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HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION CHOICE BEHAVIORS OF  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON  
U.S. COLLEGE CAMPUSES

by

ANIL TAN

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

May 2014

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2014

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family; especially, to my loving father, Fikret Tan, who I lost ten years ago, rest in peace, and my loving mother, Zekiye Kipcak, whose support has always been special and never left my side.

# HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION CHOICE BEHAVIORS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON U.S. COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Anil Tan, PhD

University of the Incarnate Word, 2014

The economic, social, and personal value of education has been realized as motivating factors for seeking a better education overseas by individuals. In addition, political, economic, and educational conditions of home countries impact individuals' decisions to study abroad. There were over 4 million tertiary students studying outside their home countries in 2011. Nearly 820,000 of those students were studying in higher education institutions in the United States. Students from China, India, and South Korea comprise nearly 49% of the international students in the United States.

The increase in the number of students studying overseas and their valuable contributions develop a strong competition among universities around the world, especially in the United States. It is important for higher education institution officials to understand the decision-making process of international students to attract them to their institutions and benefit from their presence on their campuses.

This mixed methods study examined motivational factors for international students to study in the four-year public and private higher education institutions in South Texas in the United States. A two-phased sequential explanatory mixed method design was established to identify the themes that were important in the decision-making process. The study showed that

several factors, such as perception, influence, and opportunity, were very important in the decision of international students to come to the United States for their studies. The results may help administrators with their recruitment strategies and plans. However, it is worthy to expand this study to other higher education institutions and locations to better understand the decision-making behavior of international students who study abroad.



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## **Chapter 1: Higher Education Institution Choice Behaviors of International Students on U.S. College Campuses**

### **Context of the Study**

The economic value of education is well recognized by all nations around the world. Individuals with a higher education obtain a wider range of financial benefits for themselves, which also provides wider benefits for society (Hall & Matthews, 2008). For this reason, families and their children, especially in developing nations, look for a quality education to improve their social status and economic conditions. As a result, students and their parents often seek opportunities to study abroad (Lemke, 2011).

The politics of a nation, national economies, and the world economy all contribute to an individuals' desire to study abroad (Altbach, 1991; McMahon, 1992). Such complex factors affect the environments that influence students' and their families' choices when considering studying abroad or becoming an international student. The wide use of the World Wide Web allows students to get information about political and economic changes in other countries, enabling them to make better choices about educational opportunities. These opportunities were virtually impossible just a few decades earlier (Lemke, 2011). In addition to extensive opportunities to access information, various situational factors such as the end of Cold War and the growth of open-market economies have increased the number of students studying around the world (Altbach, 1991). Other dynamics affecting the number of students studying abroad include a flexible immigration system, better research opportunities, and support services for international students at the university level (UNESCO, 2009).

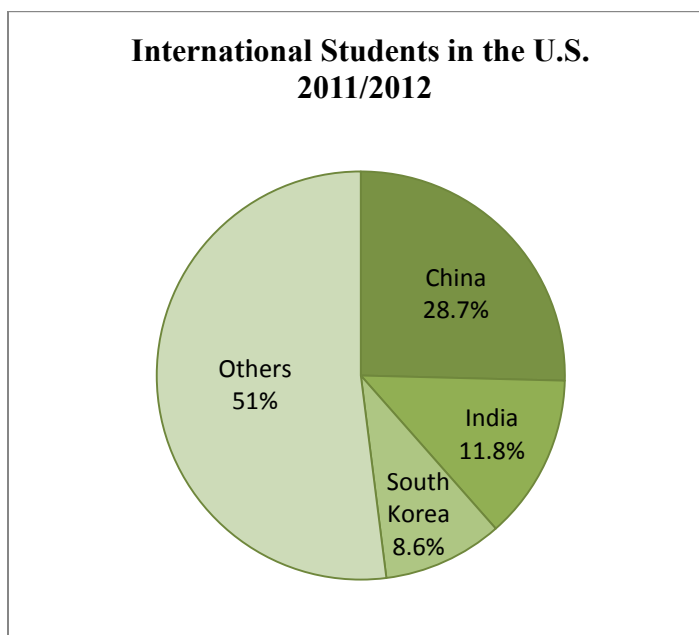
*Open Doors 2013 Report on International Educational Exchange*, published annually by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, reported that the number of students studying abroad is growing rapidly (IIE, 2013). According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009), there were approximately 238,000 international university students worldwide, in the 1960s. This number increased to over one and a half million by 1995. In 2011, 4,300,000 higher education students were enrolled outside their countries. This represented an increase of more than 5% compared to the previous year (OECD, 2013). The Institute of International Education (IIE) reports that “819,644 international students were enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States in the 2012/13 academic year” (p. 3).

### **International Students in the United States: An Overview**

China, India, and South Korea, recognized as the top three sending countries, comprised nearly half (49%) of the total international enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities. *Open Doors 2013* report further stated that China is the leading sending country for the fourth year in a row with nearly 235,597 students representing 28.7% of the total international student population in the United States (IIE, 2013). This fact can be explained by the economic explosion in Asia, which increased the number of people who could afford to send their children to school as the need for more skilled workers grew. The investment in education, throughout most of Asia, could not keep up with the investment in other parts of the economy, making studying abroad a far more attractive choice for students and parents (Lemke, 2011). The number of international students from India, the second largest sending country, decreased to a total of about 96,754 in 2013, representing 11.8% of the total international student population. South Korea, as the third leading country, maintained its numbers in the United States, at nearly 70,700 students, 8.6% of the total international student population in the United States. Figure 1 shows the percentages of

students from China, India, and South Korea, in comparison to students from other countries, studying in the United States.



*Figure 1.* Percentages of international students in the United States.

Saudi Arabia, Canada, Taiwan, and Japan each represent 3% to 6% of the total international student population (IIE, 2013). These top seven sending countries comprise about 63% of the total international student population. Recently, there have been increases of more than 20% in the number of international students from other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Iran, and Kuwait (IIE, 2013).

The most popular fields of study for international students have been business and management (21.8%), engineering (18.8%), and mathematics and computer sciences (9.5%). The University of Southern California was the top host institution in 2013, with 9,840 international students. The University of Illinois, Purdue University, New York University, and Columbia University rounded out the top five destinations for international students (IIE, 2013).

## **Contribution of International Students to the United States**

While the students benefit from their study abroad experiences, the institutions and the countries also benefit from this exchange in multiple ways. IIE (2012) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011) confirmed the increasing interest in studying abroad across the world. The U.S. Department of Commerce characterizes higher education as one of the top service sector exports in the country, as international students “provide revenue to the U.S. economy and individual host states for living expenses, including room and board, books and supplies, transportation, health insurance, support for accompanying family members, and other miscellaneous items” (IIE, 2012, p. 16).

The *Open Doors 2013* report further stated that international students contribute nearly \$24 billion to the overall United States economy in tuition, living expenses, and related costs (IIE, 2013). Furthermore, they contribute to the research capacity in the United States. Many graduate programs would have suffered from a lack of “qualified students to serve as research and teaching assistants, limiting universities’ research and development capacity in science and technology” had it not been for international students (Gates, 2004, p. 7). The tuition paid by these international students allow higher education institutions to hire more qualified instructors and improve their facilities, which also benefit their domestic, in-state students (Quazi, 1999). In addition, when these international students complete their studies and return to their home countries, they provide capital gifts as alumni (Bassinger, 1999).

## **Statement of the Problem**

With the increase in numbers of international students and the increased interest of higher education institutions abroad, international student mobility has become an important research topic (Chen & Barnett, 2000). Also, with the significant contributions and the roles of

international students in the United States, there is an increasing need for more research on this topic (Lemke, 2011). College leaders, educators, counselors, and student services providers have become more cognizant of the importance of establishing new policies, standards, and specialized programs for international students. Multiple studies investigated the overall challenges that international students face in the United States, but there are few studies providing valuable insight into student attitudes and destination choices (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). There is limited research that focuses on the international students' needs, tendencies, and behaviors throughout their study abroad experience (Butcher & McGrath, 2004).

In 2013, the proportion of Taiwanese international students dropped by 5.9%. In the same year, the proportion of Japanese students decreased by 2%, the number of Turkish students decreased by 5.8%, the number of Thai students decreased by 4.1%, and the number of students from Nepal decreased by 7.3% (IIE, 2013). However, the number of Saudi students increased by 30.5% throughout the 2012-2013 academic year (IIE, 2013). The increase in the number of students from Saudi Arabia can be explained by the scholarships the Saudi government provided for overseas studies, more specifically, for study in the United States (King Abdullah Scholarship Program, 2013). Even though the total number of international students is increasing every year, the diversity is steadily declining (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Furthermore, there are limited studies and information about the college choice activities of students who select the United States as their study abroad destination. Much of the literature on international student mobility considers total movement of students between nations and/or regions. The literature considering "student flow from the perspective of student choices is limited to a few studies" (Hamrick, 2003, p. 13). Therefore, there is a strong need to examine the factors affecting international students' decisions to study in the United States.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons international students study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study explored 1) the motivations of international students to study abroad, 2) what attracts them to the United States, and 3) how they select institutions of higher education in the United States.

## **Research Questions**

For the quantitative phase (Phase I) of this study the guiding research question was: “What are the factors influencing international students’ decisions to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States?” The specific research sub-questions for Phase I were:

1. What motivates international students to study abroad?
2. What attracts international students to the United States?
3. How do international student select institutions of higher education in the United States?

For the qualitative phase (Phase II) of this study the overarching research questions were:

1. How do the selected factors identified in Phase I contribute to the presence of international students in higher education institutions in the United States?
2. How can the data obtained in the quantitative phase be explained?

The research sub-questions for Phase II originated from the results of Phase I.

## **Significance of the Study**

Through a stronger understanding of the factors affecting international students’ choices in selecting higher education institutions in the United States, higher education officials can implement more informed plans on international student recruitment. Educators should seek to



understand the college choice process of these students in order to keep up with the competition for recruiting international students. Furthermore, this study may inform policy makers because “when social scientists do not get involved, policies are made by others, such as politicians; and when not informed by scientific knowledge, they turn out to be less than adequate” (Kagitcibasi, 1996, p. 185). The findings may benefit strategic decision-makers and marketing professionals, recruiters, policy makers, and officials in higher education institutions in the United States.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Most of the studies reported in the literature aim at explaining the decision-making processes of students as a set of push and pull factors that influence students’ decisions. For this study, Mazzarol and Soutar’s (2002) concept of push and pull factors was utilized. Findings of previous studies were used to create a list of factors that possibly influence the destination choice of international students. Push-Pull theory “has often been employed to facilitate an understanding or to describe the decision making process for international students” (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985, p. 5).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) claimed that international student mobility results from a combination of push and pull factors. The push factors occur in the sending country. These factors are the initial motivations for students to study abroad. Push factors focus on the “availability of higher education and each sending country’s economic conditions” (Loudon & Bitta, 1988, p. 2). Pull factors, on the other hand, occur within the host country and are what makes that country appealing to international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). They focus on the economic, political, and social factors of higher education in the host country. Table 1 lists examples of push and pull factors.

Table 1

*Examples of Push and Pull Factors*

Push Factors	Pull Factors
Availability of Higher Education	Higher education opportunities
Enhanced value of foreign degree	Cost of study
Financial capacity	Strategic alliances with home partners
Human resource capacity	Employment opportunities during study
Political instability	Employment opportunities after study
Employment opportunities on return	Geographical distance
Experience with international student mobility	Enhanced value of national higher education
Dependence on world economy	Active recruitment policy
	Immigration policies
	Lure of life

**Overview of the Research Design**

This study was conducted through sequential explanatory mixed method design (Creswell, 2003, 2005, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Sequential explanatory mixed method is “characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first phase of researched followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the second phase that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results” (Creswell, 2009, p. 211). This design is especially useful and relevant “to explain and interpret quantitative results by collecting and analyzing follow-up qualitative data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 211).

International students currently studying at two institutional types, a four-year, faith-based private university and a four-year public university, were surveyed through SurveyMonkey, a web-based data collection tool. A total of 183 international students were surveyed at the higher educations in the United States. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked whether they were willing and available to meet with the researcher for an interview. Eight respondents, indicating their willingness and availability, were interviewed through open-ended interview questions. Interview questions were broad, open-ended questions, which were

determined after the analysis of the quantitative data. The quantitative data were presented through descriptive and inferential statistics and then the follow-up interview transcriptions were analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. Themes were generated along with supporting information from the literature and quotations from the participants to describe concepts from their points of view. Participant's demographic characteristics including regional culture, gender, and other related characteristics, can be linked to understand their views on how they chose the destination for their studies.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

This chapter presents an overview of literature about the characteristics, contributions, and choice behaviors of international students in higher education institutions in the United States. The first section gives an overview of characteristics of international students in higher education. The second section addresses the contributions of international students to the United States in terms of academic, economic, and social factors. The third section concludes with the most important reasons identified in the literature why international students choose to go to the United States for their higher education studies. A summary then concludes the chapter.

### **International Students in U.S. Institutions**

The United States has been a destination for education and research since the mid- 1950s. According to the *Open Doors 2013* report, there were 34,232 foreign students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions during the 1954-1955 academic year (IIE, 2013). This number had more than doubled to 82,045 by 1965 and over the next ten years, it increased to 154,580. By the early 1990s there were over 400,000 international students studying in the United States.

The number of international students studying in the United States has been increasing continuously from year to year, with the exception of the 2003-2004 academic year, which saw a slight decline due to changes in regulations in response to the September 11, 2001, (9-11), terrorist attacks. Difficulties in acquiring student visas, rising tuition costs, as well as visa policies were factors influencing international students' desire to enroll in U.S. higher education institutions (IIE, 2005). Table 2 summarizes the changes in the number of international students from the 2000-2001 to the 2012-2013 academic years.

Table 2

*International Students from 2000-2001 to 2012-2013*

Year	Total International Students	% Change
2000/01	547,867	+ 6.40
2001/02	582,996	+ 6.40
2002/03	586,323	+ 0.60
2003/04	572,509	– 2.40
2004/05	565,039	– 1.30
2005/06	564,766	– 0.05
2006/07	582,984	+ 3.20
2007/08	623,805	+ 7.00
2008/09	671,616	+ 7.70
2009/10	690,923	+ 2.90
2010/11	723,277	+ 4.70
2011/12	764,495	+ 5.70
2012/13	819,644	+ 7.20

*Note.* From *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* (p. 2), by Chow, P and Bhandari, R., 2013, New York: Institute of International Education. Copyright 2013 by Institute of International Education, Inc. Adapted with permission.

### **Historical overview of international student mobility in the United States.**

**1995-2000.** During the 1995-1996 academic year, the number of international students increased to 453,787, with the contribution of students who came from Asia. In fact, Asia represented more than half the total number of students at that time (IIE, 1997). From 1995 to 1997 international student enrollment increased only by 0.9%. During this time, majors such as business, management, and engineering were the most popular choices of study for international students (IIE, 1998). In 1998, the United States saw a 5.1% increase in international student enrollment. The economic contribution of international students reached over \$13 billion to the United States economy (IIE, 1999). Additionally, by 1999, the enrollment of international students in the United States increased by another 2% to equal 490,933 students. The following

year, the number of international students passed the half million mark. By this time, China was the leading sending country (IIE, 2003).

**2001-2005.** The United States continued to be a popular destination for international students. In 2001, the enrollment increased to 547,862, a 6.4% increase over the previous year. In 2002, international student enrollment continued to increase at the same 6.4% rate to 582,996. India surpassed China and became the leading sending country of origin. During this time the countries of Mexico, Turkey, Pakistan, and Colombia were increasing their numbers. Although Japan saw a decrease in its numbers, Asian students continued to lead the United States enrollment with 56% of all international students, while students from Europe were next with 14% (IIE, 2002).

After a strong increase over the previous years, international student enrollment increased by only 0.6% in 2003. This slowdown can be attributed to the 9-11 terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. As a result of the attack, stricter visa application processes and other related security precautions negatively affected the international student's flow; in particular there was a 10% decrease in students coming from the Middle Eastern region (IIE, 2003). In 2004, the United States saw its first decline in incoming international students. This year the number of international students dropped to 572,509, a 2.4% decrease from the previous year (IIE, 2004). India remained as the leading sending country of origin, although most other countries decreased in numbers.

The trend did not change in 2005 and the United States continued to decline as a study abroad destination with only a 1.3% international student enrollment rate, taking the total of international students to 565,039. Not only were the post 9/11 restrictions blamed for the decline, but strong competition from other countries such as England and Australia were also blamed.

These countries became popular destinations for higher education opportunities for international students, which in turn affected the enrollment of international students in the United States (IIE, 2005). According to *Open Doors Report 2004*, even though the United States continued to maintain its status as the leading destination, trends indicated that it was losing its market share of international students (IIE, 2004).

**2006-2013.** The decline in the number of international students studying in the United States stabilized during the 2005-2006 academic year at 564,766; however, India and China remained the leading sending countries of origin for international students. *Open Doors 2012* reported that the number of international students studying at colleges and universities in the United States increased by 7% to a high of 623,805 during the 2007-2008 academic years (IIE, 2012).

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the number of international students studying at higher education institutions in the United States was 690,923, a 3% increase over the previous year. This growth was mainly because of a 30% increase in enrollment of Chinese students. The number of students from China in U.S. colleges and universities rose to nearly 128,000, representing 18% of the total international student population. There were nearly 105,000 students from India and were approximately 72,000 students from Korea during the 2009-2010 academic year. The number of new international students in U.S. higher education institutions increased to 764,495 during the 2011-2012 academic year, a 6.5% increase over the previous year (IIE, 2012). This represented a record number of international students in the United States. This increase was largely courtesy of China, India, and South Korea. During the 2011-2012 academic year, China sent nearly 194,000 students to the United States, which was 23.1% more than the prior year's total. India was the second leading sending country, sending just over

100,270 students, a decrease from the previous year. South Korea was third, with over 72,000 students representing a decrease of 1.4% over previous year. In the 2012-2013 academic year, the number of international students studying in United States higher education institutions was 819,644, a 7.2 % increase over the previous year. This growth was mainly because of a 21% increase in enrollment of Chinese students and the results of several national governments such as Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait providing scholarship programs to their students to study in the United States, especially at the undergraduate level. The number of students from China in U.S. colleges and universities rose to 235,597, representing 28.7% of the total international student population. There were nearly 96,754 students from India and approximately 71,000 students from Korea during the 2012-2013 academic year (IIE, 2013).

Table 3 summarizes the number of international students representing the 25 leading places of origin in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years.

### **Contributions of International Students to the United States**

Contributions of international students occur in different levels: institutional, national, and international levels. Universities in western countries such as the United States along with some other European countries depend on contributions of international students as sources of revenue, research and teaching talent, and diversity (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bolsman & Miller, 2008; Lasanowski, 2009; Tysome, 2004). Galway (2000) reported the top three fundamental reasons for institutions to recruit international students as the opportunity to generate revenue, to increase diversity, and to grow international trade links.



