

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



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Strategies for Creating Inclusive, Connected, and
Purposeful Campus Environments

*Chris R. Glass, Rachawan Wongtrirat, and
Stephanie Buus*

Foreword by Fanta Aw



STERLING, VIRGINIA



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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening Campus Commitments to International Students

Over the last two decades, American higher education has transitioned from an arena of elite mobility to mass global student mobility. Each day, almost 1 million international students make their way to class at U.S. higher education institutions, ranging from community colleges in small rural towns to elite private universities in some of America's largest cities (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2013). International students participate in campus organizations, eat dorm food, call home, and relax with friends. They interact with faculty, staff, and students who affect their developmental trajectories in ways both large and small. And they form relationships with these groups, some that last over time and space and some that are more casual and immediate. In 1950, just over 25,000 international students studied in the United States. A little over 15 years later, enrollment surpassed the 100,000 mark; by the turn of the century, enrollment reached a half million students. In the last decade, international student enrollment has almost doubled, from 514,723 in 1999–2000 to 819,644 in 2012–2013, and it is now poised to surpass the 1 million mark (IIE, 2013).

Just as the move from elite to mass higher education transformed the American higher education system after World War II, the rise of mass global student mobility has the potential to significantly reshape American higher education in the coming decades. The presence of international students at U.S. colleges and universities is nothing new. What has changed is the size and scope of international student recruitment efforts (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012). Over half of U.S. colleges and universities surveyed by IIE in 2013 reported that their institutions now had a growing reputation abroad. A statement from University of South Florida's vice provost for international initiatives summed up both the size and scope of the explosion of international student enrollment: "We are now known in places that ten years ago had never heard of us" (Hayes, 2013, para. 10).

As international recruitment has become central to academic planning and university budgets (Adams, Leventhal, & Connelly, 2012;

Choudaha, 2012), the profile of international students has diversified and changed significantly in the past decade (Choudaha, Orosz, & Chang, 2012). This shift in the profile of international students enrolling in U.S. colleges and universities has in turn challenged common assumptions about student learning and development (Lee, 2013). Moreover, making campus internationalization work so that international students become integral to campus life is easier said than done. Institutional strategic plans assert that “international students add diversity to a mostly homogenous campus” and that studying in the United States is “a great educational opportunity for these students” (Porter & Belkin, 2013, para. 6). However, current evidence that cultural diversity, in the form of increased international student enrollments, contributes to the development of intercultural learning among U.S. students is relatively thin (see Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Leask, 2009; Wächter, 2003).

International student enrollments often expand without sufficient consideration of how these enrollments will affect the campus culture(s) already in place and which capacities will be required to create a campus climate capable of including new and diverse populations. Instead, the rhetoric adopted by universities cheerfully suggests that it is possible to have “diversity’ without conflict” (Graff, 1994, p. 28; Lambert & Usher, 2013). Accordingly, international enrollments may go forward with little attention paid to the actual readiness of domestic students to create a tolerant and welcoming context for incoming international students. At the same time, a spate of recent cases at U.S. universities and colleges illustrates the deleterious, and even tragic, effects that the unfettered and aimless enrollment of large numbers of international students can have on their well-being once they arrive on campus, including depression, loneliness, and isolation (Fischer, 2012; Gareis, 2012; Glass & Braskamp, 2012; Redden, 2012; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2007). For example, a Nepalese student wrote an op-ed about her experience living alone “in a dreary box room” for two years as she struggled to study and meet her financial obligations. She asks, “Universities are eager to accept our fees—but are they doing enough to support young people like me who come from far away to study?” (Paudel, 2013).

Not surprisingly, then, international educators, activists, and journalists are increasingly calling for closer attention to the qualitative dimensions of international students’ experiences at U.S. colleges and universities (Fischer, 2014; Lee, 2014). International educators work tirelessly, often on limited budgets, to engage international students directly and to push for more inclusive campus environments for these students. Many international educators enter the field for humanitarian or social justice reasons with an eye on the potential benefits of enhanced intercultural understanding. Academic

exchange has long been a core feature of cultural diplomacy, and increased educational exchange holds great potential as a force for enhancing intercultural understanding and promoting international development. In this vein, international students are often approached as a resource for diversifying student populations and as an aid for U.S. students interested in strengthening their ability to navigate cultural differences in a global society and marketplace (Jayakumar, 2008).

