortable in Corvallis? Why?

13. What hopes do you have for the rest of your time at OSU?