Holistic Strategies for Nurturing Undergraduate International Students' Success in U.S. Higher Education

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April 26, 2023

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1

Who are undergraduate international students at US higher education institutions?

Undergraduate international students are

- Individuals who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of pursuing higher education.

- Typically holding a temporary visa, such as an F-1 or J-1 visa in the United States.

- Enrolled in undergraduate programs.

- Not permanent residents or citizens of the host country (USA, in our case).

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Why do they pursue higher education here?

# Reasons that international students pursue higher education here

- Reputation for quality education

- Diverse educational opportunities

- Cultural experience

- Career/professional development

- Language

- Global alumni network

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Why are they important to US?

Because…

- **Economic contribution**

  - to U.S. economy

  - to U.S. institutions

  - to colleges and programs (especially those under
    Responsibility Center Management [RCM] model)

NAFSA Analysis: The Economic Benefits of International Student Enrollment to The United States - A Ten-Year Trend

Select State
All

● Economic Benefit ● Jobs ● Intl Students

Academic Year 2021
Jobs 335419.00
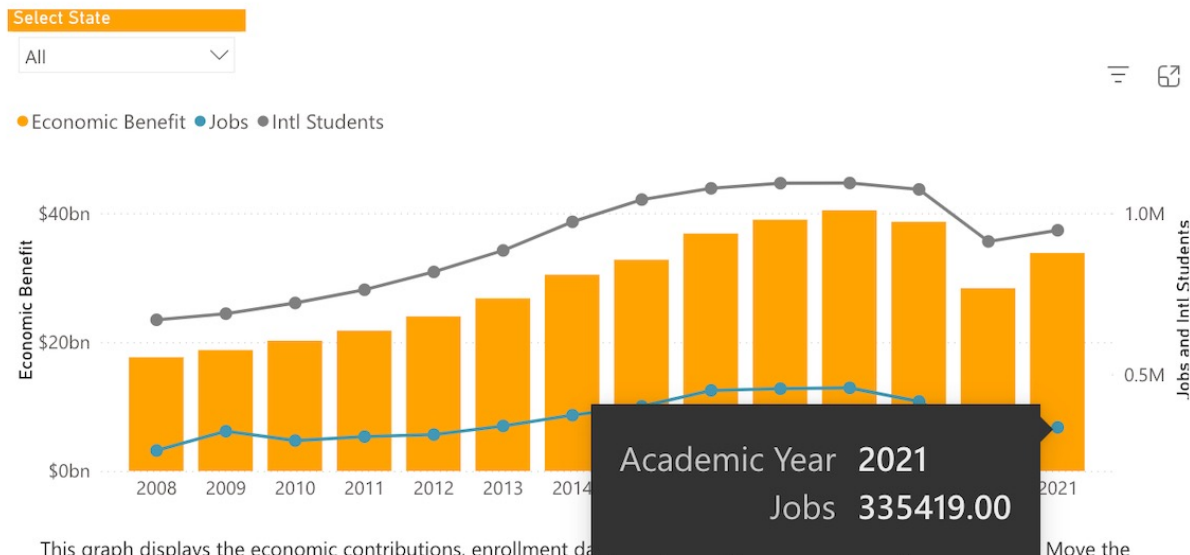
This graph displays the economic contributions, enrollment da... ...Move the mouse arrow over a single graph point to view single year data. International student enrollment data is provided by Open Doors, published by the Institute of International Education in partnership with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State. ⓘ

Figure from: https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2#trends_reports

NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2022
Institute of International Education (IIE), 2022

What else?