Table 3

*International Students in U.S. Higher Education Institutions - Leading 25 Places of Origin - 2011-2012 and 2012-2013*

Rank	Place of Origin	2011/12	2012/13	% of Total	% Change
	World Total	764,495	819,644	100.0	+ 7.20
1	China	194,029	235,597	28.7	+ 21.4
2	India	100,270	96,754	11.8	- 3.50
3	South Korea	72,295	70,627	8.60	- 2.30
4	Saudi Arabia	34,139	44,566	5.40	+ 30.5
5	Canada	26,821	27,357	3.30	+ 2.00
6	Taiwan	23,250	21,867	2.70	- 5.90
7	Japan	19,966	19,568	2.40	- 2.00
8	Vietnam	15,572	16,098	2.00	+ 3.40
9	Mexico	13,893	14,199	1.70	+ 2.20
10	Turkey	11,973	11,278	1.40	- 5.80
11	Brazil	9,029	10,868	1.30	+ 20.4
12	Germany	9,347	9,819	1.20	+ 5.00
13	United Kingdom	9,186	9,467	1.20	+ 3.10
14	Nepal	9,621	8,920	1.10	- 7.30
15	Iran	6,982	8,744	1.10	+ 25.2
16	France	8,232	8,297	1.00	+ 0.80
17	Hong Kong	8,032	8,026	1.00	- 0.10
18	Indonesia	7,131	7,670	0.90	+ 7.60
19	Nigeria	7,028	7,316	0.90	+ 4.10
20	Thailand	7,626	7,314	0.90	- 4.10
21	Malaysia	6,743	6,791	0.80	+ 0.70
22	Colombia	6,295	6,543	0.80	+ 3.90
23	Venezuela	6,281	6,158	0.80	- 2.00
24	Kuwait	3,722	5,115	0.60	+ 37.4
<b>25</b>	Spain	4,924	5,033	0.60	+ 2.20

*Note.* From *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* (p. 5), by Chow, P and Bhandari, R., 2013, New York: Institute of International Education. Copyright 2013 by Institute of International Education, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) explained that international students' create gain in a short and long term for institutions and nations. In the short term they generate revenue, and in the long term they are a skilled labor force to supplement the decreasing and aging population. According to *Science and Engineering Indicators 2012* report, in 2008 nearly half of the

engineers, mathematicians, and computer scientists with doctorates working in the United States are foreign born. On average, 30% of the engineers, mathematicians, computer scientists, and physicists with a master's degree working in the United States are also foreign born (National Science Foundation, 2012). Many of these individuals came to the United States as international students and upon completion of studies remained in the United States to work (Alberts & Hazen, 2005; Finn, 2007). Some of those international students have even “founded many of America's most innovative companies, including Intel and Google” (Anderson, 2005, p. 7). Table 4 displays the percentages of full-time science and engineering workers who are foreign-born, by occupation and highest degree level.

Table 4

*Percentages of Science and Engineering Workers who are Foreign-Born, by Occupation and Highest Degree Level: 2008*

Approximate percentage	Doctoral	Master's
	%	%
Engineers	50.0	29.5
Mathematicians and Computer Scientists	45.0	37.0
Physicists		25.0

*Note.* From *Science and Engineering Indicators, 2012* (p. 48), by National Science Foundation, 2012, Arlington VA: National Science Foundation. Copyright 2012 by National Science Foundation. Adopted with permission.

**Benefits of diversity in the United States.** Higher education institutions in the United States, regardless of size and location, seek internationalization of their campuses to achieve greater diversity (Lobnibe, 2009), not only for their campuses but also for their surrounding communities (Cudmore, 2005). Higher education institutions can benefit from diversity on campus in many ways. Gramsci (1973) and Hall (1996) stress the importance of cultural diversity in classes which enable students to understand the world around them. Today's modern

world requires education systems that prepare students to function well in global environments. Having students from different countries and cultures on campuses provides them with firsthand experience to interact and work in multicultural settings. Furthermore, diversified classrooms enable students to generate ideas and opinions that increase the knowledge available in in-class discussions and group meetings (Taras & Rowney, 2007). Diverse student populations provide a social environment to raise intercultural development, reciprocal tolerance, and the development of multicultural individuals (Adler, 1974; Horne, 2003; Volet, 1999). Hamrick (1999) argues that interaction of domestic students with international students and scholars builds a sense of global community.

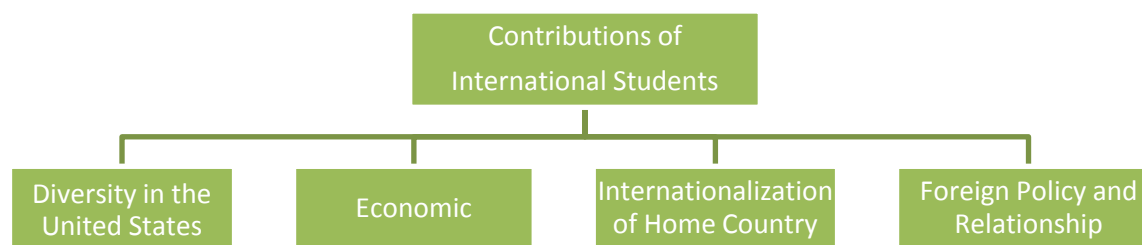
**Economic benefits.** As the world's economy becomes globalized, the internationalization of education also increases rapidly (Alidou, Caffentzis, & Federici, 2002). The increase in international students has created significant economic benefit for the destination countries. "Cross border student exchange" (Larsen, Martin, & Morris, 2002, p. 2) has become a major export industry in traditional host countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In 2013, international students contributed nearly \$24 billion to the overall United States economy in tuition, living expenses, and related costs (IIE, 2013). Studies on economic contributions of international students to the United States show that fields such as science, technology, and engineering have greatly benefited from the labor supply provided by international students (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Mattoo, 2005).

The economic impact of international students does not stop upon their return to their home countries (IIE, 1997). Some universities receive private donations from international alumni that protect the institution from unstable market (Bassinger, 1999; Marginson, 2006).

Funk (2001) further added that international alumni, in their home country, not only provide student referrals but also provide a significant amount of donations (p. 265).

**Internationalization of the home countries.** Internationalized universities increase “international and intercultural knowledge and skills of students and promote research which addresses cultural, economic, environmental, and political interdependence” (Knight & de Wit, 1995, p. 23). Students who choose to return to their home countries bring the technical knowledge, beliefs, and values with them, which set a foundation for the cultural exportation of western values. International students that have studied in a western education system influence educational, political, and economic policies and practices when they return home (Nye, 2004). One of the purposes of internationalization is to prepare people to function in an international and culturally diverse environment.

**Foreign policy and relationship.** One of the most important benefits that the United States gains by educating international students is creating generations of people who may be the future leaders of their home countries, likely enabling the United States to benefit in both foreign policy and national security. However, international students and scholars are the most undervalued foreign policy assets in the United States (Johnson, 2003). Many international students return to their home countries and become natural ambassadors by promoting an understanding of the United States. These students often work hard to influence policies at home, and continue to maintain their networks in the United States. According to Johnson (2003) foreign students and scholars are “part of America’s investment in foreign policy” (p. 1). Johnson (2003) had earlier claimed that international students return to their home countries to “become ambassadors for American values democracy and the free market” (p. 4). Figure 2 illustrates the contribution of international students in the United States.



*Figure 2.* Contributions of international students in the United States.

### **Motivations to Study in the United States**

The literature on college choice behaviors indicated that students from different academic, socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds exhibit different college choice behaviors (Freeman, 1997; Hurtado, Inkelas, Briggs, & Rhee, 1997). There are several reasons that international students prefer to go to the United States for their studies in higher education institutions (IIE, 2004; NAFSA 2005; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). These include location, size, safety, financial aid, quality education, better research facilities, and ease of access.

Many families are involved in the student decision making processes. Parents often feel more comfortable sending their children to an institution abroad where they know someone who lives nearby. Proximity of relatives to colleges and universities is seen as a benefit and a factor influencing students' decisions. Factors in the home country include economic issues, lack of quality higher education institutions, status of living in a new country, influence of friends, political instability, and importance of studying in an English speaking country, which is desired and highly regarded in the home country (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Marginson & Sawir, 2005; McMahon, 1992).

**High international regard for American higher education institutions.** The American education system is considered to be the best by many countries in the world, in terms of “quality of faculty and the quality of curriculum” (Altbach, Gumport, & Johnstone, 2001, p. 3). The U.S. higher education institutions are perceived to be better than the institutions in their home countries. A study conducted by Jacobson (2005) explained that prestige of the university, program options, and costs were significant factors in college choice behaviors.

Selectivity of higher education institutions and the reputation of their faculty members bring full-bright international students to universities in the United States (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). International students often pay extra attention to an institution’s rank (Moogan, Baron, & Harris, 1999). The image of an institution to include beliefs, ideas, facilities, and professors can have a strong influence on the student’s decision when selecting a higher education institution (Bourke, 2000; Mazzarol 1998; Qureshi, 1995).

Many international students come to the United States to study believing that the study will increase their academic growth. Specific programs available in an institution may play a strong role in pulling the international students to the institutions. Program suitability is important in the university selection process. Such program evaluation includes “international recognition cost of education and availability of financial aid” (Maringe, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, the ideal of the “American Dream” concept is still valid (Bornsztain, 1987). Bornsztain stated that international students see America as a place where limitless opportunity, culture sharing, and diversity exist.

**Costs.** The cost of attending a college is one of the main factors affecting students’ college and university choice behaviors. According to Bornsztain (1987), many international students were not able to attend the college they preferred because the colleges did not offer

financial assistance and the tuition was higher than they could afford. Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) stated that international students like to take advantage of available scholarships, grants, and other financial aid opportunities. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) further explained that geographic proximity reduces the travel and information gathering costs and may motivate students to study in countries near their own. They use the number of Canadian and Mexican students studying in the United States as evidence.

Although the cost of an international education can be significant, many students still choose to study abroad (Altbach, 1991; Hewitt & Nassar, 2005). For example, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found that lower tuition and fees are not as significant a factor for Asian students in making selection decisions about overseas institutions, as they are for students of other nationalities. Choudaha and Chang (2012) stated that financial resources of prospective students are significant in making decisions about studying abroad, but they differ in regards to nationalities. According to this report, “while 60% of Chinese respondents had adequate financial resources to afford an overseas education, only 27% of Indian respondents did so” (p. 13). That is, finding a scholarship to cover tuition and fees may be more important for Indian students than it is for Chinese students, but overall, part-time work is more significant for Asian students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Of all international students during the 2012-2013 academic year, approximately 64 % of the students funded their expenses through personal and family funds and approximately 21 % of the students had their expenses funded through the United States college or university (IIE, 2013).

**Learning English.** Fluency in English is an asset in the job market worldwide. Breton (1978) explained:

The acquisition of a second language requires time, effort and money. Since these resources are not abundant, they have economic value, or scarcity. The benefits resulting

from knowledge of a second language are spread over time. Learning a second language therefore is an investment or the acquisition of an asset. More specifically, it can be said that a second (third or fourth) language is a form of human capital, capable, like all capital, of being increased or depreciating-although, unlike material goods, it does not deteriorate with use-or even of becoming outdated. ( p. 1-2)

The ability to communicate across languages is essential in interconnected and interdependent world economies. Many international students come to the United States to become fluent in English. The importance of being fluent in English is realized by students since English is the preferred language in the global economy and in the international community (Crawford III, 2001; Hwang, 1998).

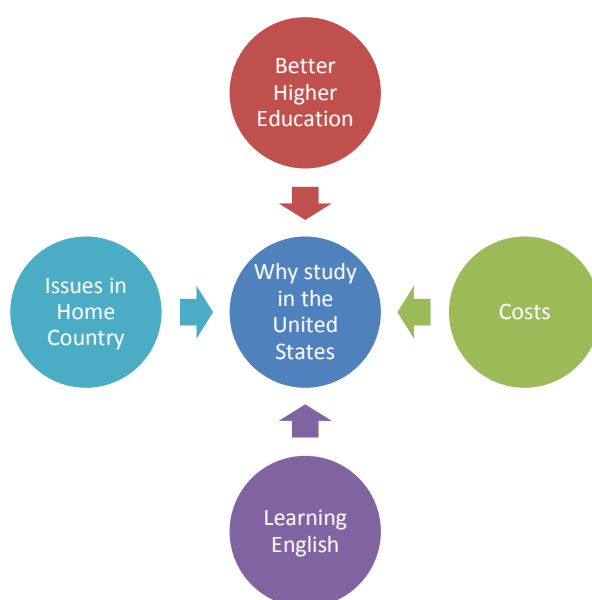
Similarities in languages also play a significant role in attracting international students to come to the United States. The similarities reduce the stress on students since they do not have to learn a completely new language and can immediately start their studies (Racine, Villeneuve, & Theriault, 2003).

**Issues within the home country.** Political instability and pessimism about the home country's higher education system, prejudices, and barriers to advancement are other reasons students go to the United States to pursue a degree (Hwang, 1998). Some students choose to study in the United States to escape political and economic difficulties in their home country (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Other factors such as a lack of scientific education opportunities, high secondary education completion rates with limited availability of post-secondary education, and high educational expenditures force students to go overseas to study (Cummings, 1984; Lee & Tan, 1984). Some nations prefer sending their students abroad for an education, instead of investing in an education infrastructure in their own countries (McMahon, 1992). For example, current restructuring of political systems in the Middle East has caused many students from that region to go to the United States to receive an education. The Open Doors 2012 report showed that the number of Iraqi graduate students in the United States increased by 71% over the



previous academic year, comprising an overall increase of 31% (IIE, 2012). Altbach (2004) further elaborated that: Discriminatory admissions policies, such as preferences given in Malaysia to students of Malay background as opposed to ethnic Chinese students, drive students to study abroad (p. 3). He further adds that, “for example, Iran was once one of the top sending countries, but since the downfall of the Shah, virtually no students have come from there”. (p. 2)

Figure 3 illustrates the main reasons that international students prefer to go to U.S. institutions of higher education to study.



*Figure 3.* Main reasons international students prefer to go to the United States to study.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons international students study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study explored 1) the motivations of international students to study abroad, 2) what attracts them to the United States, and 3) how they select institutions of higher education in the United States.

For the first, quantitative phase (Phase I) of this study, the guiding research question was: “What are the factors influencing international students’ decisions to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States?” The specific research sub-questions for Phase I were:

1. What motivates international students to study abroad?
2. What attracts international students to the United States?
3. How do international students select institutions of higher education in the United States?

For the second, qualitative phase (Phase II) of this study the overarching research questions were:

1. How do the selected factors identified in Phase I contribute to the presence of international students in higher education institutions in the United States?
2. How can the data obtained in the quantitative phase be explained?

The research method, selection of participants, data collection, and analysis techniques were determined as a result of the study’s purpose (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell (2003), “the research problem, the personal experiences of the researcher and the audiences for whom the report will be written affect the choice of the approach that will be used” (p. 21). The research problem and personal experiences I encountered in my research were the determinants

for the mixed methodology of this study. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) and Creswell (2005, 2009) defined mixed method as a procedure to collect, analyze, and mix both quantitative and qualitative data in the research process to better understand the research problem and to draw inferences. Mixing two methodologies provided the researcher with a more robust analysis as both methodologies complement each other (Green & Caracelli, 1997; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Utilizing two methodologies helped with further understanding and clarification of the research problem that a single methodological approach may not provide (Creswell, 2009). Creswell and Clark (2007) further explained that “the combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides a more complete picture by noting trends and generalizations as well as in-depth knowledge of participants’ perspectives” (p. 33).

A sequential explanatory mixed method research design was utilized to further “elaborate on the findings of one method with another” (Creswell, 2003, p. 16). Through a two-phase research design, the data collection began with collecting and analyzing quantitative information which then was followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. An overall analysis and interpretation of the data was conducted at the end of the research study. The initial phase was designed to address the research question. The second phase was designed to follow and expand on the results of Phase I for more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The results from the quantitative data were used to make decisions about the sampling and data collection in Phase II. At the end of data collection, I interpreted the results to determine how qualitative data results enhanced the understanding of the quantitative results.

### **Sequential Explanatory Mixed Method Design**

Sequential explanatory mixed method research design (Creswell, 2003, 2005, 2009) is a two-phase research design. It began with collecting quantitative data followed by the analysis of

this data. A quantitative descriptive method was appropriate for this study to answer narrow and specific ‘what’ questions (Creswell, 2009) and provided an overall understanding of the variables in the study (Merriam, 2009). The second phase begins with qualitative interviews, informed by the quantitative data results. In this study, the researcher surveyed international students in two different institution types. The survey instrument (in Appendix F) asked about the factors influencing their college and university choices in the United States.

### **Phase I: Quantitative data collection.**

***Setting.*** This study was conducted on the campuses of a four-year private university and a four-year public university in South Texas. A web-based survey was sent via SurveyMonkey® asking current international students to complete the questions in the survey.

***Participants.*** Participation selection was based on selection criteria appropriate to answer the study’s purpose. Participants were drawn from two different institutions in South Texas: a four-year private university and a four-year public university.

***Sampling.*** A convenience sample was used for quantitative data collection in Phase I (Creswell, 2012). I selected participants because they were “willing and available to be studied” (p. 145). This sampling involved using the people who were the most available, or the most willing to participate in the study.

***Selection criteria.*** The participants in this study were international students on F-1 or J-1 visas that had completed at least one semester of academic study at their respective institutions.

***Criterion 1.*** The first criterion for participation was that the student needs to have an F-1 or J-1 student visa. These are the visa categories held by most international students (U.S. Department of State, 2012).

**Criterion 2.** The second criterion that was used for selecting participants was that the international student must have completed at least one academic semester. This particular point was important because at this point, the students would have personal experience living and studying abroad, upon which they could be reflective of but still remember their decision making processes.

If the selection criteria were met, participants were first asked to complete demographic information and then asked to respond to the survey with questions about the factors influencing their motivation to study at higher education institutions in the United States.

**Instrument.** The instrument for this study included factors that Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified as being significant when making a decision for a host country or host institution. I designed this survey instrument as a five point Likert-scale survey after a review of the literature (in Appendices E & F). The survey consisted of four sections. The first section included criteria questions to determine whether the participant fits the definition of an international student, as operationally defined for this study. The second section was designed to collect demographic information. The third section included the survey questions to determine the push and pull factors influencing their choices for a host country or host institution. The fourth section included semi-structured and open-ended questions to gather further data on their motivation to study abroad, to study in the United States, and to study at their current host institution. The final question of this section asked participants to indicate their willingness and availability to have a face-to-face interview to further expand on their responses and provide their e-mail address or telephone number to make arrangements for the interview.

**Data collection procedures.** International student offices in each of the two institutions were contacted with a request to send the survey to their international student populations. The

selection criteria questions determined if the students fit the criteria of an international student. If the students did not fit the criteria of an international student, they were not required to complete the rest of the questionnaire. At the end of the survey, they were asked whether they were willing to participate in a face-to-face interview with me to further elaborate on the responses to the quantitative survey.

**Data analysis procedures.** The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the factors that have the highest influence on international students' choices in determining whether to study at a particular institution of higher education in the United States. *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS, 19) was utilized to analyze the quantitative data. Overall responses were analyzed through frequency of the factors affecting their choices, to determine the overarching factors.

**Phase II: Qualitative data collection.** Phase II began to build a more in-depth understanding of the responses from the quantitative data. International students indicating their willingness to participate in this second phase were contacted to schedule a time and location to meet with me for a face-to-face interview.

**Setting.** After identifying the willing and able participants as indicated by their responses, I contacted eight participants to determine the best possible day, time, and location for each interview. The interviews were conducted at a place convenient to participants, at on campus locations.

**Participants.** Four participants from each institution who had completed the survey and indicated their willingness and availability were contacted for face-to-face interviews.

***Selection criteria.*** Only criterion for the selection of participants was to ensure the diversity of the participants interviewed. The researcher ensured the diversity through selecting participants from different regional cultures, genders, and educational levels for the interviews.

***Sampling.*** The use of purposeful sampling criteria was considered most appropriate for the qualitative research since it includes participants most relevant to the study. According to Merriam (1998), purposeful sampling is used when, “the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and, therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61).

***Data collection procedures.*** Eight participants fitting the criteria of an international student, who also indicated their willingness and availability, were scheduled for one hour, in depth, face-to-face interviews with me. Interviews took place at a location of each participant’s choosing, and each interview was digitally recorded. During the interview process, I had introductory, casual conversation with the participants prior to starting the actual interviews, explaining the purpose of the study, and providing them with consent forms. I continued with a set of guided interview questions and adjusted his inquiry as needed in order to better understand the ideas expressed by the participants and to draw out more detail in their descriptions.

The purpose of guided interviews is to elicit the participant’s worldview. The researcher develops categories or topics to explore but remains open to pursuing topics that the participant brings up....The balance of talk, then, is in favor of the participant (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 181).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, without identifying the participant.

I further observed the body language of the participants during the interview and took notes on my observations as soon as possible after the interview. The purpose of body language observation was to understand participant comfort level and to see if there were any culture-specific cues that may help analyze and triangulate the interview data.