An international student enrollment survey conducted by IIE in 2012 found that almost 60% of U.S. institutions reported an increase in international student enrollments for that year. International student enrollments have climbed for seven straight years (2006–2012), and the figures continue to escalate. Of those institutions with more than 1,000 international students, 80% reported increases. Forty percent more international students enroll at U.S. colleges and universities than did 10 years ago. Among U.S. baccalaureate institutions, one in five reported substantial increases in the number of international students enrolled. In turn, 70% of institutions reported that they had taken action to ensure that international student enrollments would not decline, including hiring new staff, reallocating the duties of existing staff to cover international enrollments, and forming new partnerships and forms of collaboration abroad. Most of the top-20 U.S. institutions hosting international students reported modest increases in international enrollments, which suggests that those institutions with traditionally smaller enrollments—and likely few established programs for incoming international students—have seen the most substantial increases. Such institutions have seen their enrollments skyrocket, doubling or even tripling within the course of a year or two.

Weaving Together the Big and Small Stories

In this book, we outline deep approaches to the academic and social integration of international students at U.S. colleges and universities. We describe concrete examples of strategies to enhance the international student experience across a wide range of institutional types (e.g., community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and research universities). The book explores actions that have enabled colleges and universities to create more inclusive, connected, and purposeful campus environments for international students. It fleshes out the effects of these actions through the first-person narratives of international students themselves. The focus of this book, then, is on reinforcing an institution's existing strengths and capacities to help academic leaders develop comprehensive strategies that will enable the creation of inclusive campus climates for international students.

To achieve this ambitious goal, we attempt to weave together the “big stories” of how institutions are strengthening and deepening their campus commitment to international students with the “small stories,” the first-person-narrative experiences, of the international students we interviewed in our research. We connect the big stories of the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) data set with the small stories of the meaning of these developmentally effective experiences in the lives of international students. We tell the two stories in parallel to illustrate how the small stories of students and the big stories institutions intersect and cocreate one another. Without keeping both narratives in view, the big stories can be lost in abstraction and remain distant from the real-life consequences of institutional policies, practice, and programs; and the small stories leave us inspired or pained without concrete examples of policies, programs, and practices to learn from and adapt in order to enhance the international student experience.

Amplifying Student Voices

I can see from semester to semester how I grow intellectually and how I am able to do much more than I thought I would ever be able to do. The educational system here, I think, or this particular program and the people I'm surrounded by, kind of made me realize how people have so much potential but maybe they never actually try to use it or develop it. I have a feeling with this program I'll always need to actually develop my potential and see what I can actually do. It's just amazing! (Graduate, female from Eastern Europe)

When I look back, I think I have grown in that I thought I was a pretty open-minded person, but after coming here and meeting all [the] people, I became more open-minded in that sense like trying to understand other people from where they come from rather than just assuming my own ideas. When I just came in, I didn't expect that to happen. I thought I'll just come in, go to classes, get my degree, and be done with it, and people like—maybe I'll talk with people from [my country] and I'll just be done with it. The expectation was nothing at all like nothing in terms of growth, except academic. Maybe I thought I might be a little bit independent because I'll be living on my own but that's about it. (Graduate, female from Southern Asia)

These international students are flourishing. They describe engaging in meaningful experiences, a sense of meaning and purpose, supportive relationships, emotional well-being, and a sense of confidence and achievement during college.

One of the primary goals of this book is to amplify the voices of international students in the process of campus internationalization. Hearing student voices firsthand offers the reader a rare opportunity to understand the international student experience from the inside. Stories and firsthand accounts provide a concreteness and refreshing perspective that large-scale national surveys miss. Personal narratives also show that not all experiences affect international students equally. A racist encounter can be debilitating for one student and may strengthen a sense of resolve and ethnic identity for another. Moreover, various combinations of experiences—not just a single best practice—contribute to students' development. By listening, we have a lot to learn, and they have much to say. Like Walt Whitman (1892) in his poem "Song of Myself," international students do not speak with a single voice or single view. In Whitman's words, they "contain multitudes." The stories we share invite the reader to see the resilience, activism, courage, and experiences that are developmentally significant in shifting the students' perspectives both on life in the United States and on themselves.

