Formulating Strategies for International Student Success: Learning from Faculty, Staff, and Student Voices

Bethany Peters, Minnesota English Language Program
Xi Yu, International Student & Scholar Services
Workshop Goals

1. Increase understanding of international students’ needs and challenges.

2. Discuss strategies to improve students’ experience.
Overview

- Benefits
- Challenges
- Strategies
- Summary
- Discussion Points
We will highlight faculty, staff, and student perspectives from the following research:

- Supporting Non-Native English Speakers Survey (SNNES)
- International Student Barometer (ISB)
- Student Voices Survey (SV)
- Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)
- Educational Impact of International Students

https://global.umn.edu/icc/resources/umn.html
Overview of Int’l Student Data

1. Seeking Best Practices for Integrating International and Domestic Students
2. International Student Barometer (ISB)
3. Listening Sessions with UMN Departments
4. Office for Student Affairs Focus Groups
5. Survey of Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)
6. Study of the Educational Impact of International Students in Campus Internationalization
7. South Korean Undergraduate International Students’ Experiences
8. Career Services for Undergraduate International Students
10. First-Year Student Thriving Quotient Survey
11. Academic Impact of Compulsory Military Services on Korean Male International Students
Overview of Faculty/Staff Data

Source: Supporting Non-Native English Speakers Survey, Spring 2016
Benefits
Benefits (Students)

For ALL students:
• Knowledge, attitudes and skills for effective intercultural communication
• Ability to reflect on their own culture
• Leadership and problem-solving skills
• To engage with course content utilizing multiple perspectives

Particularly from int’l students:
• Benefitting from interactions with peers from countries other than their own and from interactions with American students.

Source: Educational Impact, ISB
In what ways does having non-native English speakers on campus enhance the learning environment for all students?

Source: NNES Survey
Benefits (Faculty & Staff)

1. Cultural diversity benefits
2. Communication skills improvement
3. Linguistic benefits
4. Relationship benefits
5. ‘They raise the bar’
6. Improves teaching
7. Students’ future preparation

Source: NNES Survey
Discussion Point: How can we maximize the benefits for students?

“In my experience, the presence of non-native English speakers has the potential to aid in the goals outlined above, but their presence does not automatically create these benefits. The course must be structured in a way that creates opportunities for cross-cultural interaction to occur and the students must be willing to interact. The potential positive impacts, therefore, are highly dependent on the course and the specific students and instructor (faculty).”

Source: NNES Survey
Challenges
Challenges & Needs (Student)

1. Peer interactions & building friendship *(ranked as the #1 challenge in ISB)*

2. Language proficiency

3. Group discussion and participation in class

4. Interactions with faculty/TA
A Snapshot of Student Satisfaction with Teaching & Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Elements</th>
<th>UMN</th>
<th>UMN vs. CIC +/-</th>
<th>CIC Ranking* (out of 6**)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. TEACHING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of lectures</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject area expertise of professors/TAs</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>-2.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching ability of professors/TAs</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>-2.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting time from faculty when I need it/personal support with learning</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair and transparent assessment of my work</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback on coursework/formal written submissions</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>-1.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty whose English I can understand</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of marking/assessment criteria</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. STUDIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying with people from other cultures</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to improve my English language skills</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>-1.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 6 CIC institutions include: U of M, U of Nebraska-Lincoln, Northwestern, Rutgers U, UIUC, and Indiana University Bloomington.

Source: ISB 2014
Which of the following made learning difficult in your first semester due to English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I was not comfortable speaking in class because of my English.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There was too much reading.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Too many examples used in class were taken from U.S. culture.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Too much of the vocabulary was unfamiliar.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My writing had too many grammar errors.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I wasn’t clear about what to do during pair work or group work.</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Professors/instructors spoke too quickly.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I was unfamiliar with the types of writing assignments.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I didn’t understand other students during pair work or group work.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People could not understand me when I spoke.</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Student Voices, 2010
How satisfied are you with your educational experience in your major overall?

* Int’l student scored statistically significant lower than domestic students on this item.

Source: SERU 2014
When NNES struggle to meet course requirements, it is due to ...?

Source: NNES Survey
Challenges (Staff)

When NNES struggle to communicate effectively with you it is due to ...?