***Data analysis procedures.*** Phase II began when students participated in face-to-face, in-depth interviews with me. After the interviews, the data was transcribed. The process of transcribing allowed “the researcher to become familiar with the data” (Reissman, 1993, p. 26). I then created Microsoft Word files and, later, Microsoft Excel files for further coding and analysis. The interview data and the notes taken after the interview were analyzed through the use of the meaning of analysis context, as the unit of analysis, for coding. This means that “the data was not coded sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, but coded for meaning” (Mayring, 2000, p. 43).

I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) step-by-step guidelines. These guidelines include familiarizing oneself with the data and generating initial codes. I also read through each transcript to immerse myself in the data, reviewed themes, and defined and named themes. I continued this process until categories and themes emerged from the data yielded by the participants. “The procedure is completed when theoretical saturation is achieved” (Payne & Payne, 2004, p. 102). Figure 4 provides a visual model for mixed methods sequential explanatory design procedures.



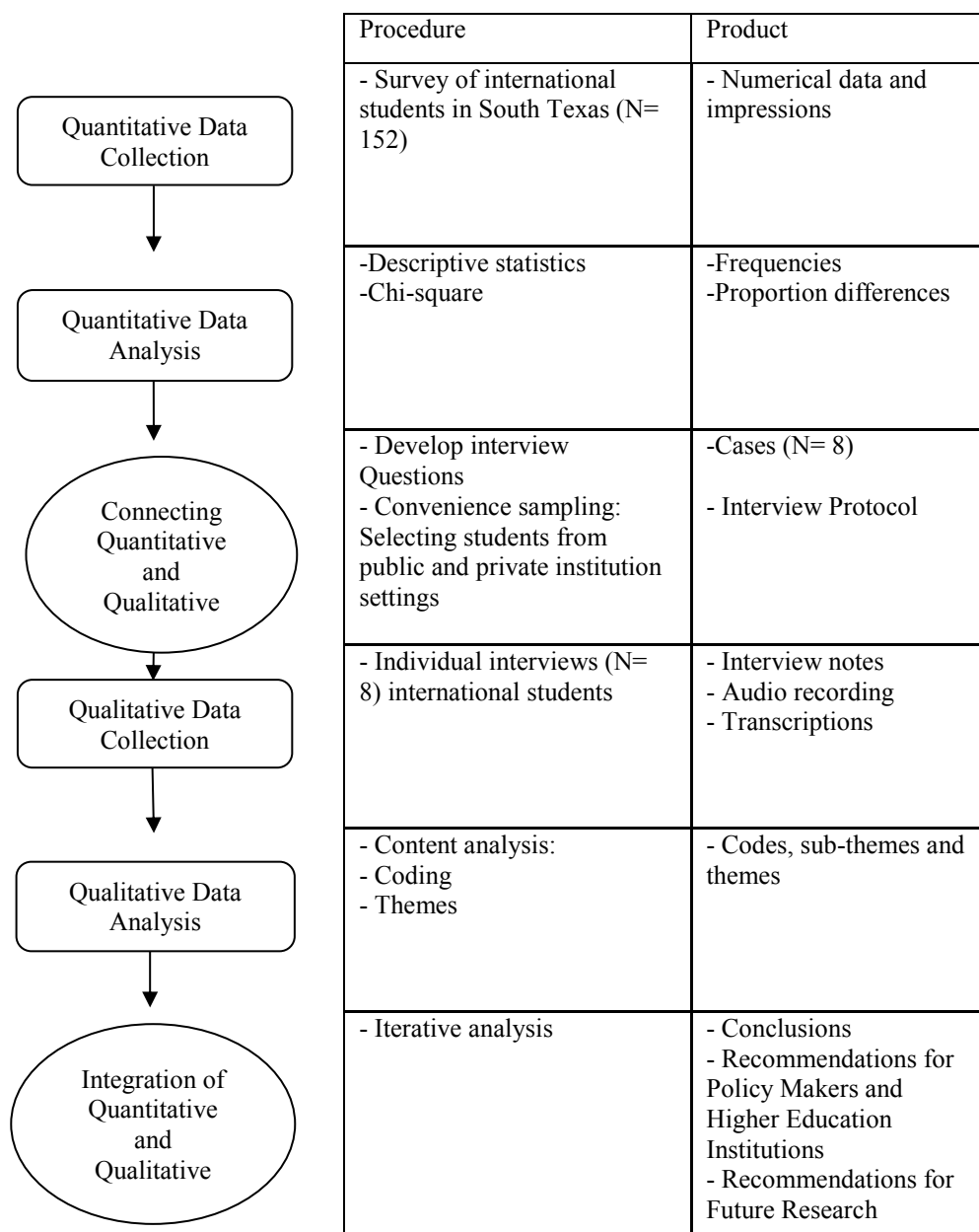


Figure 4. Visual model for mixed methods sequential explanatory design procedures.

### Role of the Researcher

Creswell (1994), Lincoln and Guba (1985), and Merriam (2002) explain that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in qualitative research. The researcher, as the tool, is a unique characteristic of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Eisner (1997) stated that “when we are conducting qualitative research, we display our

signatures” (p. 36). It is therefore important to identify the role and the background of the researcher.

As a current international student, I acknowledge that I relied on my experience as a current international student to produce a deeper understanding of data and a higher level of analysis. I went through the process of studying abroad in the United States and my experiences provided me with a stronger understanding of the motivations of the international students when selecting to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. I was able to empathize with the participants as they struggled to “make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world” (Creswell, 1994, p. 145). Furthermore, when interviewing the participants, I was able to establish rapport, which helped me to collect more in-depth data.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Prior to filling out the questionnaire and again before the interviews, the participants were provided with consent forms outlining how confidentiality was maintained and that they could discontinue the survey and/or the interview at any time. They further were made aware of the foreseeable risks or discomforts they may face as a result of their participation.

To minimize risks, I was sensitive to the cues provided by the participants during the interview process and offered breaks. The interviewees were not forced to answer any question that was beyond their comfort levels. They were free to stop the interview at any time. I was aware of the need to build empathy and demonstrate respect for participants. I attempted to create an atmosphere where the participants were fully aware of their rights and felt comfortable asking questions during or after the interview.

Privacy of the interviewees was of the utmost importance to me. Privacy ensures that the individuals are protected from lowered self-esteem, embarrassment, unpleasant experience, and

threats of integrity (Kelman, 1997). To ensure privacy and confidentiality, all candidates were given pseudonyms. In addition to pseudonyms, all printed documents regarding the subjects were kept in a secure location, under lock and key, and electronic documents were password protected on my personal computer. Only the advisor and I had access to secured documents. All documents will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Trustworthiness is an important aspect of research. Through explaining and clarifying the process, I established myself as a credible, reliable, and dependable author. “Truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality” are four criteria that will help “reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of a research study” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 80). These criteria can be used in both qualitative and quantitative research traditions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined separate strategies to measure the criteria for each type of research. Six techniques that can be used for establishing credibility in qualitative research are “prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, triangulation, member checking, and auditing” (Padgett, 1998, p. 6). For this study, triangulation and member checking techniques were used to establish credibility.

Knafl and Breitmayer (1989) explained triangulation as “the process of using different data collecting methods to obtain the same results” (p. 24). They further identified four types of triangulation: “triangulation of data methods, triangulation of data sources, theoretical triangulation, and triangulation of investigators” (p. 24). This research used triangulation of data methods which included collecting data through a survey, open-ended interviews, and field notes. When the interviews were completed, I provided the transcription to the interviewees to check for accuracy, establishing member-check.

**Limitations**

This study had the following limitations:

1. This study only included two higher education institutions in South Texas.
2. The participants were international students with limited and varied English language proficiency.
3. Only the participants who expressed willingness and availability were interviewed.
4. Due to the nature of convenience sampling, the sample may not be representative of the entire population (Creswell, 2003).

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited to international students that have completed at least one semester in their current institution in the United States and were on F-1 and J-1 student visas.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the reasons that motivate international students to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study explored (a) the motivations of international students to study abroad, (b) what attracts them to the United States, and (c) how they select institutions of higher education in the United States.

For the first, quantitative phase (Phase I) of this study, the guiding research question was: “What are the factors influencing international students’ decisions to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States?”

The specific research sub-questions for Phase I were:

1. What motivates international students to study abroad?
2. What attracts international students to the United States?
3. How do international students select institutions of higher education in the United States?

For the second, qualitative phase (Phase II) of this study, the main research questions were:

1. How do the selected factors—employment opportunities, increased income potential, benefits of having a foreign degree, family encouragement, quality of life and education, and application process—contribute to the presence of international students in the higher education institutions in the United States?
2. How can the results of the quantitative phase be explained?

The research sub-questions for Phase II were based on the results of the quantitative phase of the study.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section, Phase I, reports on the quantitative analysis; the second section, Phase II, reports on the qualitative analysis; and the last section is a summary of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses.

### **Phase I**

Phase I reports on the quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics to determine the factors that have the most significant influence on international students' choices in determining to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. Overall responses were analyzed through frequency of choices to determine the major factors. Frequency count is a way to compute how many people fit into a category (Fink, 2006). Open-ended questions were also included in the survey to obtain additional and possibly detailed insights about the participants and their responses.

**Descriptive analysis.** A total of 600 surveys were e-mailed in the spring 2013 semester to current international students who were enrolled and had completed at least one semester in their institutions,. Out of the 600 e-mails sent, 183 responses were received, resulting in a 30.5% response rate. Of these, 152 of the participants were eligible for further analysis. E-mail lists were generated by the international student offices at the institutions. Some e-mails were returned due to incorrect e-mail addresses. Consequently, the response rate was 25.3%. The statistical results were used to establish reliability and validity of the study. Although subjects were international students and English was the second language for most of them, surveys were written only in English since the participants were current students and had completed at least one semester at their respective universities in the United States.

Of the majority of the students who participated in this study, 139 (91.4%) held F-1 student visas. Of the 152 respondents, 83 (54.6%) were male students, and 103 (67.8%) were

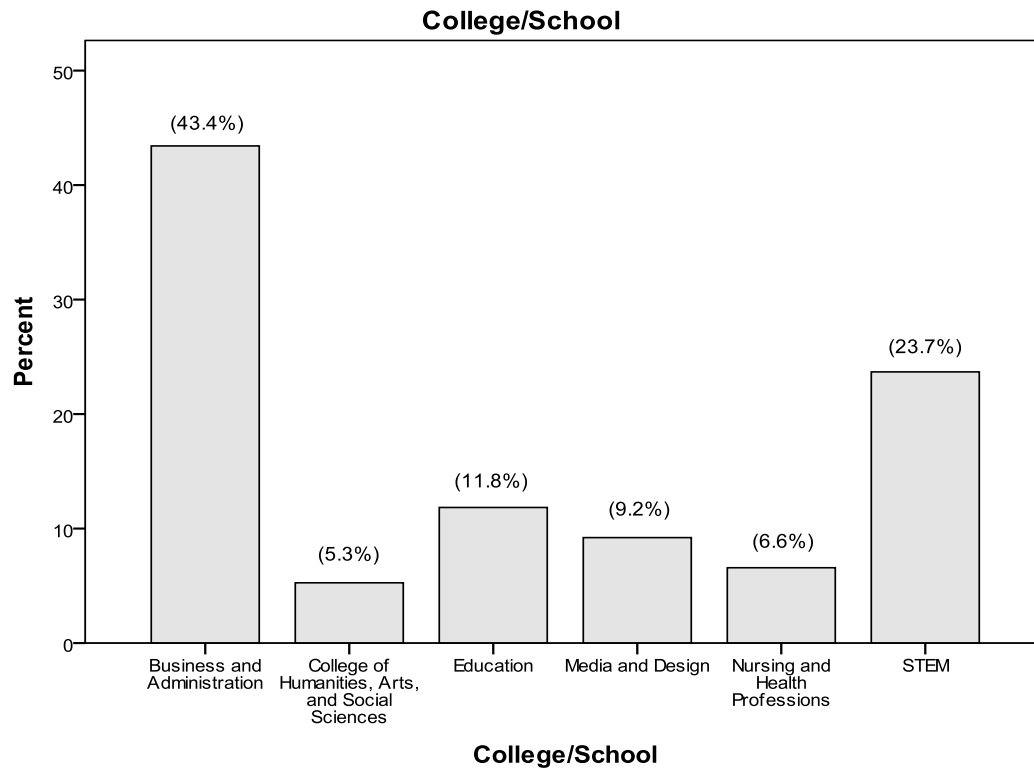
studying at a four-year, private university. Nearly 42% of the participants identified themselves as undergraduate students. Some participants declined to respond to several demographic questions and left the sections blank. Table 5 displays the demographic characteristics of participants including gender, level of study, type of institution, and visa type.

Table 5

*Description of the Survey Sample's Demographic Characteristics*

		Level of Study				School Type		
		Under-Graduate	Graduate	Doctoral	Total	Public	Private	Total
MALE	Count	35	34	14	83	34	49	83
	%	42.2	41.0	16.9	54.6	41.0	59.0	54.6
FEMALE	Count	28	32	9	69	15	54	69
	%	40.6	46.4	13.0	45.4	21.7	78.3	45.4
Total	Count	63	66	23	152	49	103	152
	%	41.4	43.4	15.1	100	32.2	67.8	100

Figure 5 displays the top fields of study for the respondents. Business and administration (business, accounting, and finance) remained the first choice, with almost half (43.4%) the participants studying in these fields. STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematic fields, were second choice with about a quarter (23.7%) of the participants studying in these fields. Other international student majors included education, media and design, and nursing and health professions.



*Figure 5.* Percentage of participants within fields of study.

Table 6 demonstrates the nationality distributions of the participants. China, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Turkey comprised the majority of the participants for this study (66.5%). Other nationalities (33.5%) included Canada, Philippines, India, Iran, Russia, Vietnam, and others contributed less than 1% of the participants each.



Table 6

*All the Countries Represented in the Survey*

Countries	Frequency	Percent
Turkey	39	25.7
Mexico	22	14.5
China	17	11.2
Saudi Arabia	14	9.2
Taiwan	9	5.9
Canada	4	2.6
India	4	2.6
Iran	4	2.6
Vietnam	4	2.6
Bangladesh	3	2.0
Philippines	3	2.0
Russia	3	2.0
Czech Republic	2	1.3
Japan	2	1.3
Libya	2	1.3
Ukraine	2	1.3
Albania	1	.7
Australia	1	.7
Azerbaijan	1	.7
Belgium	1	.7
Brazil	1	.7
Dominican Republic	1	.7
Germany	1	.7
Guatemala	1	.7
Indonesia	1	.7
Jamaica	1	.7
Jordan	1	.7
Korea	1	.7
Nepal	1	.7
Salvador	1	.7
Slovenia	1	.7
Spain	1	.7
Thailand	1	.7
Venezuela	1	.7
Total	152	100.0

**Inferential analysis.** This section provides an overview of the responses for each question and then provides comparative data separately on gender, type of institution, and the

level of study for each question. The five level Likert responses were divided into the three categories of important, neutral, and less important.

**Question 1. What motivates international students to study abroad?** Table 7 shows the motivating factors encouraging international students to study abroad. The benefits of a foreign degree, employment and future income opportunities, the desire to speak better English, and family encouragement were the most important factors influencing international students to study abroad. In this study, dissatisfaction with political instabilities, economic conditions, and quality of higher education in the home country were not significant variables motivating international students to study abroad.

Table 7

*International Students' Motivation Factors to Study Abroad*

	Important	Neutral	Less Important
Percentages	%	%	%
Benefits of foreign degree	80.9	13.2	5.9
Employment opportunities	78.9	13.2	7.9
Better in English	76.3	15.1	8.6
Higher future income	73.7	19.1	7.2
Family encouragements	63.2	24.3	12.5
Economic condition at home	34.9	24.3	40.8
Poor quality of education	32.2	27.6	40.1
Political instability	31.6	27.0	41.4
Country's problems	19.1	17.8	63.2
No scholarship or financial aid	17.1	17.8	65.1
Admission difficulty at home	16.4	21.1	62.5
Ethnic and religious intolerance	14.5	19.1	66.4
Nothing to do at home country	9.9	17.1	73.0

*Comparison by gender.* In this part of the analysis, the survey answers were investigated for gender differences. A significant difference between genders was found in the importance of the benefits of obtaining a foreign degree. A high percentage of males reported the benefits of

obtaining a foreign degree as important. Table 8 summarizes the comparative analysis of each response by gender.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between males and females. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in the proportion who reported the benefits of obtaining a foreign degree ( $p = .041$ ) as important. The proportion of students who reported this as important for their decision to study abroad was higher for males than females and a higher percentage of females reported this as neutral. Figure 6 compares the importance of benefits of obtaining a foreign degree between genders.

Table 8

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Male and Female Students*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
M: Male F: Female	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Percentage within gender	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Benefits of foreign degree	88.0	72.5	7.2	20.3	4.8	7.2	6.377	.041
Employment opportunities	81.9	75.4	9.6	17.4	8.4	7.2	1.994	.369
Better in English	80.7	71.0	14.5	15.9	4.8	13.0	3.500	.174
Higher future income	74.7	72.5	19.3	18.8	6.0	8.7	.401	.818
Family encouragements	66.3	59.4	18.1	31.9	15.7	8.7	4.695	.096
Economic condition at home	32.5	37.7	31.3	15.9	36.1	46.4	4.917	.086
Poor quality of education	34.9	29.0	32.5	21.7	32.5	49.3	4.635	.099
Political instability	28.9	34.8	30.1	23.2	41.0	42.0	1.092	.579
Country's problems	16.9	21.7	20.5	14.5	62.7	63.8	1.237	.539
No scholarship or financial aid	19.3	14.5	20.5	14.5	60.2	71.0	1.936	.380
Admission difficulty at home	18.1	14.5	26.5	14.5	55.4	71.0	4.342	.114
Ethnic and religious intolerance	15.7	13.0	20.5	17.4	63.9	69.6	.552	.759
Nothing to do at home country	9.6	10.1	15.7	18.8	74.7	71.0	.302	.860

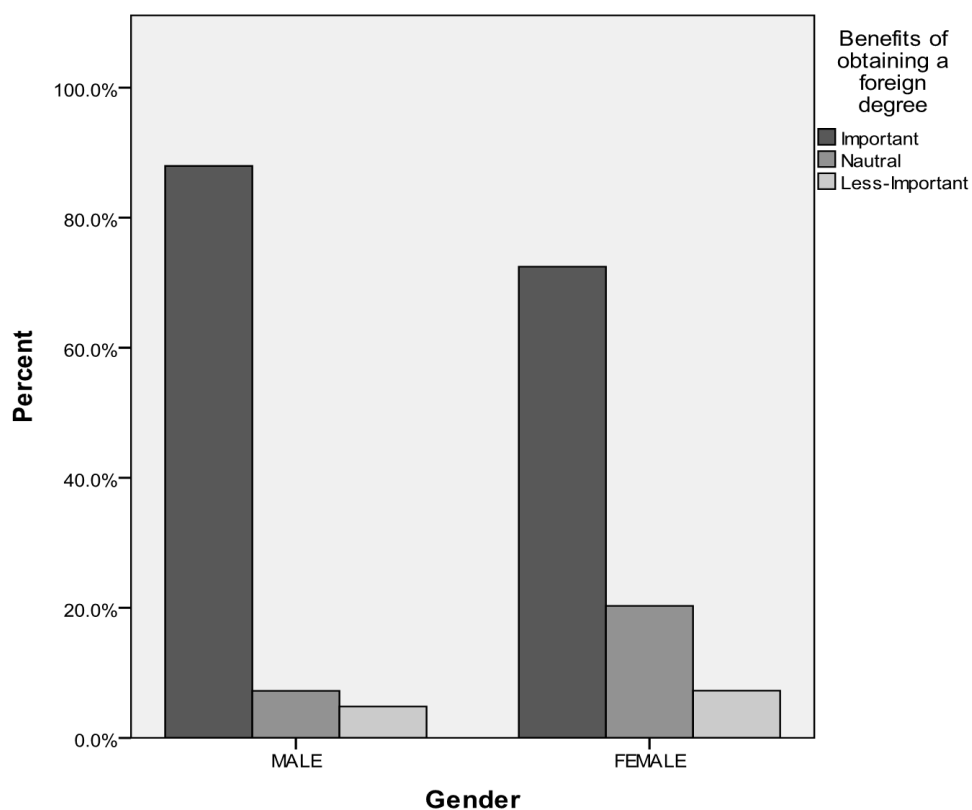


Figure 6. Importance of obtaining a foreign degree by gender.