- Cultural diversity

- Academic benefits

- Global reputation

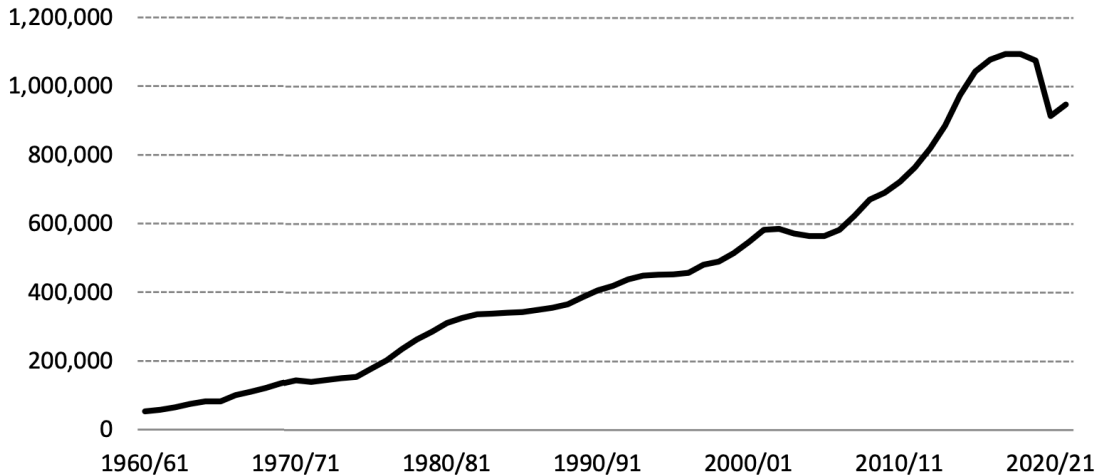- International relations

- Talent pool

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Facts about International Students and Enrollment

Trends in International Student Enrollment

In 2021/22, the total number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities increased by 4% to 948,519 students.

	Total int'l students	% change
2017/18	1,094,792	1.5
2018/19	1,095,299	0.05
2019/20	1,075,496	-1.8
2020/21	914,095	-15.0
2021/22	**948,519**	**3.8**

Figure from: https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/

IIE, 2022

Where are international students from?

|	2020/21	2021/22	% of total
WORLD TOTAL	**914,095**	**948,519**	**100.0**
China	317,299	290,086	30.6
India	167,582	199,182	21.0
South Korea	39,491	40,755	4.3
Canada	25,143	27,013	2.8
Vietnam	21,631	20,713	2.2
Taiwan	19,673	20,487	2.2
Saudi Arabia	21,933	18,206	1.9
Brazil	14,000	14,897	1.6
Mexico	12,986	14,500	1.5
Nigeria	12,860	14,438	1.5
Japan	11,785	13,449	1.4
Nepal	11,172	11,779	1.2
Bangladesh	8,598	10,597	1.1
United Kingdom	8,028	10,292	1.1
Iran	9,614	9,295	1.0
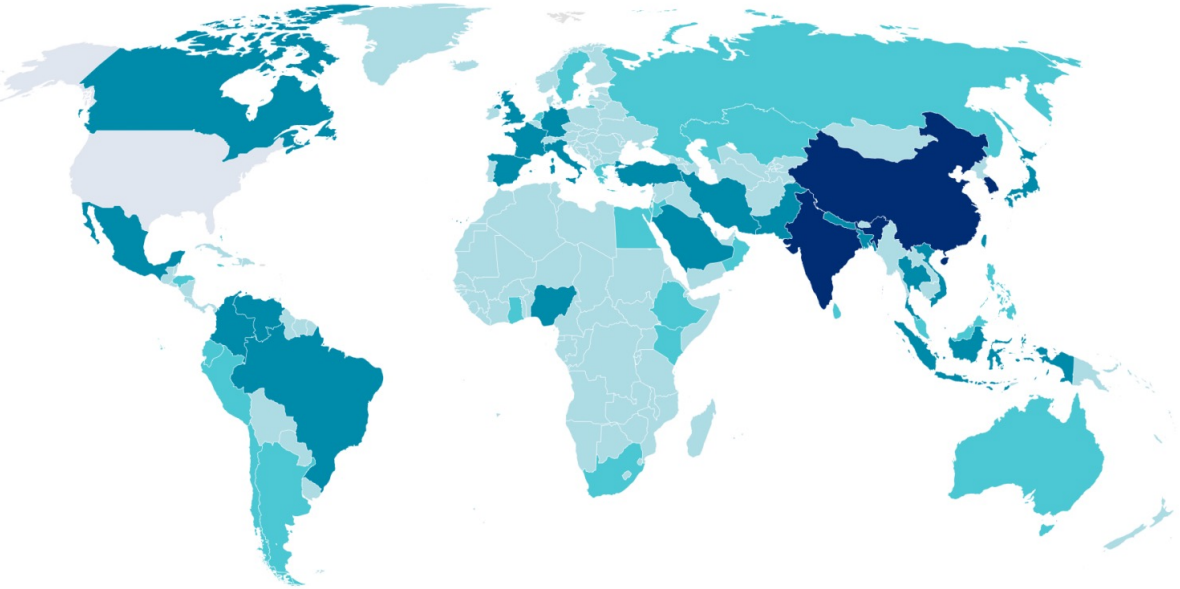
Figure from:
https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2022/
https://opendoorsdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/OpenDoors_Presentation_Print.pdf