The rich narratives included in this book reflect Gargano's (2009) assertion that scholars should "place student voices at the forefront of a discourse on student mobility" (p. 343). Consequently, this book not only describes concrete examples of policies, programs, and practices that colleges and universities can learn from and adapt to enhance the international student experience, but it is also filled with the voices of international students. We draw on 40 in-depth interviews with international students sharing success as well as difficulties and struggles navigating college life in the United States. Narratives like those in this book allow us to enter into the international students' experiences, drawing on their courage and identifying with the complex and intense interactions that shape them.

Cross-Campus Connections

One of the aims of this book is to take readers on a journey, from community colleges to liberal arts institutions to large public flagship research universities, from rural parts of the United States to highly populated urban areas. Our goal is to raise questions that provoke the reader to think about how university life has changed with the surge of international students and the challenges that confront senior administrators seeking to strengthen and deepen connections for the students.

We set out to identify colleges and universities that are strengthening their commitments to international students in three important areas: strengthening connections among various units, exploring ways to deepen the quality of the international student experience, and expanding the number of students

engaged in international, global, and intercultural learning. We used the GPI and our relationships with over 135 colleges to identify institutions that are demonstrating promising practices that are enhancing the international student experience.

The institutions vary in size, location, educational mission, and composition of international students yet share a commitment to comprehensive internationalization and take seriously the concrete practices that create developmentally effective environments for international students. They do not leave the international student experience to chance; each institution has taken into consideration the changing demographics of international students as they develop programs, policies, and practices that create positive campus climates for these students. They have made practical decisions to devote human resources, time, and money to initiatives that foster the success of international students.

The institutions in this book are just a handful of a larger number of institutions that are doing excellent work in the areas we highlight. Since the engagement of international students will vary from campus to campus, we did not set out to select “the most successful” institutions; we did highlight practices that we thought other institutions could adapt to their own context. Solutions are contextual, so our emphasis is on the key features of educational experiences that create positive campus environments for international students. Since the institutions we highlight in this book represent a diversity of histories, missions, and initiatives, we begin by providing a brief background of each institution before jumping into in-depth examination of specific contexts and arenas these institutions are working in to enhance the international student experience.

Elon University

Elon University’s pastoral campus located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina brings worlds together. This intimate, closely connected campus community is a short drive away from one of North Carolina’s largest cities, Greensboro. Elon is best known for its rags-to-riches story of institutional transformation, which took place in the 1970s, when Elon catapulted itself from obscurity to a selective, nationally recognized university known for exemplary study abroad programs, among other distinctions. Elon consistently ranks in the top 10% on the key benchmarks of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and it is a renowned national model of excellence in engaged learning. This independent, private liberal arts university was originally named Elon College. In 2001, after its transformation and the creation of robust professional programs, it changed its name to Elon University. The university infuses its mission throughout the student experience,

embracing the founders' vision of "an academic community that transforms mind, body, and spirit and encourages freedom of thought and liberty of conscience" (Elon University, n.d.). To accomplish its mission, Elon focuses on active student engagement with faculty, a dynamic liberal arts and sciences curriculum, integration of knowledge across fields and disciplines, and a fundamental respect for human diversity. In 2012, 72% of students attending Elon had a study abroad experience. Many institutions would view that level of participation as phenomenal success given that national averages for study abroad participation hover around 3% and in North Carolina the percentage of students studying abroad is less than 2% (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers [NAFSA], 2011).

The administrators leading internationalization efforts looked at those numbers and asked themselves, "How can we allow even more students to engage in a cross-cultural experience?" International students enrolled at Elon mostly come from large, urban cities and discover the beautiful, rural countryside of North Carolina's Piedmont. Phil Smith, director of the Study USA program at Elon, asked his colleagues, "What can we do to have international students experience more while they are here, to deepen and make their experience richer?" International students coming from large cities abroad now enhance their global experience with study away experiences in places from New York City to a small coal-mining town in Kentucky. Study away programs allow students with diverse perspectives to engage in what Elon describes as a "global experience"—purposefully designed experiences in which students encounter people different from themselves. Chapter 3 highlights how Elon is seeking to leverage "encounters with difference that make a difference" through its Study USA program.