*Comparison by type of institution.* In this section of the analysis, the survey answers were investigated for type of institution differences. Table 9 shows responses of students studying at two different types of institutions: public and private. A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between institution types. The results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the institution types ( $p > .05$ ) in the proportion reporting importance of these factors in their decision to study abroad.

Table 9

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Public and Private University Students.*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
Pu: Public Pr: Private	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr		
Percentage within institution type	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Benefits of foreign degree	83.7	79.6	14.3	12.6	2.0	7.8	1.976	.372
Employment opportunities	81.6	77.7	14.3	12.6	4.1	9.7	1.468	.480
Better in English	83.7	72.8	12.2	16.5	4.1	10.7	2.601	.272
Higher future income	77.6	71.8	18.4	19.4	4.1	8.7	1.161	.560
Family encouragements	59.2	65.0	30.6	21.4	10.2	13.6	1.654	.437
Economic condition at home	28.6	37.9	30.6	21.4	40.8	40.8	1.990	.370
Poor quality of education at home	40.8	28.2	30.6	26.2	28.6	45.6	4.292	.117
Political instability	26.5	34.0	36.7	22.3	36.7	43.7	3.525	.172
Country's problems	12.2	22.3	22.4	15.5	65.3	62.1	2.717	.257
No scholarship or financial aid	18.4	16.5	26.5	13.6	55.1	69.9	4.313	.116
Admission difficulty at home	20.4	14.6	18.4	22.3	61.2	63.1	.956	.620
Ethnic and religious intolerance	18.4	12.6	16.3	20.4	65.3	67.0	1.059	.589
Nothing to do at home country	8.2	10.7	20.4	15.5	71.4	73.8	.700	.705

*Comparison by level of study.* In this portion of the analysis, the survey answers were investigated for level of study differences. This part of the study breaks down the motivating factors by educational level: Undergraduate (U), Graduate (G), and Doctoral (D). Although these were the top ranking for each higher education level, the percentage of importance differed among undergraduates, graduates, and doctoral students. Overall, graduate students had the highest percentages, followed by undergraduate and doctoral students. Table 10 displays the responses of the students for each educational level.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors among level of education. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference among the level of education in proportion to those who reported employment opportunities and higher future income ( $p = .027$ ) as an important factor. The proportion of students who reported

these as important on their decision to study abroad were higher for graduate students and lower for doctoral students. Figure 7 compares the importance of employment opportunities among different levels of education and Figure 8 compares the importance of increased income potential among different levels of education.

Table 10

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Undergraduate, Graduate, and Doctoral Students.*

	Important			Neutral			Less Important			Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
U: Undergraduate G: Graduate D: Doctoral	U	G	D	U	G	D	U	G	D		
Percentage within level of education	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Benefits of foreign degree	81.0	84.8	69.6	12.7	13.6	13.0	6.3	1.5	17.4	7.808	.099
Employment opportunities	76.2	86.4	65.2	19.0	7.6	13.0	4.8	6.1	21.7	10.942	.027
Better in English	81.0	72.7	73.9	11.1	21.2	8.7	7.9	6.1	17.4	5.830	.212
Higher future income	74.6	80.3	52.2	20.6	15.2	26.1	4.8	4.5	21.7	10.928	.027
Family encouragements	68.3	60.6	56.5	15.9	33.3	21.7	15.9	6.1	21.7	8.933	.063
Economic condition at home	41.3	27.3	39.1	23.8	25.8	21.7	34.9	47.0	39.1	3.243	.518
Poor quality of education at home	39.7	24.2	34.8	28.6	30.3	17.4	31.7	45.5	47.8	5.411	.248
Political instability	36.5	28.8	26.1	28.6	28.8	17.4	34.9	42.4	56.5	3.714	.446
Country's problems	22.2	19.7	8.7	20.6	13.6	21.7	57.1	66.7	69.6	3.408	.492
No scholarship or financial aid	20.6	16.7	8.7	19.0	18.2	13.0	60.3	65.2	78.3	2.604	.626
Ethnic and religious intolerance	14.3	13.6	30.4	20.6	22.7	17.4	65.1	63.6	52.2	3.945	.414
Admission difficulty at home	15.9	13.6	13.0	20.6	21.2	8.7	63.5	65.2	78.3	2.269	.686
Nothing to do at home country	11.1	9.1	8.7	12.7	21.2	17.4	76.2	69.7	73.9	1.727	.786

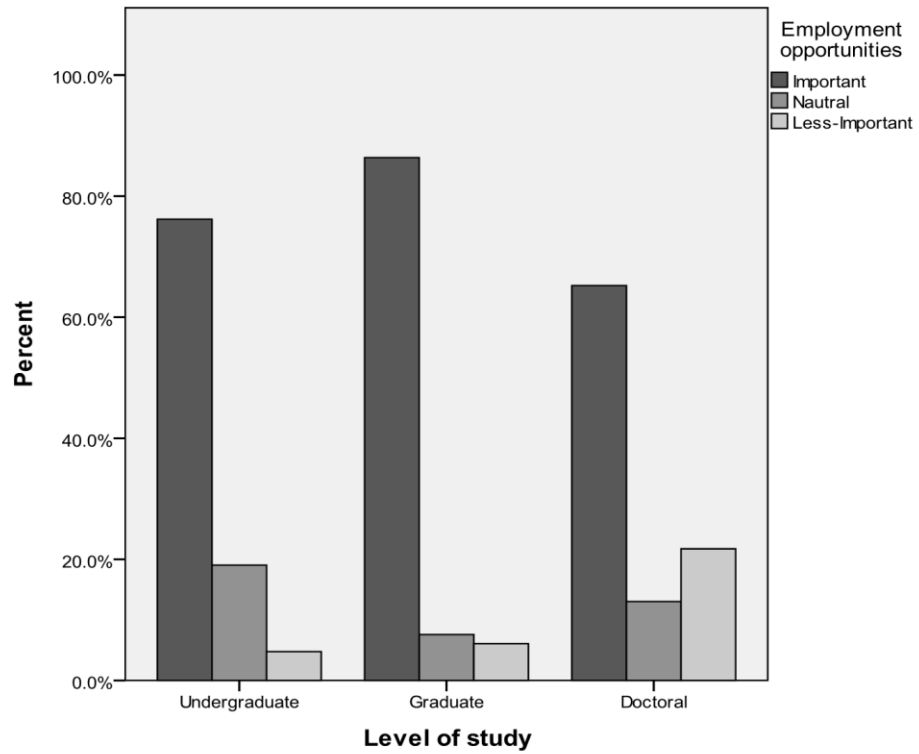


Figure 7. Importance of future employment opportunities by education level.

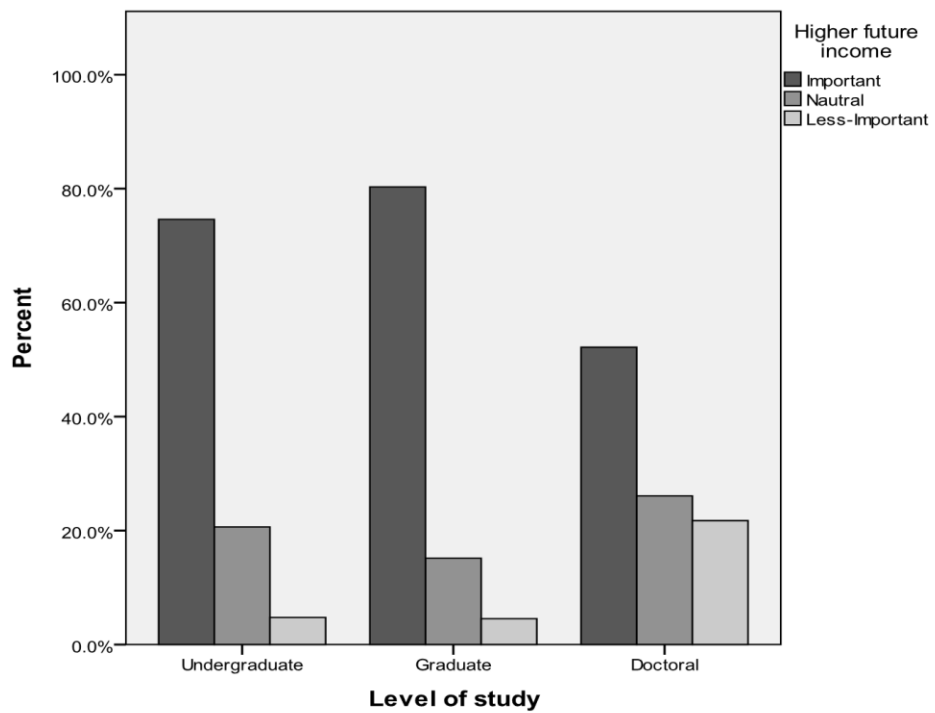


Figure 8. Importance of increased income potential by level of education.

**Question 2. What attracts international students to the United States?** The data show—in table 11—that several variables including desire to learn more about other countries and cultures, quality of life, a need to understand how different economies function, and the quality of higher education in the United States were more important for international students in their decision to go to the United States for their studies.

Table 11

*International Students' Motivation Factors for United States*

	Important	Neutral	Less Important
Percentage	%	%	%
Learn about countries/cultures	71.7	15.1	13.2
Quality of life	68.4	13.8	17.8
Understand how different economies function	67.1	20.4	12.5
Quality of higher education	67.1	19.1	13.8
Live and work in the U.S.	51.3	22.4	26.3
Employment opportunities	50.7	23.7	25.7
Many schools and academic programs	50.7	25.7	23.7
Do business with the United States	44.1	23.7	32.2
U.S. visa policies	35.5	36.8	27.6
Closeness to my home country	21.7	13.8	64.5
American movies and television programs	19.1	18.4	62.5

*Comparison by gender.* This portion of the survey, examined factors including friendliness, quality of education, U.S. movies and films, and economics to determine what attracts international students to study in the United States. The results showed that more males than females perceived the United States as having a higher quality of life and that learning about other countries and culture are what attracted them to study there. Seeking a better quality of education, and understanding how different economies function were also important factors attracting international students to study in the United States. For both males and females, the influence of American television, movies, and films did not play a vital role in attracting them to



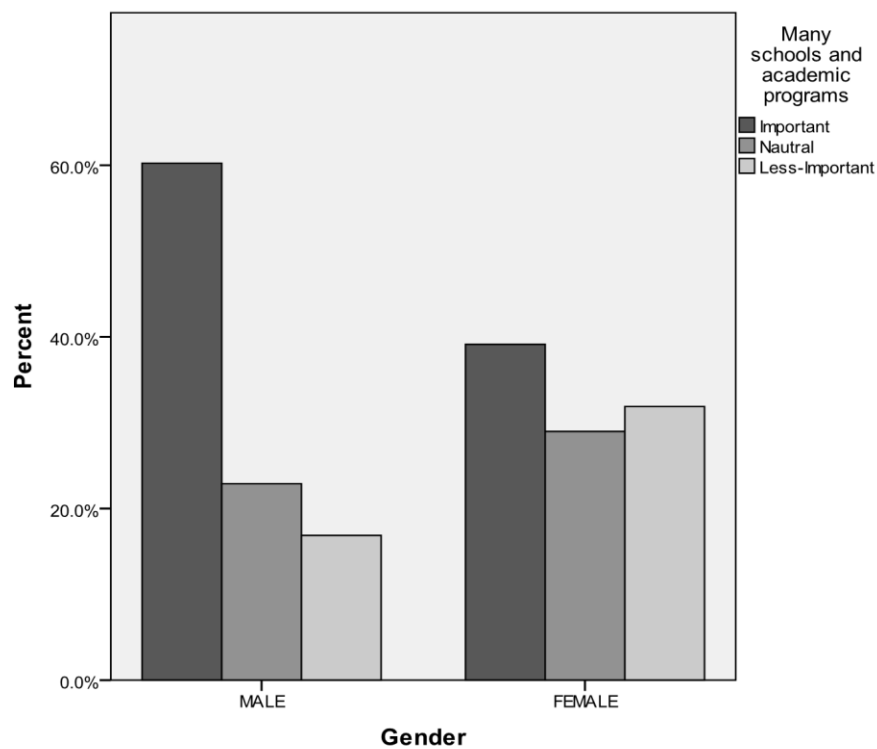
study in the United States. Table 12 demonstrates the percentage of each response, for each gender.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between males and females. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between males and females in the proportion who reported many choices of schools and academic programs ( $p = .024$ ) as important, and influence of American movies and television programs ( $p = .030$ ) as less important. Over 60% of males reported that many choices of schools and academic programs were important, but less than 40% of females felt the same. The influence of American movies and television was less important for both genders but a much larger percentage of females (almost 74%) reported the factors as less important or not important in their decision to study in the United States. The figures 9 and 10 display the differences in proportion between males and females, in the importance of many schools and academic programs and the influence of American movies and television programs in their decision.

Table 12

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Male and Female Students*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
M: Male F: Female	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Percentage within gender	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Learn about countries/cultures	75.9	66.7	14.5	15.9	9.6	17.4	2.224	.329
Quality of life	74.7	60.9	10.8	17.4	14.4	21.7	3.347	.188
Understand how different economies function	73.5	59.4	19.3	21.7	7.2	18.8	5.288	.071
Quality of higher education	73.5	59.4	15.7	23.2	10.8	17.4	3.400	.183
Live and work in the U.S.	45.8	58.0	25.3	18.8	28.9	23.2	2.263	.322
Employment opportunities	48.2	53.6	28.9	17.4	22.9	29.0	2.877	.237
Many schools and academic	60.2	39.1	22.9	29.0	16.9	31.9	7.447	.024
Do business with the United States	47.0	40.6	25.3	21.7	27.7	37.7	1.715	.424
U.S. visa policies	36.1	34.8	37.3	36.2	26.5	29.0	116	.944
Closeness to my home country	16.9	27.5	12.0	15.9	60.2	56.5	3.628	.163
American movies and television programs	24.1	13.0	22.9	13.0	53.0	73.9	7.030	.030

*Figure 9. Importance of many choices of schools and academic programs by gender.*

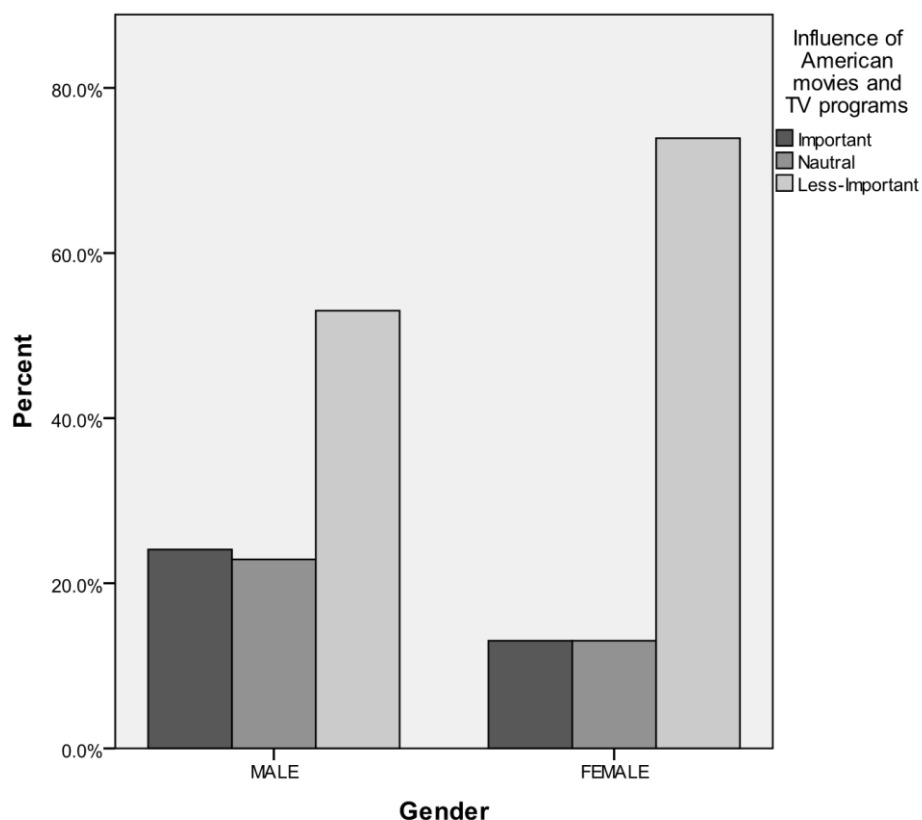


Figure 10. Importance of the influence of American movies and TV programs by gender.

*Comparison by type of institution.* In this section of the survey, students from the public university display different characteristics than private university students. According to the survey, higher quality of life and better quality higher education were the most important factors for the public university students. On the other hand, students from the private university ranked desire to learn more about other cultures as their primary reason to go to United States for their studies. The desire to learn more about other cultures is followed by importance of understanding how different economies function, higher quality of life and better quality of higher education. Table 13 shows responses of students studying at public and private institutions.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between institution types. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between institution types in the proportions who reported quality of life ( $p = .024$ ), and U.S. visa

policies ( $p = .012$ ) as important. Both public and private university participants reported that factor quality of life was important. Public university participants reported this as more important than private university participants. The U.S. visa policy factor was reported as more important for private institution participants and reported as neutral for public institution participants. Figures 11 and 12 display the differences between public and private institution participants, with respect to quality of life and U.S. visa policies.

Table 13

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Public and Private University Students.*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
Pu: Public Pr: Private	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr		
Percentage within school type	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Learn about countries/cultures	71.4	71.8	20.4	12.6	8.2	15.5	2.702	.259
Quality of life	81.6	62.1	12.2	14.6	6.1	23.3	7.490	.024
Understand how different economies function	61.2	69.9	24.5	18.4	14.3	11.7	1.152	.562
Quality of higher education	79.6	61.2	14.3	21.4	6.1	17.5	5.649	.059
Live and work in the U.S.	42.8	55.3	26.5	20.4	30.6	24.3	2.075	.354
Employment opportunities	51.0	50.5	28.6	21.4	20.4	28.2	1.508	.471
Many schools and academic	63.2	44.6	20.4	28.2	16.3	27.1	4.698	.095
Do business with the United States	30.6	50.5	32.7	19.4	36.7	30.1	5.885	.053
U.S. visa policies	22.4	41.7	53.1	29.1	24.5	29.1	9.902	.012
Closeness to my home country	20.4	22.3	18.4	11.7	61.2	66.0	1.259	.533
American movies and television programs	20.4	18.4	20.4	17.5	59.2	64.1	.349	.840

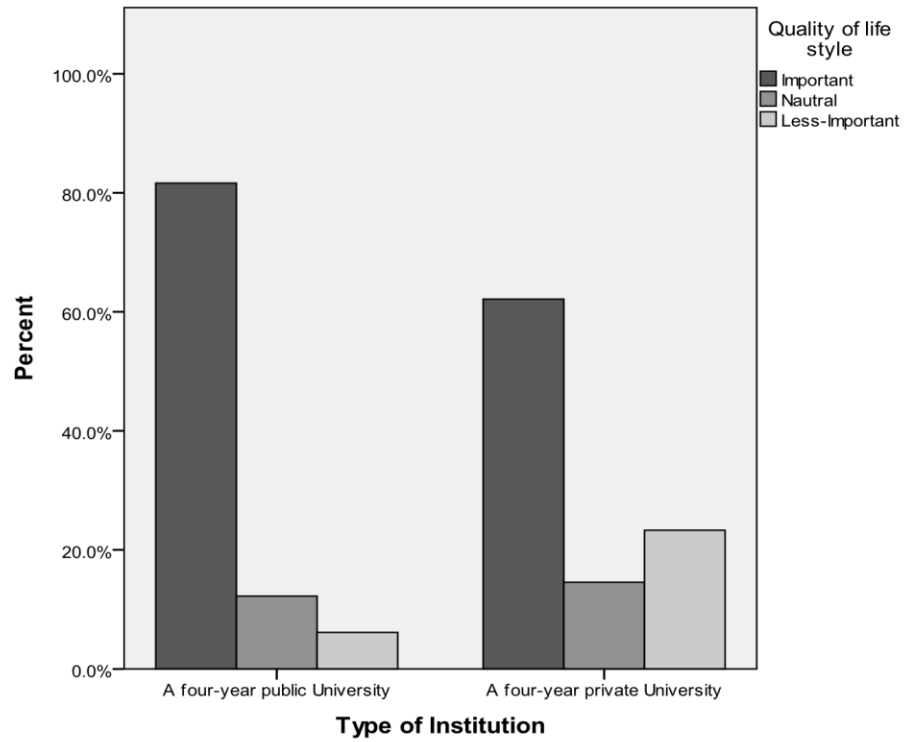


Figure 11. Importance of quality of life by institution types.