Source: NNES Survey
About how many of the NNES in your classes have adequate English language skills to:

- express themselves clearly in discussions: 16% (None), 40% (Very Few), 36% (Some), 8% (Many), 8% (All)
- ask any questions they may have during class: 20% (None), 33% (Very Few), 31% (Some), 15% (Many), 11% (All)
- cite sources accurately: 14% (None), 38% (Very Few), 34% (Some), 13% (Many), 11% (All)
- produce comprehensible, acceptable written work: 11% (None), 39% (Very Few), 38% (Some), 13% (Many), 11% (All)
- deliver comprehensible, acceptable oral presentations: 10% (None), 37% (Very Few), 41% (Some), 11% (Many), 11% (All)
- participate effectively in group work: 9% (None), 37% (Very Few), 41% (Some), 14% (Many), 14% (All)
- express themselves clearly when talking with instructors: 5% (None), 29% (Very Few), 49% (Some), 17% (Many), 17% (All)
- understand complex topics: 6% (None), 27% (Very Few), 48% (Some), 18% (Many), 18% (All)
- participate effectively in research, service, or work: 5% (None), 20% (Very Few), 53% (Some), 21% (Many), 21% (All)
- understand reading assignments: 3% (None), 22% (Very Few), 52% (Some), 23% (Many), 23% (All)
- take exams within the required limit: 3% (None), 21% (Very Few), 47% (Some), 29% (Many), 29% (All)
- understand assignment instructions: 3% (None), 19% (Very Few), 56% (Some), 22% (Many), 22% (All)
- understand lectures: 2% (None), 18% (Very Few), 57% (Some), 23% (Many), 23% (All)
- work effectively in an online environment: 3% (None), 16% (Very Few), 53% (Some), 27% (Many), 27% (All)
Challenges (Faculty & Staff)

1. English proficiency challenges (n=347)
2. Academic challenges (n=187)
3. Cultural differences (n=121)
4. Campus resources (n=91)
5. Reluctance to ask for help (n=76)
6. Peer interactions (n=58)
7. Low confidence (n=43)
8. Attitudes & expectations (n=22)
9. Interactions with faculty (n=20)

Source: NNES Survey
1. How can faculty/staff determine if a student is struggling with a language or culture barrier?
2. How can faculty/staff encourage more meaningful domestic and international peer interactions and friendships?
3. How faculty/staff encourage the use of campus resources to help students build their language skills?
Strategies
Strategies (Student)

How often have your instructors used the following strategies in any of your classes?

Source: Ed Impact ISB 2014
What would help you adjust more easily during your first year?

Recommendations for Faculty/Staff:

1. Create structured opportunities for integration
2. Be aware of the cultural background differences within the classroom setting
3. Encourage international students to utilize campus resources

Source: Student Voices, 2010
Strategies (Faculty)

How often do you use the following strategies to support NNES?

Source: NNES Survey
How often do you use the following strategies to support NNES?

I adapt my communication style so that my language is more comprehensible.

- Never: 18%
- Rarely: 36%
- Sometimes: 27%
- Often: 10%

I recommend the use of campus support centers when it might be helpful.

- Never: 22%
- Rarely: 22%
- Sometimes: 22%
- Often: 19%
- Most of the Time: 10%
- Always: 5%

I try to give feedback on language errors when appropriate.

- Never: 11%
- Rarely: 32%
- Sometimes: 34%
- Often: 13%
- Most of the Time: 8%
- Always: 2%

Source: NNES Survey
Strategies (Faculty & Staff)

1. communication strategies
2. accommodations
3. arranging one-on-one support
4. providing visuals & handouts
5. promoting campus resources
6. encouraging students
7. fostering peer interaction and support

Source: NNES Survey
Discussion Point: How can we enhance use of these strategies in our work with international students?

1. communication strategies
2. accommodations
3. arranging one-on-one support
4. providing visuals & handouts
5. promoting campus resources
6. encouraging students
7. fostering peer interaction and support

Source: NNES Survey
Summary

Comparisons & Gaps
- Benefits
- Challenges
- Strategies

Future Research
Resources

- Int’l Student Research at the University of Minnesota
- Resources for Supporting Multilingual Learners
  - https://esl.umn.edu/
- ESL Resources for Students
  - https://esl.umn.edu/student-resources
- Academic Resources for International Students
  - https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/academic-resources-for-intl-students/
- International Student Needs Assessment (2015, & 2016)
  - http://undergrad.umn.edu/international_fee/research.html
Questions?