Florida International University

Florida International University (FIU), a top-tier, student-centered, public research university, prizes its commitment to being "worlds ahead in its service to the academic and local community." The word *international* is not just central to the name of this institution; FIU has infused global learning throughout its undergraduate curriculum. A 2013 article in *Inside Higher Ed* described the curriculum as putting "the 'I' in FIU" (Redden, 2013). Founded only 50 years ago, FIU has distinguished itself as one of the most competitive universities in the state in terms of admissions. Woven into the heart of Miami, FIU's 344-acre campus was built at the site of a local airfield. Today, FIU is a destination for globally mobile students.

Its lush, green campus complex is a vibrant habitat for creativity and innovation that prepares graduates to "succeed in a global market." FIU is a place where the traditional definition of *international students* as those

“who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of tertiary study” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003, para. 1) is too narrow. A broader definition that includes first- and second-generation Americans reveals the diversity of students who call FIU their alma mater, since the institution serves a large number of Spanish-speaking Americans who grew up in Miami but whose parents came from South or Central America.

International students from China, Venezuela, India, Saudi Arabia, and Colombia intermix with FIU’s large Hispanic population. Of the over 50,000 students who attend FIU, more than 85% are considered minorities. The university’s mission zeroes in on its diversity: “Florida International University is an urban, multi-campus, public research university serving its students and a diverse population of South Florida. We are committed to high quality teaching, state-of-the-art research and creative activity, and collaborative engagement with our local and global communities” (FIU, 2013).

Hilary Landorf, director of global learning initiatives, leads FIU’s quality enhancement plan (QEP), Global Learning for Global Citizenship. This university-wide initiative includes a graduation requirement for all undergraduates of a minimum of two classes that are infused with global learning outcomes. These courses, as Landorf puts it, enable students to “view the world from multiple perspectives, attain knowledge of global interconnections, and graduate from the university willing to address local and global issues through critical thinking and problem solving.” Initiatives designed to enhance the international student experience often myopically focus on international student programming. In contrast, the comprehensive approach at FIU is aimed at creating a social environment and positive campus climate to enhance intercultural understanding for all students. Florida International University is strengthening and deepening its commitment to international students by ensuring that international students—in the broadest sense of the word—engage deeply in experiences so they graduate as “responsible global citizens.” Chapter 1 highlights the key factors that helped FIU internationalize its curriculum.

Indiana University–Bloomington

In 1909 the U.S. Bureau of Education conducted its first Foreign Student Services Survey to assess how higher education was serving Chinese students. A questionnaire was sent to 100 institutions asking about facilities, number of students, scholarships, and services. Indiana University–Bloomington (IU) responded to the questionnaire, reporting one Chinese student, living in a private home off-campus and paying \$40 in tuition each year.

A hundred years later, IU was one of the top 25 institutions hosting international students, home to a bustling 6,123 foreign-born students (IIE, 2012). Christopher Viers, the associate vice president for international services at IU, is facilitating opportunities for international and domestic students to build relationships. IU has purposely sought to move beyond the “one time annual event” and encourage cross-cultural interaction at a more micro-level. International students consistently rate informal interactions with their U.S. peers as some of the most meaningful and important learning experiences. Viers originally was a pre-med major with plans to work as an emergency room physician. His own cross-cultural encounters during college with people from other countries and cultures expanded his view of the world and created in him a passion for international education. Now, having seen the transformative potential of cross-cultural interaction, Viers is an ardent advocate who helps students at IU

see the world through the eyes of international students as I had come to do. I strive to find ways for others to know the caliber of the students, their reasons for study in the U.S., the sacrifices they make in pursuing U.S. higher education, and their seriousness of purpose. Fear keeps so many people from that experience. (“Serving International Students,” 2009, p. 19)

Bloomington, Indiana, is a “quintessential college town” with a population of 70,000 people, almost 60% of whom are graduate or undergraduate students. The university strives to provide the “ideal college experience,” attracting students from around the world with its “great traditions, gorgeous campus, international culture, Big Ten sports, and active academic climate” (IU, 2013, para. 1). As the flagship institution of the IU campus system, Bloomington is committed to the mission that provides “broad access to undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education for students throughout Indiana, the U.S., and the world, as well as outstanding academic and cultural programs and student services” (IU, 2014, para. 1).