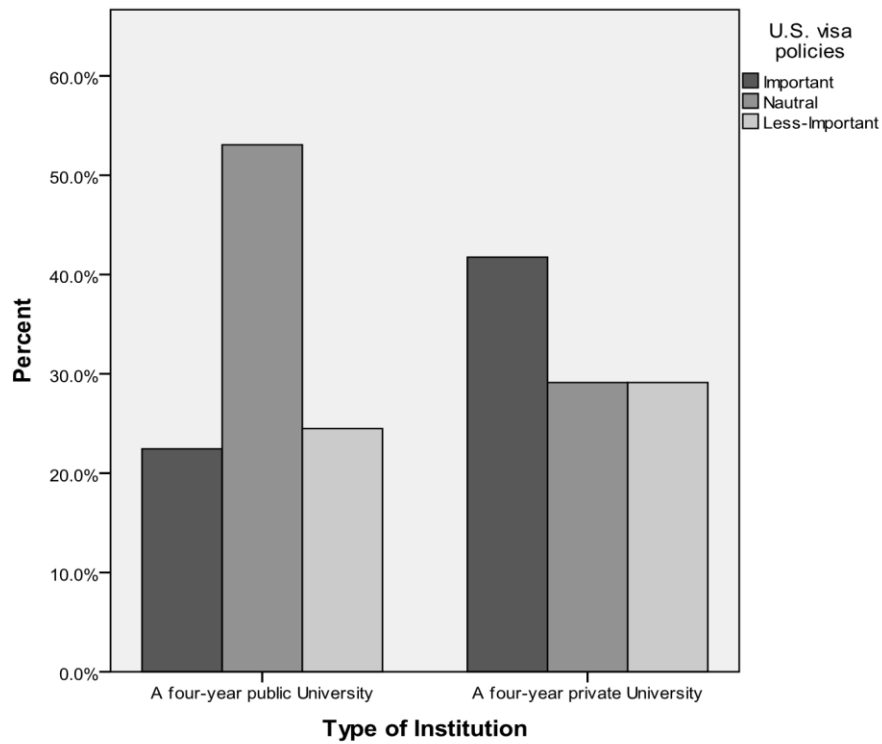


Figure 12. Importance of quality of higher education by institution types.

*Comparison by level of study.* Several factors emerged as an attraction to the United States. Undergraduate students ranked higher quality of life as the most important factor for them and ranked understanding of how different economies function as second. Desire to learn more about other countries and cultures was the most important factor for graduate students and was followed by an understanding of how different economies function and better quality of higher education. Same factors listed above were also important for doctoral students with a different ranking. For doctoral students, the most important factors were desire to learn more about other countries and cultures and better quality of higher education, and many schools and academic programs ranked second. The second ranking factors were followed by higher quality of life and employment opportunities. Table 14 displays the responses of students from different educational levels.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between males and females. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference among level of education in the proportions who reported learn about countries and cultures ( $p = .015$ ) and do business with the United States ( $p = .017$ ) as important. The proportion of students who reported learn about countries and cultures as important in their decision to study in the United States were higher for graduate and doctoral students and lower for undergraduate students. More undergraduate students reported this as neutral than graduate and doctoral students. The do business with the United States factor was reported as more important in the decision for undergraduate students, less important for graduate students, and least important for doctoral students. More doctoral students reported this as neutral in their decision. Figure 13 compares the importance of the factor learn about countries and cultures among different levels

of education, and figure 14 compares the importance of the factor do business with the United States, among different levels of education.

Table 14

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Undergraduate, Graduate, and Doctoral Students*

	Important			Neutral			Less Important			Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
U: Undergraduate G: Graduate D: Doctoral	U	G	D	U	G	D	U	G	D		
Percentage within level of education	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Learn about countries/cultures	63.5	78.8	73.9	27.0	6.1	8.7	9.5	15.2	17.4	12.282	.015
Quality of life	73.0	66.7	60.9	7.9	18.2	17.4	19.0	15.2	21.7	3.632	.458
Understand how different economies function	66.7	71.2	56.5	25.4	16.7	17.4	7.9	12.1	26.1	6.330	.176
Quality of higher education	63.5	71.2	65.2	19.0	18.2	21.7	17.5	10.6	13.0	1.522	.823
Live and work in the U.S.	46.0	57.6	47.8	30.2	15.2	21.7	23.8	27.3	30.4	4.473	.346
Employment opportunities	42.9	54.5	60.9	34.9	15.2	17.4	22.2	30.3	21.7	8.182	.085
Many schools and academic programs	50.8	45.5	65.2	22.2	30.3	21.7	27.0	24.2	13.0	3.696	.449
Do business with the United States	54.0	42.4	21.7	14.3	24.2	47.8	31.7	33.3	30.4	12.114	.017
U.S. visa policies	39.7	36.4	21.7	38.1	36.4	34.8	22.2	27.3	43.5	4.368	.358
Closeness to my home country	25.4	19.7	17.4	14.3	13.6	13.0	60.3	66.7	69.6	1.047	.903
American movies and television programs	12.7	24.2	21.7	17.5	21.2	13.0	69.8	54.5	65.2	4.262	.372

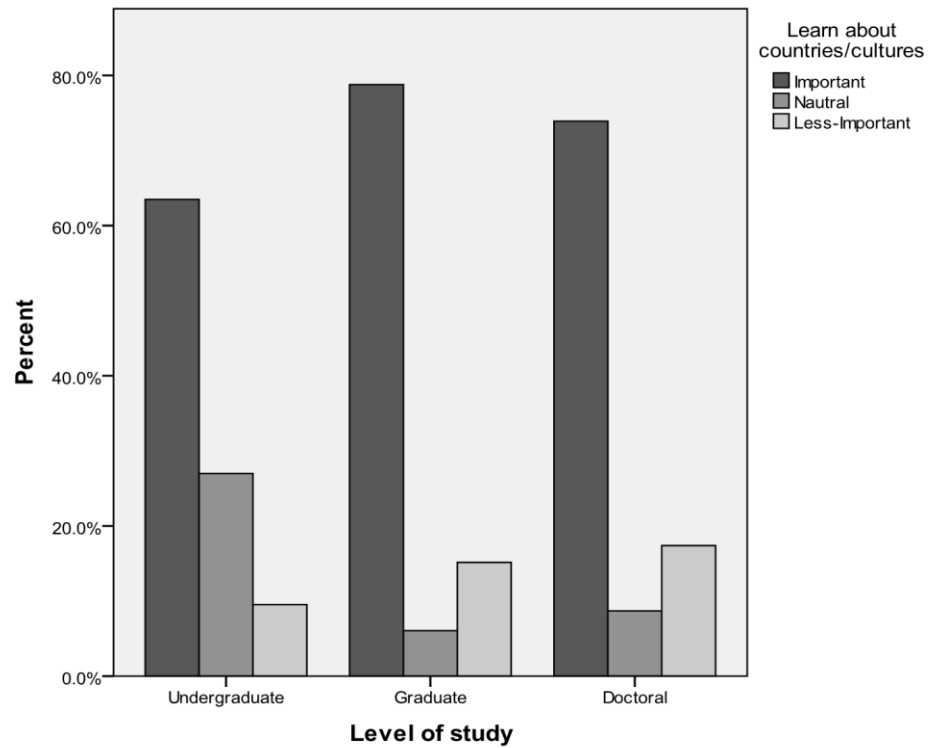


Figure 13. Importance of learning about countries and cultures by level of education.

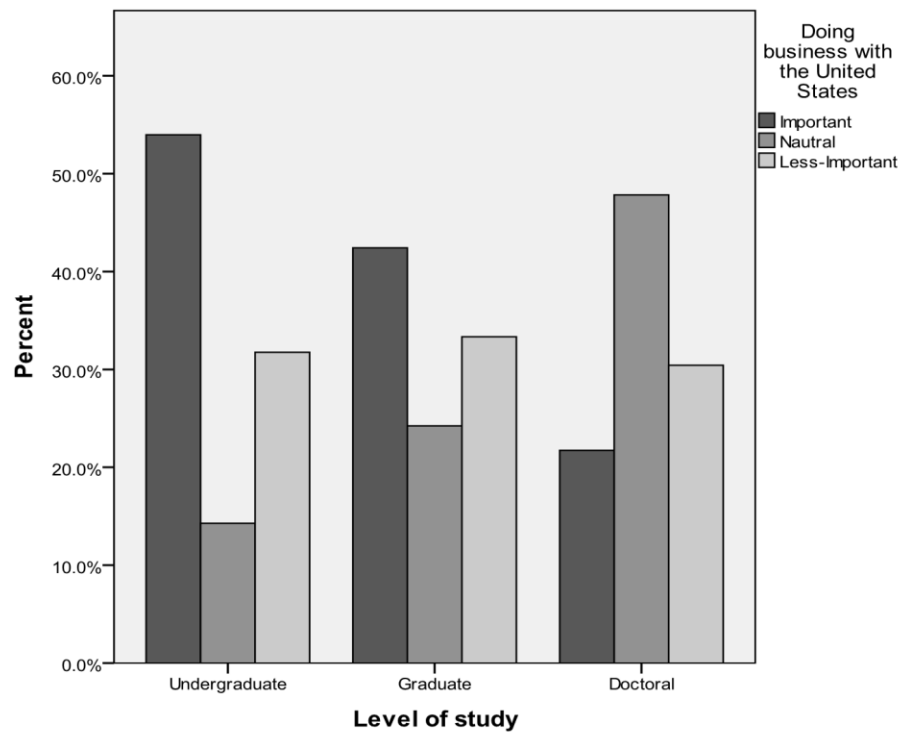


Figure 14. Importance of doing business with the United States by level of education.



***Question 3. How do international students select institutions of higher education in the United States?*** The data below—table 15—indicate the importance of factors for international students in the decision to attend an institution of higher education in the United States. The survey results indicated that variables such as strong student support service, having students from different cultures on campus, easier application process, and wide choice of academic programs were more important than variables such as sister school or exchange programs with the institution, family recommendation, having family members living in the location where the school is, cheaper tuition, scholarships and other financial aid opportunities, influence of the recruiters, and recruitment materials, on international students' institution selection decision.

Table 15

*International Students' Motivation Factors for Institutions of Higher Education in the United States*

	Important	Neutral	Less Important
Percentage	%	%	%
International student support services	57.9	23.0	19.1
Students from different cultures	53.3	21.7	25.0
Application process	52.0	32.2	15.8
Choices of academic programs	52.0	28.3	19.7
Cost less money to live	48.0	25.0	27.0
Good reputation of programs	46.7	28.3	25.0
Safer place	45.4	32.9	21.7
Easier admission	44.7	34.2	21.1
Good reputation of faculty	44.1	25.7	30.3
Students from home country	42.1	28.3	29.6
Friend recommendation	36.8	27.6	35.5
Financial support opportunities	35.5	21.1	43.4
Family/friends living in the location	32.9	17.1	50.0
Cheaper tuition	29.6	25.0	45.4
Higher rank	27.6	31.6	40.8
Recruitment	26.3	32.9	40.8
Family recommendation	25.0	25.0	50.0
Friend/family member graduated	24.3	19.1	56.6
Alumni support	23.0	34.9	42.1
Sister school exchange programs	22.4	18.4	59.2
High reputation at home country	19.7	34.9	45.4

*Comparison by gender.* The most significant contributing factor for an international student to select an institution was the strong institutional support system and application process. For males, easier application and admission processes, international student support services, and students from different cultures were important factors when deciding among public and private institutions in the United States. For females, international student support services, having a wide choice of academic programs, and having students from different

cultures at the institution played a key role in selecting the institution to attend. Table 16 shows the comparative analysis of each response for each gender.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between males and females. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females in the proportions who reported family recommendation ( $p = .037$ ) as less important. Both males and females reported that it was less important; however, the proportion of students who reported these as less important on their decision to study at their institutions was higher for males than for females. Nearly the same amount of students from both genders reported the factor as having a neutral impact on their decision.

Figure 15 displays the difference between males and females in respect to family recommendation.

Table 16

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Male and Female Students*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
M: Male F: Female	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Percentage within gender	%	%	%	%	%	%		
International student support services	53.0	63.8	26.5	18.8	20.5	17.4	1.903	.386
Students from different cultures	53.0	53.6	24.1	18.8	22.9	27.5	.807	.668
Application process	56.6	46.4	27.7	37.7	15.7	15.9	1.925	.382
Choices of academic programs	51.8	52.2	25.3	31.9	22.9	15.9	1.500	.472
Cost less money to live	51.8	43.5	24.1	26.1	24.1	30.4	1.165	.558
Good reputation of programs	44.6	49.3	31.3	24.6	24.1	26.1	.833	.659
Safer place	48.2	42.0	32.5	33.3	19.3	24.6	.821	.663
Easier admission	53.0	34.8	28.9	40.6	18.1	24.6	5.069	.079
Good reputation of faculty	39.8	49.3	28.9	21.7	31.3	29.0	1.599	.450
Students from home country	41.0	43.5	32.5	23.2	26.5	33.3	1.812	.404
Friend recommendation	38.6	34.8	30.1	24.6	31.3	40.6	1.464	.481
Financial support opportunities	30.1	42.0	22.9	18.8	47.0	39.1	2.333	.311
Family/friends living in the location	33.7	31.9	15.7	18.8	50.6	49.3	.275	.872
Cheaper tuition	28.9	30.4	28.9	20.3	42.2	49.3	1.570	.456
Higher rank	24.1	31.9	34.9	27.5	41.0	40.6	1.482	.477
Recruitment	33.7	17.4	31.3	34.8	34.9	47.8	5.495	.064
Family recommendation	16.9	34.8	26.5	23.2	56.6	42.0	6.609	.037
Friend/family member graduated	20.5	29.0	20.5	17.4	59.0	53.6	1.503	.472
Alumni support	28.9	15.9	32.5	37.7	38.6	46.4	3.588	.166
Sister school exchange programs	24.1	20.3	19.3	17.4	56.6	62.3	.523	.770
High reputation at home country	21.7	17.4	37.3	31.9	41.0	50.7	1.466	.481

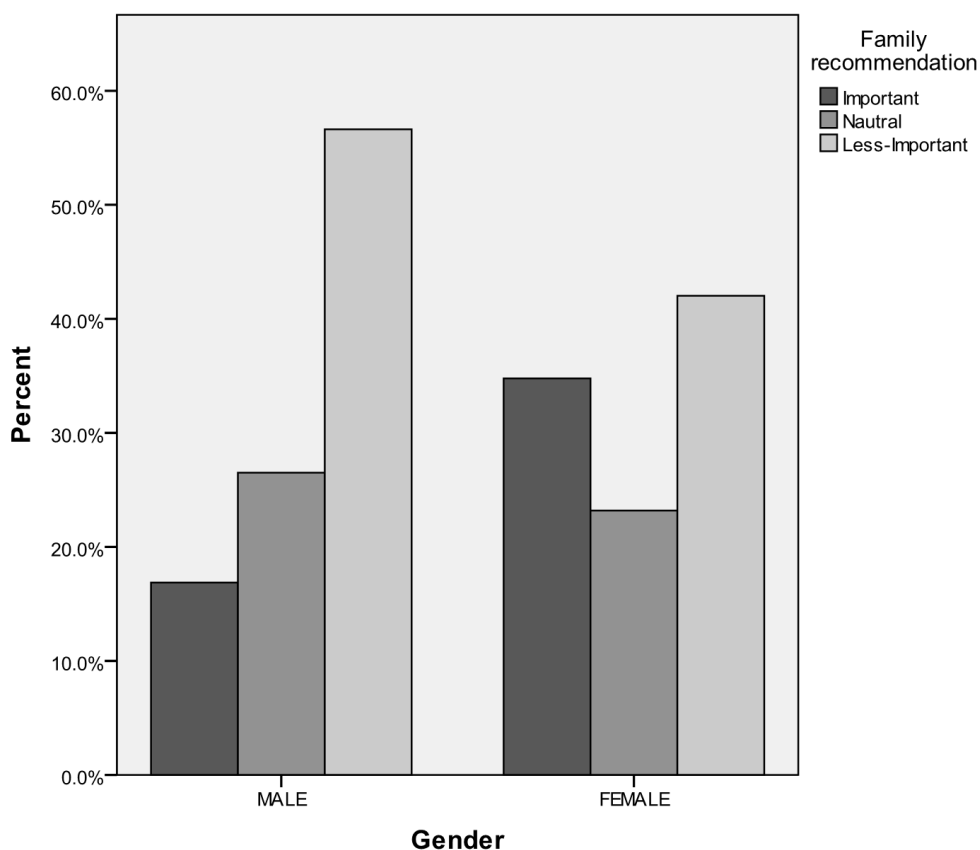


Figure 15. Importance of family recommendation by gender.

*Comparison by type of institution.* Several factors, such as studying in a safer place, family recommendation, higher institutional rank, and influence of recruiters, were almost equally important for both student types in selecting their higher education institutions. However, some other factors differ based on the type of school students are from. Students from public universities reported good reputation of faculty members and good reputation of academic programs as the most important reasons for them to decide to study in their current institutions. Institutions having strong student support services and a lower cost of living are also considered important in the decision making process. For private university students, having a strong institutional student support service were the most important factor, followed by easier application process, having students from different cultures on campus, and availability of wide

choices of academic programs. Table 17 shows the percentages of responses of students studying at public and private institutions.

A chi-square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between institution types. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between institution types in the proportions of participants who reported easier application process ( $p = .025$ ), wide choices of academic programs ( $p = .011$ ), good reputation of faculty members ( $p = .033$ ), scholarship and financial aid opportunities ( $p = .039$ ), strong alumni support ( $p = .039$ ), and higher institutional reputation ( $p = .041$ ) as important. The proportion of students who reported an easier application process and wide choices of academic programs as an important factor in their decision to study in their intuitions was higher for private institutions. Nearly half of the students from public institutions reported these factors as having a neutral effect on their decision. Students from both public and private institutions reported that good reputation of faculty members was important. Public university participants reported this as more important than private university participants. However, less than 40% of the private students reported this as less important in their decision. The proportion of students who reported scholarship and financial aid opportunities, strong alumni support, and higher institutional reputation as less important in their decision to study at their intuitions was higher for private institution participants. Public school students reported scholarship and financial aid opportunities as important and they reported strong alumni support, and higher institutional reputation as neutral on their decision to study in their current institutions. Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 display the difference between public and private institutions in respect to easier application process, wide choices of academic programs, good reputation of faculty members,

scholarship and financial aid opportunities, strong alumni support, and higher institutional reputation.