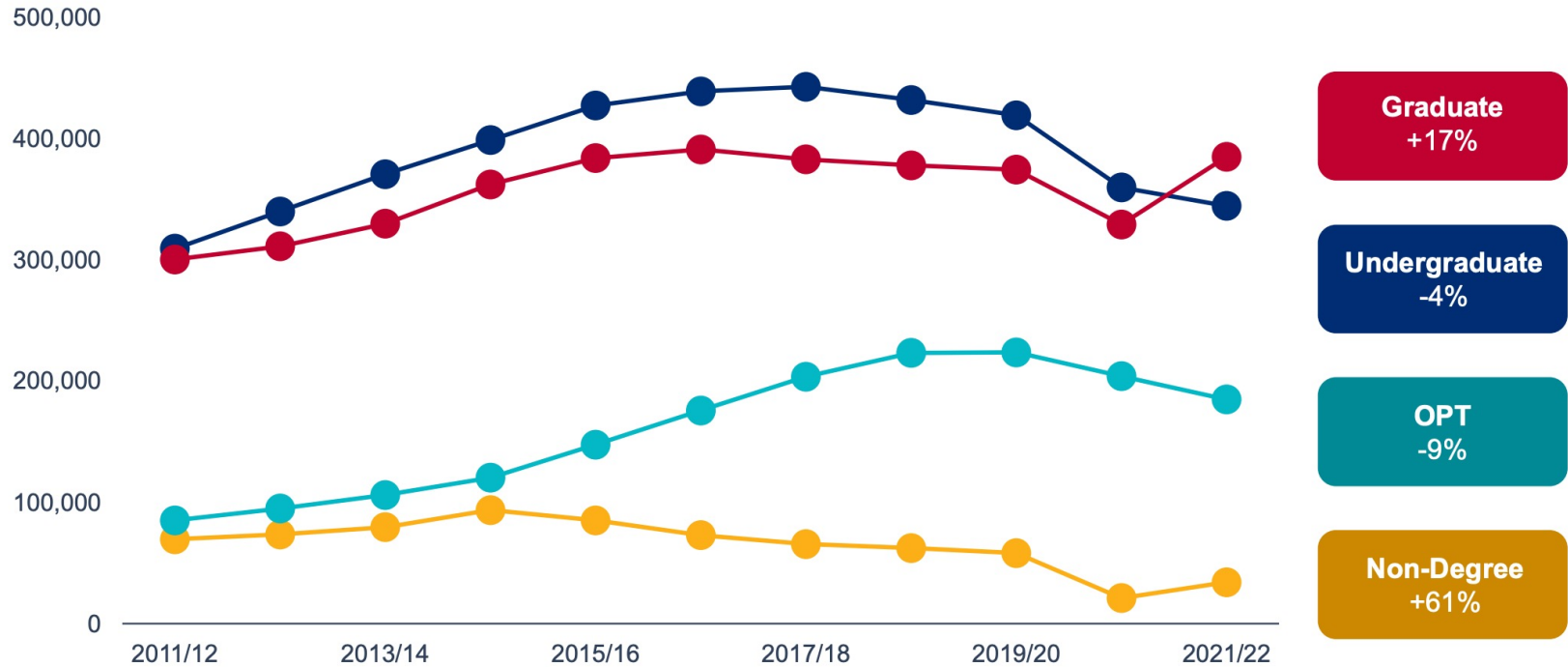IIE, 2022

Trends in International Student Enrollment

Graduate +17%

Undergraduate -4%

OPT -9%

Non-Degree +61%

Figure from: https://opendoorsdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/OpenDoors_Presentation_Print.pdf

IIE, 2022

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Challenges Faced by International Students

Common Challenges Faced by International Students

- **Language barriers**: communication and comprehension

- **Cultural differences**: values, norms, and expectations

- **Financial constraints**: tuition, living costs, and limited aid

- **Academic expectations**: rigorous coursework, unfamiliar teaching styles

- **Social isolation**: lack of social connection

Stress

Kwon, 2009
Mesidor & Sly, 2016
Wu et al., 2015

What else?