Keeping track of over 6,000 international students has led to university-wide efforts to create sunapsis, a proactive case management and tracking system that ensures the university is engaging international students before issues and problems arise with visa issues or student academic performance. This proactive, data-driven, evidence-based approach to enhance the international student experience demonstrates a concrete commitment by senior administrators to enhance the campus climate for international students and support their student success. Chapter 4 highlights how IU is taking a data-driven approach to enhancing international student success.

Northern Arizona University

Northern Arizona University (NAU) touts that it

opened its doors in 1899 with 23 students, one professor, and two copies of Webster's International Dictionary bound in sheepskin. The first president scoured the countryside in a horse and buggy seeking students to fill the classrooms of a single school building. (NAU, 2014, para. 1)

Today, NAU is home to 26,000 students and 900 full-time faculty. It has experienced eight straight years of international student enrollment growth. Over 1,000 international students, double the number from just five years ago, from 60 countries call NAU their home.

As an institution, NAU has challenged the notion that internationalization is a luxury that cannot be afforded. "The exact opposite is true," according to Harvey Charles, vice provost for international education at the university. "A well-resourced internationalization infrastructure means that there are resources to fund global learning projects and other university priorities" (as cited in Redden, 2013, 'Comprehensive Internationalization,' para. 2). Rather than focusing on the obstacles to achieving comprehensive internationalization, NAU has emphasized how investing in comprehensive internationalization efforts generates more resources to fulfill the academic mission of the institution. It has championed an approach to budget and planning that reinvests revenue from expanded international elements into strengthening and deepening campus internationalization efforts. NAU, winner of the Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization in 2012, has demonstrated its dedication to deepening and strengthening its commitments to international students.

NAU acknowledges the integral role that housing and residence life play by providing and creating a home for international students. It values the contribution that a robust international community makes to academic initiatives that span the globe, such as science, engineering, technology, and mathematics programs. Located in Flagstaff, Arizona, near Grand Canyon National Park, NAU sees the important cultural role in forging strong connections between the global community and the local public. Among its initiatives, NAU is investing in the concrete features of the student experience, especially in areas of housing and residence life. International houses have a long and storied tradition in international education. Chapter 4 explores the new international house (I-House) at NAU.

Old Dominion University

Old Dominion University (ODU) prides itself on being a vibrant, metropolitan university at the commercial and cultural crossroads of southern

Virginia. Partnership is part and parcel of the culture of this vibrant research university. The campus ethos exemplifies “idea fusion,” the cross-disciplinary partnering of top researchers with an extensive range of businesses, community organizations, and the greater metropolitan region of Hampton Roads. Located just a few miles from the Port of Virginia, the deepest shipping channel on the U.S. East Coast, ODU has a prominent role in international affairs and the economy of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Undergraduates learn to live, study, and work on a multicultural campus in one of the most culturally diverse regions of Virginia. ODU is among the most ethnically diverse institutions in Virginia; one-third of every freshman class is composed of Filipino, Asian, African American, and Hispanic students. The university’s modern buildings and entrepreneurial approach to problem solving has attracted over 1,400 international students—about 6% of its student population—from more than 110 nations around the world.

ODU has made it a strategic priority to create a coordinated service model for international students and scholars and to implement curricular and cocurricular programs that develop culturally competent students. It has made support for international students and their families a strategic priority, including multiple initiatives designed to assist with cultural orientation, housing, health care, family support, child care, and mentoring. Moreover, campus leaders strive to invest strategically in avenues that nurture continued ties with international alumni after they graduate. The university’s original motto, “A Portal to New Worlds,” reflects a fundamental commitment of campus educators to integrate the diverse cultural traditions represented at ODU throughout campus life. Spearheading these efforts is the Office of Intercultural Relations (OIR), with a mandate to “cultivate a climate of understanding and respect that yields authentic interactions with diverse individuals and groups” (OIR, 2014, para. 1). Old Dominion University has distinguished itself not just as a provider of student services, but as an organizer of an active and engaged International Student Advisory Board (ISAB), willing to advocate for issues on behalf of its international student population. Chapter 2 describes the formation and evolution of the ISAB at ODU.