Table 17

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Public and Private University Students*

	Important		Neutral		Less Important		Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
Pu: Public Pr: Private	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr	Pu	Pr		
Percentage within school type	%	%	%	%	%	%		
International student support services	53.1	60.2	32.7	18.4	14.3	21.4	4.073	.130
Students from different cultures	46.9	56.3	32.7	16.5	20.4	27.2	5.145	.076
Application process	38.8	58.3	46.9	25.2	14.3	16.5	7.375	.025
Choices of academic programs	46.9	54.4	42.9	21.4	10.2	24.3	9.107	.011
Cost less money to live	55.1	44.7	28.6	23.3	16.3	32.0	4.162	.125
Good reputation of programs	57.1	41.7	26.5	29.1	16.3	29.1	3.940	.139
Safer place	42.9	46.6	40.8	29.1	16.3	24.3	2.447	.294
Easier admission	36.7	48.5	44.9	29.1	18.4	22.3	3.697	.157
Good reputation of faculty	59.2	36.9	20.4	28.2	20.4	35.0	6.840	.033
Students from home country	36.7	44.7	40.8	22.3	22.4	33.0	5.757	.056
Friend recommendation	42.9	34.0	26.5	28.2	30.6	37.9	1.233	.540
Financial support opportunities	44.9	31.1	26.5	18.4	28.6	50.5	6.491	.039
Family/friends living in the location	36.7	31.1	16.3	17.5	46.9	51.5	0.485	.785
Cheaper tuition	36.7	26.2	30.6	22.3	32.7	51.5	4.739	.094
Higher rank	30.6	26.2	34.7	30.1	34.7	43.7	1.113	.573
Recruitment	22.4	28.2	44.9	27.2	32.7	44.7	4.752	.093
Family recommendation	24.5	25.2	28.6	23.3	46.9	51.5	0.512	.774
Friend/family member graduated	16.3	28.2	24.5	16.5	59.2	55.3	3.105	.212
Alumni support	16.3	26.2	49.0	28.2	34.7	45.6	6.482	.039
Sister school exchange programs	12.2	27.2	24.5	15.5	63.3	57.3	4.960	.084
High reputation at home country	24.5	17.5	44.9	30.1	30.6	52.4	6.395	.041

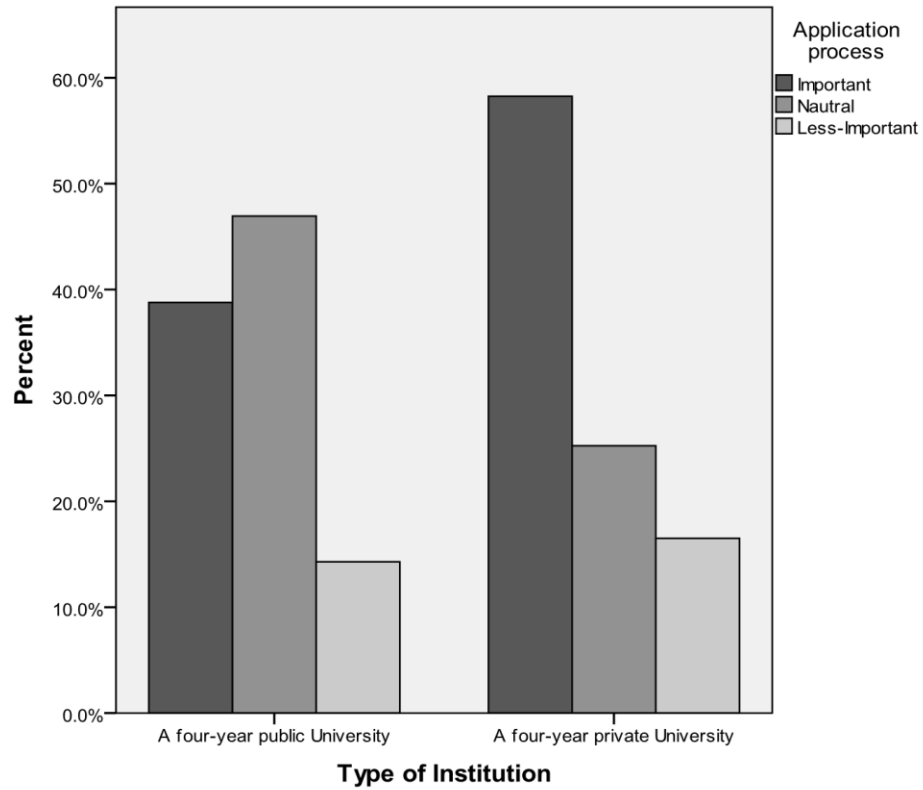


Figure 16. Importance of easier application process by institution type.

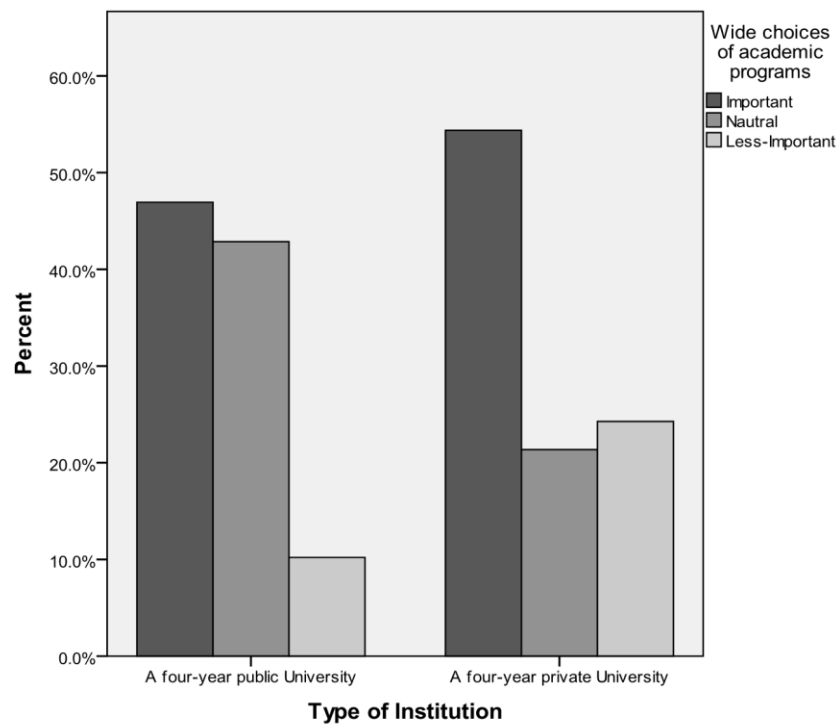


Figure 17. Importance of wide choices of academic programs by institution type.



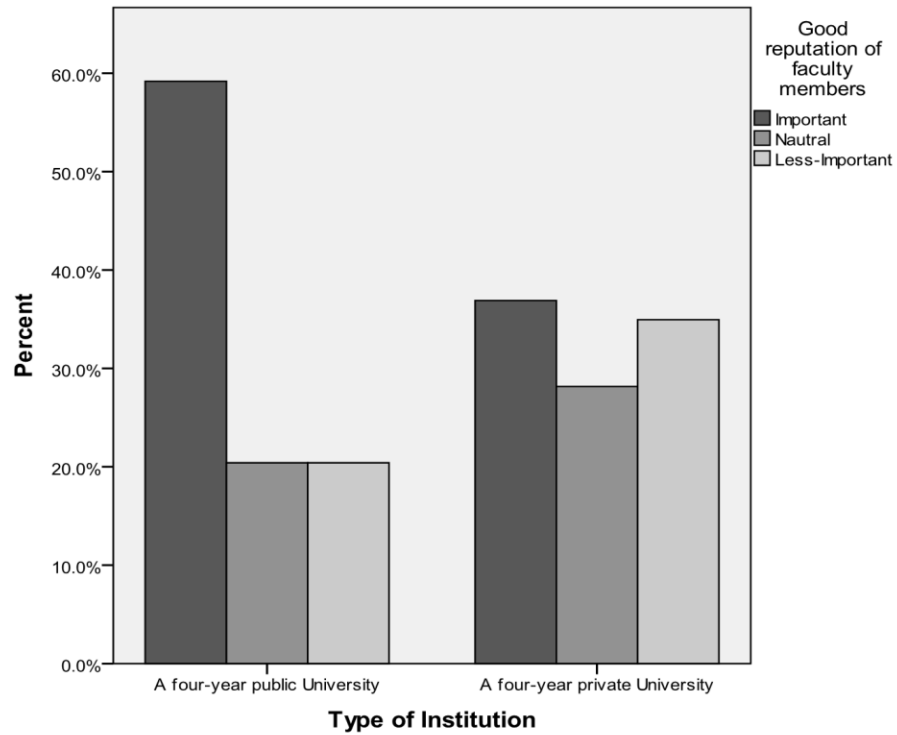


Figure 18. Importance of good reputation of faculty members by institution type.

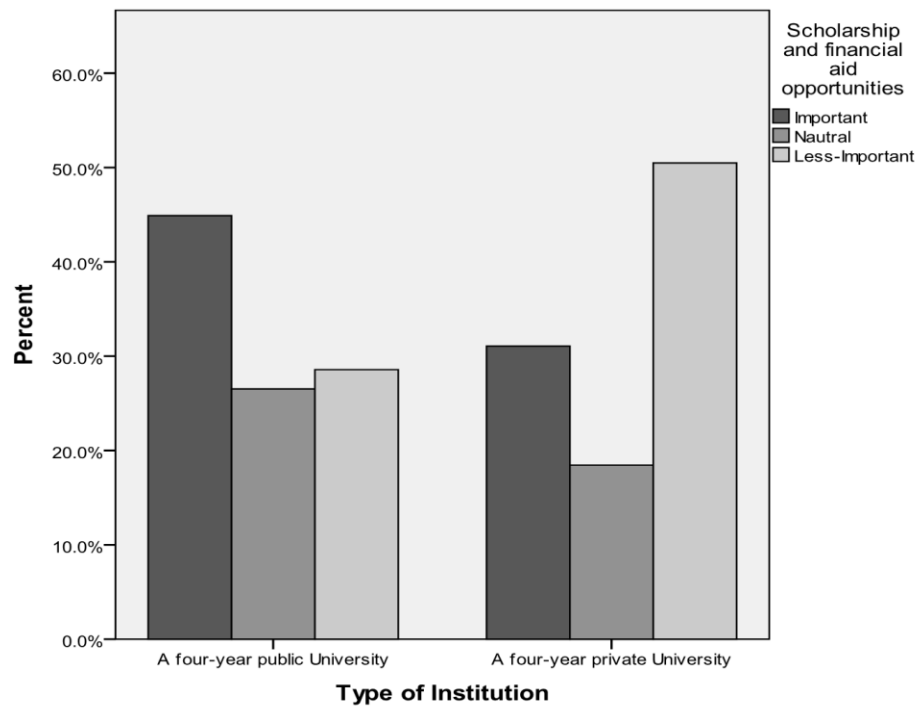


Figure 19. Importance of scholarship and financial aid opportunities by institution type.

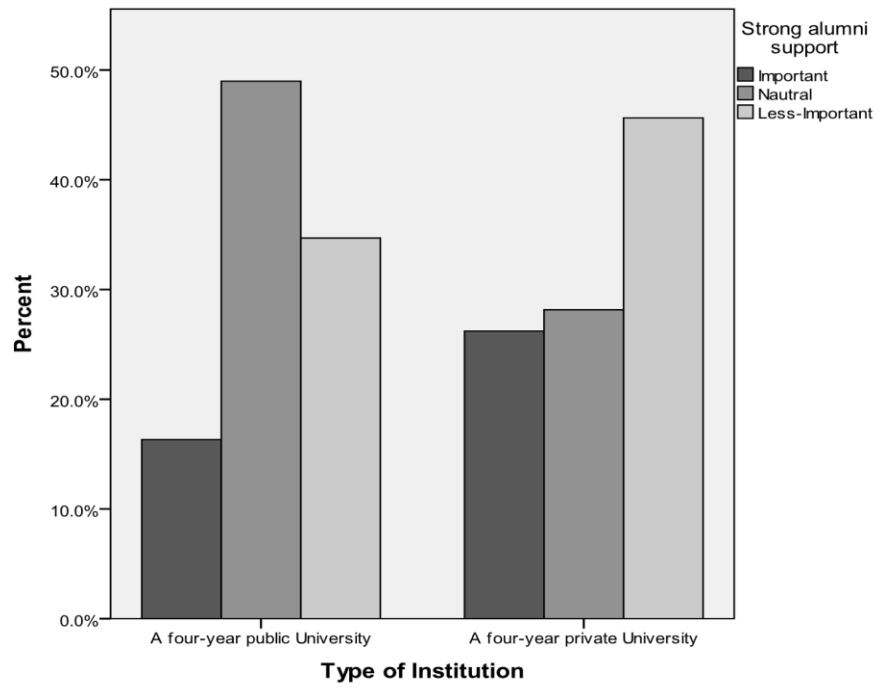


Figure 20. Importance of strong alumni support by institution type.

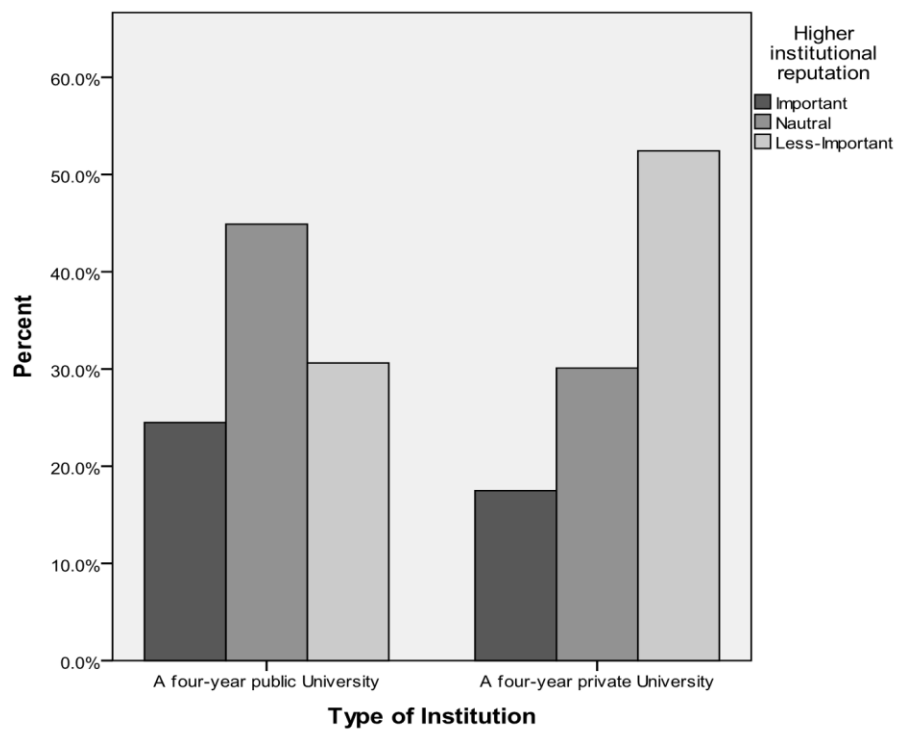


Figure 21. Importance of higher institutional reputation by institution type.

*Comparison by level of study.* Several factors appeared to be most important for international students in terms of institution selection. For doctoral students, the most important factor was easier application process. Graduate students selected having students from different cultures on campus and having a strong institutional student support service as their most important factor, while undergraduate students ranked wide choices of academic programs as the most important factor in deciding to study at their current institution. Table 18 displays the responses of students from different educational levels including undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral.

A chi square test was run to determine if there were differences in importance of factors between institution types. The results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference among the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels of education ( $p > .05$ ) in the proportion of students reporting importance of these factors in their decision to study at their institutions.

Table 18

*Percentages of Factor Importance by Undergraduate, Graduate, and Doctoral Students*

	Important			Neutral			Less Important			Chi-square	Sig. (2-sided)
U: Undergraduate G: Graduate D: Doctoral	U	G	D	U	G	D	U	G	D		
Percentage within level of education	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
International student support services	52.4	66.7	47.8	27.0	18.2	26.1	20.6	15.2	26.1	4.011	.404
Students from different cultures	50.8	59.1	43.5	27.0	16.7	21.7	22.2	24.2	34.8	3.576	.466
Application process	41.3	54.5	73.9	36.5	31.8	21.7	22.2	13.6	4.30	8.501	.075
Choices of academic programs	54.0	53.0	43.5	30.2	25.8	30.4	15.9	21.2	26.1	1.666	.797
Cost less money to live	39.7	54.5	52.2	28.6	19.7	30.4	31.7	25.8	17.4	4.266	.371
Good reputation of programs	47.6	51.5	30.4	28.6	27.3	30.4	23.8	21.2	39.1	3.956	.412
Safer place	34.9	53.0	52.2	39.7	24.2	39.1	25.4	22.7	8.70	7.480	.113
Easier admission	41.3	47.0	47.8	36.5	34.8	26.1	22.2	18.2	26.1	1.417	.841
Good reputation of faculty	34.9	53.0	43.5	33.3	19.7	21.7	31.7	27.2	34.8	5.295	.258
Students from home country	36.5	48.5	39.1	31.7	30.3	13.0	31.7	21.2	47.8	7.653	.105
Friend recommendation	27.0	42.4	47.8	38.1	19.7	21.7	34.9	37.9	30.4	7.539	.110
Financial support opportunities	34.9	31.8	47.8	23.8	19.7	17.4	41.3	48.5	34.8	2.525	.640
Family/friends living in the location	20.7	43.9	34.8	22.2	13.6	13.0	57.1	42.4	52.2	8.424	.077
Cheaper tuition	22.2	30.3	47.8	23.8	28.8	17.4	54.0	40.9	34.8	6.580	.160
Higher rank	27.0	30.3	21.7	34.9	27.3	34.8	38.1	42.4	43.5	1.350	.853
Recruitment	31.7	21.2	26.1	33.3	37.9	17.4	34.9	40.9	56.5	5.470	.242
Family recommendation	20.6	27.3	30.4	31.7	24.2	8.7	47.6	48.5	60.9	5.141	.273
Friend/family member graduated	19.0	30.3	21.7	25.4	13.6	17.4	55.6	56.1	60.9	4.220	.377
Alumni support	19.0	27.3	21.7	36.5	36.4	26.1	44.4	36.4	52.2	2.718	.606
Sister school exchange programs	22.2	24.2	17.4	25.4	15.2	8.7	52.4	60.6	73.9	4.945	.293
High reputation at home country	17.5	21.2	21.7	36.5	33.3	34.8	46.0	45.5	43.5	.402	.982

**Summary**

Overall, several factors appear to have significance for each participating group. The factors of benefits of obtaining a foreign degree, employment opportunities, and mastery of the English language, higher future income, and family recommendation were important for both

genders on their decision to study abroad at a higher education institution in the United States.

The factors of learning about countries and cultures, quality of life and higher education, and understanding how different economies function, were important for students from both types of institutions. Level of education, international student support service, students from different cultures, application process, and wide choices of academic programs were important factors in students' decision. Tables 19, 20 and 21 display the differences in importance of factors in their decision to study abroad at a higher education institution in the United States for each participating group.

Table 19

*Differences in importance of factors on students' study abroad decision*

Groups	Differences	More Important	Less Important
Gender			
	Benefits of foreign degree	Male	
Type of institution	No differences		
Level of study			
	Employment opportunities	Grad>Ug>doc	
	Higher future income	Grad>Ug>doc	

Table 20

*Differences in importance of factors on students' decision to study in the United States*

Groups	Differences	More Important	Less Important
Gender			
	Wide academic	Male	
	Movies		Female
Type of institution			
	Life style	Public	
	U.S. visa policies	Private	
Level of study			
	Learn	Grad>Doc>Ug	
	Business with the	Ug>Grad>Doc	

Table 21

*Differences in importance of factors on students' decision to study at their current institution*

Groups	Differences	More Important	Less Important
Gender			
	Family recommendation		Male
Type of institution			
	Financial support		Private
	Application process	Private	
	Institutional reputation		Private
	Reputation of faculties	Public	
	Wide academic programs	Private	
	Alumni support		Private
Level of study			
	No differences		

## Phase II

Phase II reports on the qualitative analysis, utilizing an interview script that was generated following the analysis of the quantitative data. An open-ended, semi-structured interviewing approach was used to get detailed insights about the participants' responses.