- **Career development**

  - Internship, work opportunities

- **Navigating immigration regulations**

  - Work authorization

- **Vitriolic Sociopolitical Climate**

- **Mental health and well-being**

Dropout

Kwon, 2009
Mesidor & Sly, 2016
Wu et al., 2015
Zhai & Du, 2020

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Theoretical frameworks for nurturing undergraduate international students' success

Tinto's Model of Student Integration Tinto, 1975, 1987, 1993

- Individual and environmental differences and their interactions affect dropout intentions and behaviors

- Integration in academic and social domains

- Impact on persistence and success

- Importance of support networks
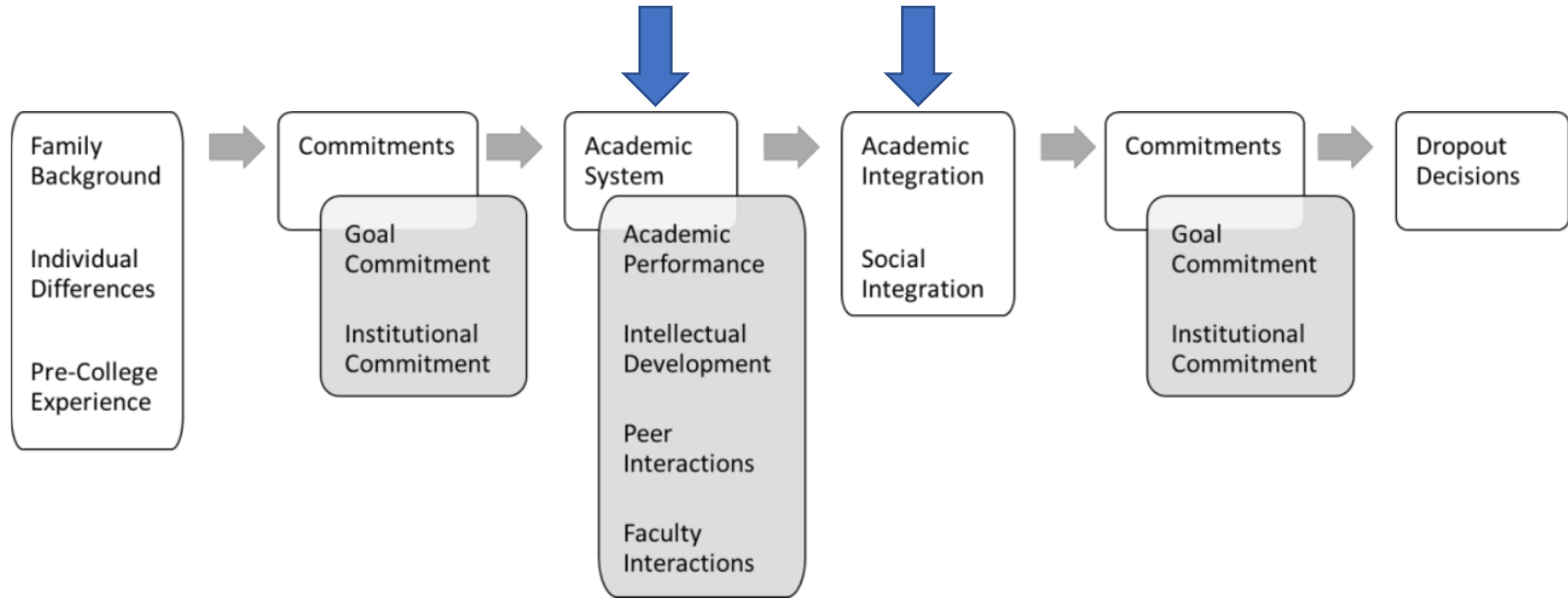
Tinto's Model of Student Integration

Figure **2-1**: A Conceptual Model of Tinto's Theory (1975).