Valencia College

Valencia College awards more associate degrees than any other two-year school in the United States (“Valencia No. 1,” 2010), and almost 40% of those degrees are awarded to minority students. When the campus opened in 1967, it served a predominantly White student population; today, the campus is very multicultural. Diversity is the norm; students are used to being surrounded by people from other places, according to Jennifer Robertson, director of study abroad and global experiences at Valencia. Robertson cited

a recent campus survey in which 97% of students said they felt comfortable interacting across cultures. Students date across cultures. They seek roommates across cultures.

Founded as a community college, the institution has dramatically expanded its academic scope in the last 50 years. Today, the college extends to five campuses in Orange and Osceola Counties in Central Florida. The entrepreneurial spirit of Valencia spawned numerous innovative international initiatives over the years. The first, started in 2001, was the nondegree Intensive English Program, which has seen tremendous success in international student recruitment over the last decade, and in 2006 the college established the Study Abroad and Global Experiences Office to coordinate outbound study abroad initiatives. One of the boldest moves was transferring International Student Services to the Continuing Education division, which already had a well-established international student recruitment process in place. To coordinate these efforts in an educationally purposeful way, Valencia committed itself to strengthening the connections among the initiatives by breaking down the silos and fostering a culture of collaboration for all aspects of internationalization. Today, with a greater strategic focus, Valencia is on the brink of creating a culture in which faculty administrators and staff work together across the college to connect the different international initiatives. Recruitment, admissions, academic advising, immigration advising, programming, and counseling for international students are all under the umbrella of International Student Services.

Strengthening these connections became an opportunity for Valencia to continue to invigorate a culture of excellence, reinforce its identity as an international campus, and deepen the quality of the various international initiatives. Internationalization is a hallmark of the campus effort to “provide opportunities for academic, technical and lifelong learning in a collaborative culture dedicated to inquiry, results, and excellence,” according to Robertson. The college prides itself on helping students achieve more than they dreamed would be possible, and it has been nationally recognized for its “innovative thinking and laser-focused commitment to student success,” receiving the inaugural Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence (Dembicki, 2011, para. 4). The college has organized itself to be even more integrated in order to direct that same laser-like focus on supporting the international students seeking two-year and four-year degrees. It has taken a comprehensive approach to internationalization by increasing academic exchanges and international student enrollment, expanding study abroad opportunities, and infusing global and intercultural learning throughout the curriculum. The reorganization transformed its siloed approach to one offering comprehensive services to international students.

International students have been a priority at Valencia for a long time. A new culture has taken hold—one that sees shared purposes between its traditional, regionally focused economic and strategic initiatives and its expanding global connections. Robertson described this holistic approach to internationalization as a “new culture of embracing international students, and bringing them into the college, seeing them not just as a source of revenue, but also how they can enhance the environment of the college as well.”

Top sending countries include Venezuela, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and China. In addition, because of geographic proximity, a significant percentage of international students come from countries in the Caribbean Basin, such as Haiti, Bahamas, and Jamaica. Valencia has a highly diverse international student population with students from over 80 countries; this diversity is increasingly becoming an interconnected part of Valencia’s identity. Chapter 2 highlights how Valencia is connecting international students with its campus and local community.

Valparaiso University

Just an hour southeast of Chicago, Valparaiso University is the largest independent Lutheran university in the United States. The curriculum at Valpo, as the university is sometimes called, is rooted in liberal arts tradition and maintains a highly residential ethos characterized by strong and supportive relationships among faculty and students. Over two-thirds of students arrive from out of state and nearly 50 countries around the world. The university believes “now is the best time to start preparing for a future in this interconnected world” (Valparaiso University, n.d.-a, para. 2). The faculty and staff at Valpo live out its mission to be “a community of learning dedicated to excellence and grounded in the Lutheran tradition of scholarship, freedom, and faith, [which] prepares students to lead and serve in both church and society.” Reflecting the institution’s core commitments to liberal learning, Valpo has numerous study abroad programs and an on-campus learning environment that leverages diversity to engage students with the diverse cultural and religious traditions of the world. As a faith-based institution, Valpo makes its commitment to the “creative relationship between faith and learning” (Valparaiso University, n.d.-b, para.1) by attending to the interior lives of students, exploring questions of value, identity, ethics, and meaning.