**Method.** I used an open-ended, semi-structured approach to understand the perspectives of participants from both public and private institutions. To construct a purposeful sampling, I selected the participants based on their regional culture, institution type, gender, and level of study. This was necessary because the participants needed to be individuals that represent students from different regional cultures, genders, and educational levels. In this portion of the sampling process, I selected participants based on their purposefulness to the study. The use of purposeful sampling criteria was considered most appropriate for the qualitative research, since it only includes participants most relevant to the study. Merriam (1998) explained that, "the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore, must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Using this technique, I was required to select participants that had varying combinations of demographic information including regional

culture, institution type, and educational level, from both genders, in an effort to get a more diverse perspective on the research problem (Creswell, 1998).

For this study, students were selected from two higher education institutions, a four year public and a four year private institution. Through the use of purposeful sampling, eight participants, four students from a public institution and four students from a private institution, were chosen from the 152 participants who took part in the quantitative phase of the study. These selected students were asked to participate in a 60 minute face-to-face interview for an in-depth exploration of the reasons motivating international students to study at particular institutions of higher education in the United States.

The interview questions were open-ended and focused on the participants' perceptions of the study abroad decision process. Each participant was interviewed, face-to-face, until theoretical saturation was achieved (Payne & Payne, 2004). The interviews had an average duration of 45 minutes. Several steps were then taken to enhance credibility and trustworthiness, as suggested by Guba (1981). Triangulation and member checking techniques were used to establish credibility. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the meaning of analysis context method as described by Mayring (2000).

**Interview protocol development.** The second point of integration between the two phases was in the development of the interview protocol questions based on the quantitative data analysis. To further investigate the reasons motivating international students to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States, interview questions were developed by integrating the results from the first, quantitative phase.

The interview protocol consisted of 22 questions. A copy of the interview protocol is provided in Appendix B. An open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol was developed that

included “exact wording and sequence of questions determined in advance for all participants to be asked the same basic questions in the same order. The questions asked were framed in an open-ended format” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 48). The first nine questions served as ice-breaking questions to help relax the participants (Hatch, 2002) and to assist in gathering background information about the participant, level of education, major, and previous academic experience.

Questions 10 and 11 were developed to further explore reasons, provided by participants in the quantitative phase, to acquire a higher education. Question 12 was developed to better understand their motivations to study abroad. Question 13 was developed to explore their motivations in selecting the United States as their study abroad destination. Questions 14 and 15 were developed to further clarify the reasons that motivated them to select their current institution to study abroad. Questions 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21 were developed to explore other educational options, support of their families in their study abroad decision, difficulties or problems they experienced in deciding to go to their institutions, their other institution and life options, and overall their thoughts and perceptions about the study abroad decision processes they went through.

**Summarized profile of participants.** There were four participants from each public and private institution. Two of the participants were female and six were male. The backgrounds of the participants varied in regional culture, gender, and level of education. Three of the participants were doctoral students from Asia and Europe, three were graduate students, one was from North Africa and two were from the Middle East, and two were undergraduate students from the Middle East. All participants have been studying in the United States for more than one



semester. The pseudonyms of the participants were as follows: PL, PTA, PC, PTU, PP, PCH, PTU1, and PTU2.

Table 22

*Demographic Characteristic of the Interviewees*

Participants	PL	PTA	PC	PTU	PP	PCH	PTU1	PTU2
Region	North Africa	Asia	Europe	Middle East	Asia	Asia	Middle East	Middle East
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male
Level of Education	Graduate	Doctoral	Doctoral	Graduate	Doctoral	Graduate	Under graduate	Under graduate
Type of School	Private	Private	Private	Public	Private	Public	Public	Public

**Findings.** Coding was done and themes were drawn from the interviews. Three general themes emerged from the interviews: perception, influence, and opportunity. Each general theme was divided into sub-themes for enhanced analysis and reporting. Perception was divided into three sub-themes: better education and knowledge, benefits of having a foreign degree, and life style. Influence was divided into family, media, and friends, and opportunity was divided into the three sub-themes of language, easy admission process, and more options to study and program flexibility.

**Themes.** Three general themes were identified in the qualitative phase of the study. A list of thematic codes was developed based on an initial reading of the survey responses. Table 23 shows the themes and codes identified in this phase.

Table 23

*Themes and Codes from Participants Interviewed in the Qualitative Phase*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Perception	Better Education-knowledge	First of all for the knowledge Poor education system Better than my country's education system
	Benefits of having a foreign degree	Better career Get a better job Start from a good position
	Life Style	Exposure to other cultures Opportunity to do whatever you want The traffic People here always work out
Influence	Family	Most supportive one was my brother My uncle kind of support me and my mom then my dad
	Media	American movies Information you saw on TV Saw in news Because of Spurs
	Friends	My friend was here They used to live here My dad had some friends here My friend's wife
Opportunity	Language	I have to learn English I wanted to learn English Improve my language
	Easy Admission Process	Get admission very quickly Admission much easier Very easy to get in Admission part is pretty easy
	More options to study/ Program flexibility	A lot of alternatives No limit for you You can pick your courses Freedom of your selection Many connections abroad

***Perception.*** Perception was identified as the primary theme based on the interviewees' statements mentioning their thoughts, feelings, and knowledge, which affected their decision to study abroad at a higher education institution in the United States. This theme included concepts such as better education and knowledge, benefits of having a foreign degree, and lifestyle.

*Better education-knowledge.* In accordance with the quantitative data results, the importance of having a better education on the study abroad decision was also emphasized by PTA from Asia. He explained that in his country, foreign education was “very much respected” and “universities in western countries have better education systems.” Furthermore, education is very much about competition and there is no “real-life information” in schools. He stated that in this century, knowledge is very important and getting a degree from a western university would improve his chances of learning about more up-to-date information.

PL from North Africa confirmed this:

First of all for the knowledge, second to get higher positions or let's say basically now if you want to work, if you have high school you are not going to find anything; it is not you are going to find anything but it is not going to fit your dreams.

PL further explained that the education system in his country was “poor” and that he did not have “enough” freedom. “Even from culture, from people. So in that time, I decided to just run away from the country and the same time study”.

*Benefits of having a foreign degree.* The benefits of obtaining a foreign degree was another important factor drawn from the quantitative and qualitative data results. All of the participants stated that having a foreign degree would help them get better jobs, more money, and higher status within their countries upon their return, if they decide to return. For example, PTU from the Middle East explained:

One of things is, if you study abroad, if you have a degree from a university in United States or in any other country and I am talking about for my country. That's so important for your career, to get a better job; this is the most important reason.

PL explained the importance of having a foreign degree as, “to get a better job, better pay, the options more. You are in front of so many people, if you have a degree from United States.” PP from Asia further confirmed:

You look at it like the return for it. You get an education and what kind of a job you land. So you compare that with what’s going on here with what’s going back at home so back at home you don’t get a return for it, your education, the time you spent but here once you pay for your education, you know you can actually get a good job, so along those lines....-If you are looking for a job and if you are looking down for a good job with a good salary and for social life, it’s important.

PTU1 from the Middle East also added that the diploma she would receive from the United States would certainly enhance her chances of getting a high-paying job with “higher status.” PC’s (from Europe) motivation was that in her country having a foreign degree was “very useful” and that getting a graduate degree from the U.S. was more valuable.

*Lifestyle and culture.* Lifestyle and the attractiveness of the culture in general were important factors for the participants to select the United States, as their study abroad destination, as both the quantitative and qualitative data results indicated. PC explained that she wanted to explore different cultures and lifestyles: “I would like to know different cultures; I would like to go to places that I’ve never been to. And just focus in exploration and comparison of cultures.” PTA stated that he wanted to get experience, different than what he would have in his home country. He said that he wanted to tell about his experiences upon his return to his home country. He was especially interested in California. He said, “I like in California because I like to drive fast” and that “in California, everything is like if they have free spirit.” PTU1 said that she wanted to see the U.S. and learn about the culture more. She was exposed to the culture through several media but she wanted to experience life in the United States personally. In regards to the lifestyle, PP from Asia explained that the life style was more open and there were more opportunities to learn about things other than what he would learn in school. PTU was especially

attracted to the driving and the cars in the United States. He explained that the traffic jam is a serious problem in his home country and “the easiest thing is the traffic” in the United States. Another factor was the basketball. He had been following the National Basketball Association in his home country and he wanted to see the games live. He further stated that “in America is like, anyone can dream, the American dream” and that “you get what you earn, your labor means something here.”

***Influence.*** Influence was another primary theme drawn from interviewees’ statements concerning influence of family, friend, and media on their decision to study abroad at a higher education institution in the United States. The responses generated several sub-themes that formed the influence theme. These themes included family, friends, and media.

***Family.*** Family was an important motivator for the participants to study abroad in the United States as it was pointed out by the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data results. They expressed that they received significant support and encouragement from their families. PL explained that his brother was the one paying the tuition and that “he is the most supporting” for him to study abroad. Another participant, PTA, stated that his family was supportive as long as he wanted to study abroad: “So like my uncle kind of support me and my mom then my dad, my sister and after that everybody in my family say okay. You want to do it, do it.” His family believed that the only way to succeed in life was to study. They were expecting him to get a higher education and believed that studying abroad would better enhance his chances of getting a good job after graduation. PC explained that “the first thought that I had about studying abroad was brought to me by my mom” and that “I was given the opportunity from my family friends that if I decide to get my master’s degree in the U.S. they will sponsor me.” She further stated:

My parents are actually very supportive because they recognize the value and they really see it thru my perspective as a really once in a life time option or opportunity and my mom as I said she was always very supportive and she tried to emphasized the importance of knowing other languages, other cultures, to be successful, especially the world is getting more and more globalized.

PTU was also encouraged and supported by his family to study abroad. They were very proud of him “going to a good school” overseas. He further elaborated that his family was always supportive. This was important for him because studying abroad is rather expensive. PP’s parents were very strict about him getting an education because “now-a-days, you have to get an education in order to be somebody and all that, so ever since the beginning, as long as I remember.” Another participant, PCH from Asia, stated that his parents wanted him to be “well-educated” and further explained:

Before this program my father was talking to me that hey, if you get the chance to study abroad, we wish you can take the chance to study abroad. Also, he likes the United States I don’t know why, he recommends me to study in the United States.

PTU1 was also encouraged by her parents, especially by her father:

My father wanted me and my sister to study abroad but my sister couldn’t manage it. It was also her dream. But it was also my father’s dream...they are very supportive, my family in financially, in spiritually, in every way.

*Friends.* Friend was another important factor in attracting the students to the United States as their study abroad destination. PL explained that his friend, already studying abroad in the United States, was significant in helping him make a decision about his selection of a study abroad destination:

He said go to the States. I said why? In the States, you will not feel that you are foreign or strange. As soon as you get friends and you go through the community, you will be one of them because they are all from all about. You will feel that you are in your own country. You are not a stranger.

PT substantiated the importance of friends with the statement, “especially the person who influenced me was my best friend’s big brother” and that he listened to his friends’

recommendations. He had many friends in the United States studying and he felt that he had “connections.” PC also received a recommendation from her friend:

And she [her friend], I would say she did had an influence on me. Because when she talked about the school here, you could see the excitement about the classes and all the courses, and she also happens to be a native to my home country.

PTU had friends studying in the United States and they would always tell him about the schools and the life in the United States. He felt comfortable about leaving his family in his home country and coming to the U.S. to receive further education. PP also stated:

My dad had some friends here and they were going to a particular university, and they were actually our neighbors so after high school when I was thinking about where to go, it was either you go to some other country where I did not know the process or anything or go to the U.S. where at least people that have already gone through the process were going to help us. It was one of the main reasons why we chose U.S. I basically was between here and UK but since my family had some people that were here, they encouraged us to come here instead.

*Media.* Even though the findings of quantitative data indicated that the media factor was less important for students on their decision to study abroad in the United States, all of the interview participants explained that media was an important factor in their study abroad decision and especially their selection of destination. PL explained that “all what I know it is American movies, all what I see is America, America, America. Like it is I raised with an idea in my mind”, and “movies are, no point just saying no movies, it is really can influence you.” He was curious about the life in the United States because “it reflects the life here in the States and teaches you some stuff about the culture, about life here” and he “wanted to try.” He further stated,

Especially like in the movie on TV you do not see too much things from Australia. You always get information from United States and I was traveling in United States one time when I was a kid and that is a lot of fun.

PTA's decision was very much influenced by television:

About all the information you saw on TV, it is all about America. You do not see anything about Australia, maybe the Mr. Crocodile but in that we don't see too much stuff or maybe seeing the opera, the other that is about it. So, I said yes. American culture, I am more familiar with. So, I said yes, let's go to United States.

He further explained:

You know when you watch the TV, California has the lot of fun like sunshine, bikini, beaches, and all kind of stuff. Some yes that is the only place I can think about when I choose the school. All of this, all in you know in the movies...so you got all the information from all kind of media then when they mention those big schools then we think about which school you have image, you think about those schools. So I think I have image from the media for like the big school. In the movie that they think all the people are partying all the time in college.

PC confirmed that she had been exposed to American news, especially news about the professional basketball team, the San Antonio Spurs and the professional baseball team, the Texas Rangers.

***Opportunity.*** Opportunity was also found to be a primary theme as interviewees' responses included statements regarding the importance of learning language, the admission process, and the availability of academic programs on their decision to study abroad at a higher education institution in the United States. The sub-themes identified in the interviews were language, admission process, and many options to study and program flexibility.

***Language.*** Importance of knowing and being fluent in English was also one of the important factors as both the quantitative and qualitative data results indicated. "The first thing to I wanted to improve my language, my English" stated PCH. PL further explained that "English is not my first language, so first thing I have to learn English. So that way I decided to go to country that is English speaking." He wanted to go to a place where the English was the native language and he could select among three countries — Australia, England, and the U.S. He had not done much research on the institutions at first because his main goal was to learn English in



an English speaking country. PTA said that the main foreign language instruction in his country is American English and that he wanted to continue and improve his language skills in the United States. Countries like Australia and New Zealand, “they speak closer to British English.” PTU1 added that because “everybody speaks English in the world,” learning the language was significant in making the decision to study abroad at an English-speaking country.

*Admission process.* The ease of the admission process was another important factor, based on the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data, for participants in their decision to study at their current institutions in the United States. Participants, both from public and private institutions, explained that they were attracted to their current institutions mostly because of the ease of the admission process. PL said that “I want school, private school, where I can obtain admission very quickly.” PTA further confirmed “that is very easy to get in, you don’t even need the GRE, don’t need TOEFL score” and that “the admission part is pretty easy. Especially the master’s, I don’t need to do anything, which is okay for dial a phone and I got accepted.”

PP said that his current school was not his first choice, but “well I guess the biggest factor would be this was the only school that accepted me.” PTU stated that “I wanted to continue my master’s for computer science in the United States, but my GPA was low, so my options were many so I had to lower my expectations.” He further elaborated that “if I wanted to take GRE or TOEFL, it will take me a lot of time and a lot of money. So, I think that is easier, so just do that.”

PCH said:

I was thinking to maybe, you know, everybody want to go to Harvard, everyone want to go to Columbia, or everybody want to go to UCLA but during that time I just don’t have that confidence to go because I don’t think my English is good enough to apply or my academic performance is not good enough to apply to those schools. So, of course, I think about the good schools like, you know, Ivy League, all those kinds of schools but know it is not going to happen.

PTU also explained that even though his current institution has higher admission standards, it is still lower than many other “high quality” institutions in the United States.

*More options to study — program flexibility.* The findings of the quantitative data indicated that the availability of many schools and academic programs was less significant for students in their decision to study abroad. In contrast, interview participants explained that these factors were important when they were deciding to study abroad. . This was a significant finding in the qualitative data. Some participants said that they were not able to study the majors they were interested in, in their countries. This is why having more options to study was a significant factor. For example, PC explained,

In the U. S., you can go for the two year program first, pass all the mandatory courses, and in between the time, you still have time to decide what you really want to study, when you’re not sure what you want to do.

She further added that “I think this kind of freedom of your selection was one of the things that attracted me more to the U. S. education work.” PTU also mentioned that in his country, there was more structure, and people were not as “free to choose” as it is here in the United States. He had to select a major that he did not like in his home country because of his low examination scores. In the United States, he found that he could study “almost anything” he wanted. PL further confirmed that “you have a lot of alternatives you need to choose between.” PCH was also interested in this specific institution because of its connection with other institutions around the world.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations**

Due to economic, political, and social conditions of the sending countries “students studying in higher education institutions outside their home countries have been growing rapidly” (Altbach et al., 2001, p. 3). As a matter of fact, higher education institutions across the world have been experiencing strong competition to attract international students. In view of the fact that the number of international students around the world has been increasing as well as the existence of a competition among study abroad destinations across the world, there is a need to understand international students’ decision making processes in an effort to attract them to the United States. While there are many factors that influence international students’ decision, this study aimed to identify the main factors influencing international students’ decision to study abroad.

This chapter discusses the quantitative and qualitative results, compares the findings with the literature, and connects with the theoretical framework. The qualitative findings are discussed based on the themes that emerged from the interviews.

### **Question 1. What motivates international students to study abroad?**

The findings from both the survey and the interviews indicated that regardless of nationality, gender, level of education, and type of institution, some factors have been identified as significant motivators for international students to study abroad. These factors included greater employment opportunities, better future income, desire to learn, speak and write in English, higher benefits of having a foreign degree, and encouragement of parents.

In relation to the factors that influence international students’ decision to study abroad, the survey data analysis provided evidence in accordance with the literature reviewed that many international students believe that a degree from an English speaking country would bring them

better employment opportunities with better income upon return to their home countries. It is also important and highly regarded for most of the students to be fluent in English and having lived in a western country, especially in the United States. Since English is the preferred language in the global economy and in the international arena, international students prefer English speaking countries to learn, improve skills, and become fluent in English (Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Crawford III, 2001; Hwang, 1998).

The influence of parents also plays a very important role in the international students' decision making process to study abroad (IIE, 2004; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). The importance of parents' roles is also highlighted in earlier studies. According to Gomes and Murphy (2003) parental roles and pressure have a strong influence on the study abroad decision making process of their children. This study finding confirmed the earlier findings about the strong role that parents play in students' decision making about studying abroad and selecting a destination and a higher education institution. Participants stated that if it were not for their encouragement and support, they would not be able to study abroad. Some participants even expressed that even though they were not thinking about studying abroad, their parents motivated them to study abroad.

Hwang (1998) and Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) had suggested that political instability and pessimism about a home country's higher education system were significant considerations for international students to study abroad. Some students even chose to study in the United States to escape political and economic difficulties in their home countries. However, the survey and interview responses did not confirm this. For example, "I was dissatisfied with the political instability in home country" (41.4%), "I was dissatisfied with the economic condition/situations

in home country” (40.8%), and “I was dissatisfied with the quality of higher education in my home country” (40.1%).

It is also mentioned in the literature that limited scientific education opportunities, limited availability of post-secondary education, and high educational costs force students to study abroad (Lee & Tan 1984; Cummings, 1984). However, these arguments and earlier findings were not confirmed through this study; therefore, this study puts forward that participants were not motivated to study abroad for any of the reasons mentioned above.

### **Question 2. What attracts international students to the United States?**

Factors such as higher quality of life, need of understanding how different economies function, better quality of higher education, friendly visa policies, desire to learn more about other countries and cultures, and live and work in the United States after graduation are also identified as important factors that attract international students to the United States.

There are several reasons that international students prefer to go to the United States to pursue higher education. The main reasons are the quality of the American education system and higher education institutions, outstanding curriculum, and high quality faculty are considered to be the best by many countries in the world (Altbach et al., 2001; Bornsztein, 1987; Jacobson, 2005). Even though the findings indicated the significance of the quality of higher education institutions in the United States, curriculum and faculty have not necessarily been factors in affecting students’ decision.

Institutions, institution’s rank, programs that are available in the institutions, program suitability, the reputation of their faculty, international recognition of the institution, and availability of financial aid are some of the main reasons in the university selection process and play a strong role in attracting international students to institutions in the United States (Bourke,

2000; Cubillo, Cervino, & Sanchez, 2006; Maringe, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Moogan, et al., 1999; Peng, Lawley, & Perry, 2000). In this case, flexibility of programs with many program options and program suitability have been important factors, and financial aid and the institutions' rankings were not significant factors as the earlier literature suggested. The importance of a quality higher education, institutional ranking, and employment opportunities after graduation are pointed out in the earlier study –value for money- in attracting international students (Petruzzellis & Romanazzi, 2010). Quantitative and qualitative findings and analyses confirmed the significance of these arguments in the previous literature. However, even though students expressed initial interest in higher ranking institutions, the difficulty of gaining entrance to such high ranking institutions prevented them from applying.