Schlossberg's Transition Theory Schlossberg, 1981

- Stages of adaptation to new environments
    - Moving in
    - Moving through
    - Moving out
- Role of support systems in facilitating transitions
- Application to international student experience

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Holistic Strategies for Career Counselors and Educators to Support International Student Success

Holistic Strategies for Supporting Undergraduate International Student Success

- Addressing academic and career needs as a whole

- Promoting social and cultural integration

- Rallying support and advocating for international students amid vitriolic sociopolitical climate

- Offering financial resources

- Ensuring mental health and well-being

Kwon, 2009
Mesidor & Sly, 2016
Wu et al., 2015
Zhai, 2021
Zhai & Du, 2020

Academic and Career Support

- **Collaborate with academic advisors and Office of International Students to develop tailored support programs addressing international students' specific academic and career needs:**
  - Regular communication; Joint planning; Integrated advising; Collaborative assessment

- **Provide tailored workshops on job search strategies, resume and cover letter writing, and interview preparation:**
  - Customized content; Specialized workshops; Online resources; Feedback and review sessions

- **Connect international students with alumni or professionals in their fields of interest, creating networking opportunities and potential mentorship relationships**
  - Alumni networking events; Mentorship programs; Career fairs

Social and Cultural Integration

- **Help organize and participate in cross-cultural events, fostering connections between international and domestic students while promoting cultural understanding:**

  - Collaborate with student organizations; Integrate cross-cultural activities into career development; Facilitate conversation circles; Active participation

- **Develop webinars/seminars and resources focused on building communication skills and cross-cultural competency, preparing international students for diverse workplace environments:**

  - Real-world scenarios; Guest speakers; Online resources

Rallying support and advocating for international students amid vitriolic sociopolitical climate

- **Serve as advocates for international students by educating employers**
  - Employer outreach; Clear and concise resources; Partnership with companies; Internship and co-op support
- **Serve as social justice advocates for international students by promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and non-discrimination**
  - Campus-wide initiatives; Public awareness campaigns, Advocacy networks; Collaborate with immigration experts (e.g., Office of International Students)

Financial Resources

- **Establish a centralized online database of scholarships, grants, and financial aid opportunities specifically designed for international students**
- **Collaborate with campus departments to create on-campus job opportunities and develop a comprehensive list of on-campus job opportunities that are suitable for international students**

Mental Health and Well-being

- **Recognize signs of mental health challenges in international students**

- **Address pressing mental health needs and/or refer students to counseling services as needed.**

- **Collaborate with mental health professionals to develop workshops that address the unique stressors and challenges faced by international students:**

  - Partnership with mental health professionals; Host panel discussions featuring international alumni; Develop an online resource hub.
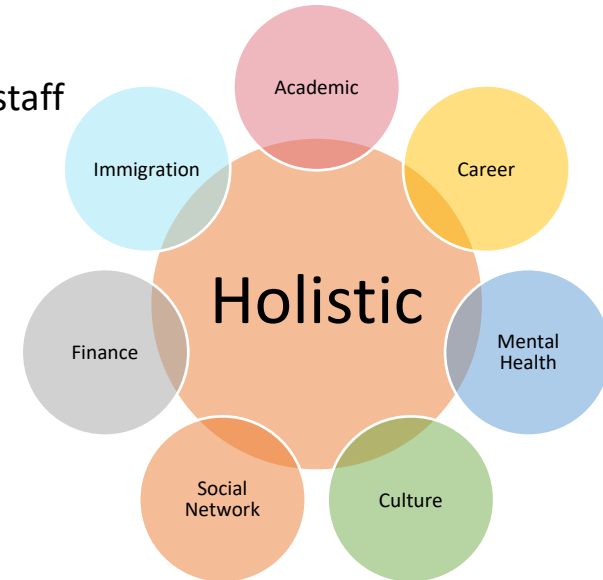
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Conclusion

Conclusion

- Importance of addressing international students' unique needs through holistic strategies

- Benefits of a holistic approach to student success

- Fostering a campus climate that values diversity and inclusion

- Investing in ongoing professional development for faculty and staff

- Benefits for students, institutions, and society

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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