Valpo has been recruiting foreign students throughout its 125-year history. Ten years ago, the percentage of international students reflected the national average: around 4% of the total student population (C. Schaefer, personal communication, July 22, 2013). In the next 10 years, Valpo, like many institutions around the United States, expects over 15% of its student population, or nearly 600 students, to be foreign-born (Valparaiso

University, 2013). Chuck Schaefer, chair of the International Studies Department, characterized current enrollment trends as “exponential growth.” As is the case in many U.S. institutions, a large proportion of the international enrollment growth comes from an influx of Chinese students from middle-class families. Valpo hosts the first Confucius Institute of any small, church-based institution in the United States and has developed a close academic exchange partnership with Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. Valpo also hosts over 160 students from the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Strong partnerships that promote scholarly exchange of faculty have paved the road for sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships. Schaefer believes the challenges of such a large influx of students do not fit easily into a paradigm in which international students just “acculturate to the U.S.” The new generation of international students, from his perspective, require international educators to view today’s globally mobile students as a more cosmopolitan-minded population: “The attraction is to become part of a globalized transnational ex-patriot group of people who have more in common with one another than they often times do with their own nationals.” Chapter 1 highlights how Valpo is investing in faculty learning and professional growth.

Organization of Each Chapter

A comprehensive resource for international educators, faculty, and student affairs staff, this book describes the social contexts that contribute to enhancing the international student experience and outlines deep approaches to the academic and social integration of international students at U.S. colleges and universities. Each chapter consists of four key, integrated elements:

1. A discussion of contemporary issues and trends from research literature and the popular press
2. Research from the GPI that identifies and describes high-impact curricular and cocurricular experiences
3. The first-person narratives of international students themselves
4. Campus-level case examples of policies, programs, and practices that other colleges and universities can adapt to their own campus context to better meet the complex needs of international students

Chapter 1 examines curricular experiences that contribute to cross-cultural interaction and an enhanced sense of belonging for international

students. The student narratives reveal the role that intergroup dialogue and faculty–student interactions play in building international students’ sense of belonging. We use both narratives and institutional examples to demonstrate in a more holistic way the critical role that faculty members play in the social and academic integration of international students.

Chapter 2 describes cocurricular experiences that contribute to cross-cultural interaction and an enhanced sense of belonging among international students. Student narratives in turn confirm the importance of student engagement and leadership programs that enhance a sense of belonging for international students.

Chapter 3 describes the role of friendship networks in international students’ well-being and academic success. Student narratives highlight qualitative aspects of students’ relationships that contribute to their sense of belonging.

Chapter 4 describes how relationships with family members affect international students’ sense of belonging. Student narratives describe how students manage family obligations and negotiate tensions among individual, familial, and other collective needs, desires, and goals. This chapter also discusses how use of social media with home- and host-country peers affects international students’ sense of belonging. Student narratives describe a widespread, but little-discussed, problem of discrimination against international students in online environments: students face more blatant discrimination off campus than on, including through social media.

Chapter 5 revisits one of the core themes of this book: enhancing international students’ sense of belonging. We suggest three subtle but important ways that international educators and administrators might expand the ways we approach the issue of belonging when it comes to the international student population at U.S. colleges and universities. This chapter builds on core themes in the book and highlights the role of belonging in terms of student academic engagement and success. We will show that belonging in all of its forms—resilience building, engagement and deliberative democratic discussion, and diversified student social networks—are critical elements as well as outcomes of the classroom experience.

Chapter 6 offers recommendations for colleges and universities that are committed to enhancing the international student experience. We believe that deep and meaningful change can be accomplished not by one office, but rather through collaborations among departments and offices across campus and the community—most importantly, the international student community.

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