### **Question 3. How do international students select institutions of higher education in the United States?**

Previous literature suggested that selectivity of higher education institutions and the reputation of their faculty pull bright international students to U.S. universities (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and that the international students pay extra attention to an institution's rank (Moogan, et al., 1999). However, participants were not motivated by the selectivity of their current institutions, the quality of the faculty, and the institution's rank. Their main motivation in selecting their current institution was mostly because of family and friend recommendations.

Marginson (2006) explained that students seek to study in developed and high ranked schools to embody their identity. The image of an institution —beliefs, ideas, reputations, facilities, and instructors— can have a strong influence on the student's decision to attend an education institution (Bourke, 2000; Mazzarol, 1998; Qureshi, 1995). This was not the case. Findings indicated that international students were not currently studying at their current

institutions because of the ranking but because of the ease of the admission and acceptance processes. Students believed that they could not get acceptance from a higher ranking institution and the ease of the admissions process was the second most important factor (family and friend recommendation as the most important factor) in making the decision to study at their current institution.

Even though proximity of relatives to colleges and universities is seen as a benefit and a factor influencing students' decisions in earlier studies, "U.S. is closer to my home country" (64.4%), "My family recommended this institution" (50%), "I have/had family members/friends living in the location where my school is" (50%) are not considered as significant for international students to go to the United States for their studies.

Even though the literature suggested that the reputation of the academic programs and faculty are considered important for international students to select institutions, "the good reputation of academic programs" (46.7%), and "the good reputation of faculty members" (44.1%) were only confirmed by less than 50% of the respondents.

Other factors such as availability of employment opportunities while studying, many choices of schools and academic programs, and having students from different cultures on campus are either mentioned insignificantly or not covered at all in the available literature. The researcher aimed to learn more about the importance of these factors on international students' decision and add to the literature.

### **Theoretical Framework: Push-Pull**

Push-Pull theory has often been employed to facilitate an understanding or to describe the decision making process for international students (Agarwal & Winkler, 1985; Mazzarol, Choo, & Nair, 2001; Mazzarol, Soutar, Smart, & Choo, 2001; McMahon, 1992). International students

focus on the economic, political conditions, and social factors in the host country. Push factors focus on the availability of higher education and each sending country's economic conditions (Loudon & Bitta, 1988). Even though several factors were identified by the participants as being significant, some of the factors were identified as less significant. For example, push factors such as enhanced value of a foreign degree and employment opportunities on return were significant factors for the participants. Factors such as availability of higher education, political instability, and financial factors (such as the cost of higher education) were not significant in the decision making processes of the participants and their parents. One of the participants stated that the experience (international student mobility) was a factor but was not a significant motivation for her. PT also stated that this was a factor but not a significant motivation.

Pull factors occur within the host country. These factors make that country attractive to international students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). In this case, cost of study, strategic alliances with home partners, employment opportunities during study, immigration policies, geographical distance, and active recruitment policy were not significant motivators for the participants. Participants stated that their family, friends, media, and overall lure of life were the main factors in helping them with their decisions about the study abroad destination and the institution. Findings of this study further confirmed that country characteristics were more important than the institutions and the programs that are offered by these institutions, which is contrary to Muche and Wachter's 2005 findings. Figure 22 shows the most significant factors for international students in their decisions to study abroad, to study abroad in the United States, and to study at their current institutions.



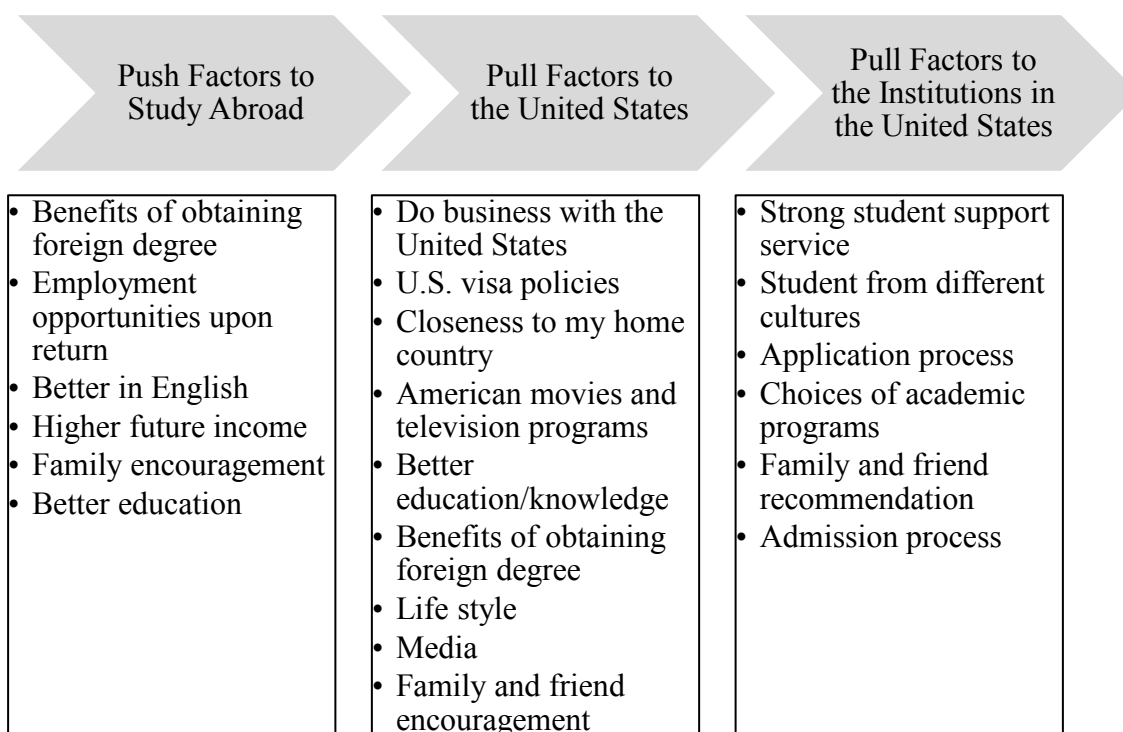


Figure 22. The most significant motivating factors.

Figure 23 shows the least significant factors for international students in their decisions to study abroad, to study abroad in the United States, and to study at their current institutions.

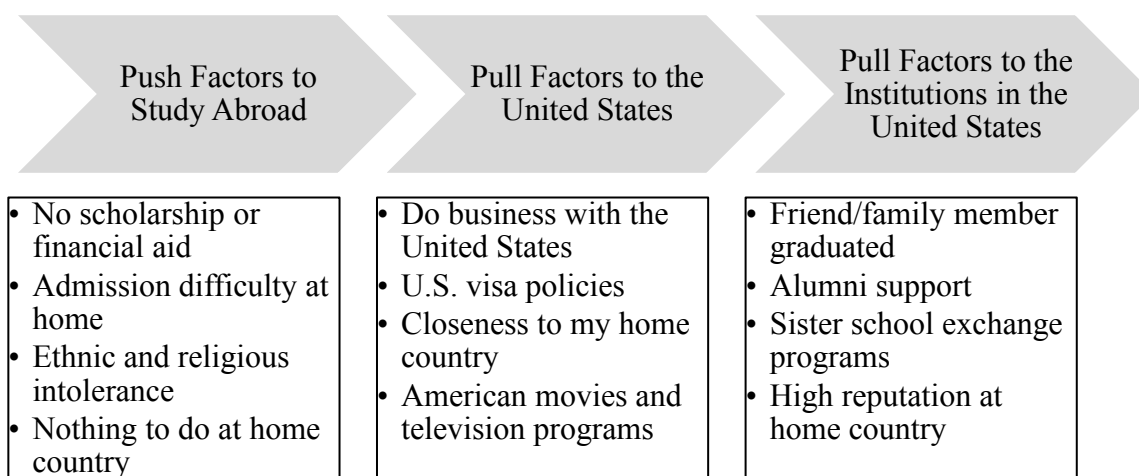


Figure 23. The least significant motivating factors.

Uysal and Jurowski (1994) examined the nature of the relationship between push and pull factors. They found that these two sets of variables had common elements. For example, in this study, parents pushing their children to study abroad were also interested in sending their children to the United States for them to learn about the economic system and the language. They were not only interested in the better employment opportunities for their children but they were also attracted by the United States as their choice of study abroad destination for their children. Furthermore, they wanted the institutions with more program flexibility. This indicates that it is not possible to separate pull factors from push factors and that when determining the motivations for students to study abroad in a certain country and at a certain institution we need to look at these factors as being interconnected. That is, the findings indicated that drawing a strict line between push and pull factors was not possible due to the variables involved in the decision making processes for both students and family members.

### **Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions and Policy Makers**

Özturgut (2013) stated that “recruitment and retention of international students require a personal approach” (p. 11). Providing a personal approach is the key in helping the decision making processes of international students. They are mainly attracted to the United States and to their current institutions through family and friend recommendations. Higher education institutions could certainly emphasize the family values when promoting the United States and their institutions.

Furthermore, media was a significant factor in the participants’ decisions in selecting the United States as their study abroad destination. More effective and targeted use of media sources is certainly significant in attracting international students. This can be achieved through effective

and appropriate utilization of national media and with more emphasis on the use and support of social media by the policy makers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was conducted at two higher education institutions in South Texas. Expanding the study, again through a mixed-method study, to multiple institutions is certainly worth pursuing. It is important to include higher education institutions with more extensive scholarship opportunities that are also research intensive. Even though the results of this study did not indicate cost as a significant factor, it is important to understand the viewpoints of international students on scholarships.

Another recommendation is to conduct a study focusing on specific nationalities. Having different cultural, political, and economic contexts of the nations will certainly change the outcome of responses. Therefore, it is recommended that further research, focusing on international students from specific nations, be conducted to narrow the scope to have a better understanding of the motivations of the students from individual nations.

The last recommendation is to expand this study to international students studying at countries other than the United States. This would produce a more informed comparison, and analysis would be enhanced by having a better understanding of the motivations of students when deciding to study abroad and the thought processes utilized when selecting higher education institutions.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Form

Page 1 of 4

#### Application for Institutional Review Board Approval Form University of the Incarnate Word

(PLEASE TYPE INFORMATION)

Title of Study: HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION CHOICE BEHAVIORS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON U.S. CAMPUSES

College/School or Division/Discipline: Dreeben School of Education

Investigators			
<b>Principal Investigator</b> - A UIW PI must be designated for all projects in which UIW is engaged in research.			
Name: Anil Tan	Phone #: (210) 685-8902	E-mail: atan@student.uiwtx.edu	Address: 4301 Broadway Cpo# 1366 San Antonio, TX 78209
<b>Co-Investigator(s)</b> – List all co-investigators and provide contact information on each one			
Name: Click here to enter text.	Phone #: Click here to enter text.	E-mail: Click here to enter text.	Address: Click here to enter text.
<b>Faculty Supervisor of Project, Thesis, or Dissertation</b>			
Name: Dr. Osman Ozturgut	Phone #: (210) 519-9870	E-mail: ozturgut@uiwtx.edu	Address: University of the Incarnate Word 4301 Broadway San Antonio, TX 78209

Research Information		
Research Category: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Expedited Review <input type="checkbox"/> Full Board Review		
Purpose of Study: The purpose of this mixed methods study is to explore the reasons motivating international students to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study will explore 1) the motivations of international students to study abroad, 2) What attracts them to the United States, and 3) how they select institutions of higher education in the U.S. through surveying and interviewing the current international students in three higher education institutions in South Texas. Click here to enter text.		
Number of Subjects: Phase I, Approximately 2,500  Phase 2- Approximately 15	Number of Controls: none	Duration of Study: 6 months

041311

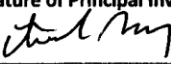
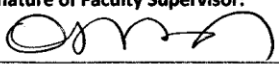
13-04-002

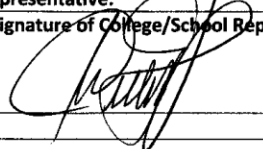
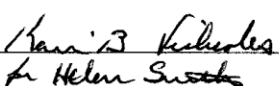
Does this research involve any of the following:	YES	NO
Inmates of penal institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Institutionalized intellectually handicapped	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Institutionalized mentally disabled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Committed patients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Intellectually handicapped outpatient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mentally disabled outpatient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnant women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fetus in utero	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Viable fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nonviable fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dead fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
In Vitro fertilization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Minors (under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For each "Yes", state what precautions you will use to obtain informed consent? Click here to enter text.		
How is information Obtained? (Include instruments used. Attach copy of instrument to this application.) Participants will be asked to respond to open-ended questions on-line through SurveyMonkey. See attachment. Phase II will be conducted through one-on-one interviews.		
Confidentiality – Are data recorded anonymously? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
If answer is "No", how will the study subjects' confidentiality be maintained? Click here to enter text.		
Benefit of research: Click here to enter text. Through a stronger understanding of the factors affecting international students' choices in selecting higher education institutions in the U.S., higher education officials can implement more informed plans on international student recruitment. Educators should seek to understand the college choice process of these students in order to keep up with the competition for recruiting international students. Furthermore, this study will inform policy makers because "when social scientists do not get involved, policies are made by others, such as politicians; and when not informed by scientific knowledge, they turn out to be less than adequate" (Kagıtcıbası, 1996, p.185). The findings will benefit strategic decision-makers and marketing professionals, recruiters, policy makers, and officials in higher education institutions in the United States.		
Possible risk to subjects: Click here to enter text. None		
Funding Source: N/A	Funded by: N/A	Grant Proposal Pending: N/A
Not Funded: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

**CHECKLIST:**

- Research protocol ☒
- Informed consent documents ☒
- Instruments used for data collection ☒
- CITI certificate of training on the protection of human subjects ☒

**If change in research occurs the Board must be notified before research is continued.**

SIGNATURES		
<b>Original Signatures are required. This application will not be processed until all signatures are obtained.</b>		
<b>Signature of the Principal Investigator</b> The undersigned accepts responsibility for the study, including adherence to DHHS, FDA, and UIW policies regarding protections of the rights and welfare of human subjects participating in the study. In the case of student protocols, the faculty supervisor and the student share responsibility for adherence to policies.		
<b>Print Name of Principal Investigator:</b> Anil Tan	<b>Signature of Principal Investigator:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 4/5/2013
<b>Signature of Faculty Research Supervisor – Required</b> By signing this form, the faculty research supervisor attests that he/she has read the attached protocol submitted for IRB review, and agrees to provide appropriate education and supervision of the student investigator above.		
<b>Print Name of Faculty Supervisor:</b> Dr. Osman Ozturgut	<b>Signature of Faculty Supervisor:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 4/5/2013
<b>Signature of Co-investigator(s)</b>		
<b>Print Name of Co-Investigator:</b> 1. Continue if there are more co-investigators. All must sign.	<b>Signature of Co-Investigator:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

APPROVAL SIGNATURE(S)		
<b>Signature of the IRB College/School Representative:</b>		
<b>Print Name of College/School Rep.:</b> Abszel Anoleto	<b>Signature of College/School Rep.:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> 4/9/2013
<b>Signature of the IRB Chair (if needed)</b>		
<b>Print Name of IRB Chair:</b> Kevin B. Richards	<b>Signature of IRB Chair:</b>  for Helen Smith	<b>Date:</b> 4/11/2013

<b>Application Number:</b> <u>13-04-002</u>
The Researcher must use copies of the <b>stamped</b> consent form. Other communications to the study subjects must also be stamped with the IRB approval number. Electronic surveys must have the IRB approval number inserted into the survey before they are used.
IRBs are filed by their number and helps the Graduate Office keep track of submissions and communications. Please refer to this number when communicating about the IRB.



## Appendix B: Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certification

12/7/12

Completion Report

### CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

#### Dreeben School of Education Curriculum Completion Report Printed on 12/7/2012

**Learner:** Anil Tan (username: aniltan)

**Institution:** University of the Incarnate Word

**Contact Information** Department: Dreeben School of Education

Email: atan@student.uiwbx.edu

**Dreeben School of Education:**

#### Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 12/07/12 (Ref # 9298259)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction	12/07/12	3/3 (100%)
Students in Research	12/07/12	10/10 (100%)
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Research with Children - SBR	12/07/12	4/4 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	12/07/12	4/4 (100%)
Internet Research - SBR	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees	12/07/12	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	12/07/12	5/5 (100%)
University of the Incarnate Word	12/07/12	no quiz

**For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.**

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director Office of Research Education  
CITI Course Coordinator

## Appendix C: Participant Consent Form (Survey)

Page 1 of 2

### Consent Agreement

#### SUBJECT CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A STUDY OF

Higher education institution choice behaviors of international students on U.S. campuses

University of the Incarnate Word

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student from the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, working on towards a doctoral degree in education with a concentration in international education and entrepreneurship.

The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons motivating international students to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study will explore 1) the motivations of international students to study abroad, 2) What attracts them to the United States, and 3) how they select institutions of higher education in the U.S. through surveying and interviewing the current international students in three higher education institutions in South Texas.

The survey is 18 questions long and the procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The survey includes *Sampling Criteria Questions, Demographic Questions and Survey*. There will be no compensation of any kind available for your participation.

As the researcher I understand that your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from this project at any point during the survey or skip any question you prefer not to answer. There are NO risks to you by participating in this research. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The survey will be kept in a locked and secured location and will be destroyed within a reasonable period of time upon completion of the study. All data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you.

If you have any questions about this research or your participation, you can email the dissertation chair, Dr. Osman Ozturgut - [ozturgut@uiwtx.edu](mailto:ozturgut@uiwtx.edu). Also, you can contact, if you experience any problem as a result of your participation in this research, with the UIW committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board, will answer questions about your rights as a research subject (1-210-829-2758 --- Dean of Graduate Studies and Research).

Page 2 of 2

By completing and submitting this survey, as a participant, you are providing your informed consent.

Sincerely,  
Anil Tan  
University of the Incarnate Word

University of the Incarnate Word  
IRB Approved  
Application No. 13-04-002

## **Appendix D: Participant Consent Form (Interview)**

### Consent Agreement

#### SUBJECT CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A STUDY OF

Higher education institution choice behaviors of international students on U.S. campuses

University of the Incarnate Word

IRB 1304002

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student from the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas, working on towards a doctoral degree in education with a concentration in international education and entrepreneurship.

The purpose of this study is to explore the reasons motivating international students to study at particular higher education institutions in the United States. More specifically, this study will explore 1) the motivations of international students to study abroad, 2) What attracts them to the United States, and 3) how they select institutions of higher education in the U.S. through surveying and interviewing the current international students in two higher education institutions in South Texas.

The survey is 18 questions long and the procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The survey includes Sampling Criteria Questions, Demographic Questions and Survey. There will be no compensation of any kind available for your participation.

As the researcher I understand that your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from this project at any point during the survey or skip any question you prefer not to answer. There are NO risks to you by participating in this research. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The survey will be kept in a locked and secured location and will be destroyed within a reasonable period of time upon completion of the study. All data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you.

If you have any questions about this research or your participation, you can email the dissertation chair, Dr. Osman Özturgut- [ozturgut@uiwtx.edu](mailto:ozturgut@uiwtx.edu). Also, you can contact, if you experience any problem as a result of your participation in this research, with the UIW committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board, will answer questions about your rights as a research subject (1-210-8292758) Dean of Graduate Studies and Research).

By completing and submitting this survey, as a participant, you are providing your informed consent.

Sincerely,

Anil Tan

University of the Incarnate Word

IRB 1304002

## Appendix E: Sampling Criteria Questions

Instructions: Please respond to each item by checking the appropriate box with the mouse or by typing your response in the box provided. If you have any questions, please ask a research team member.

### *Sampling Criteria Questions*

1. Are/Were you on F-1 student Visa?

☐Yes ☐No

2- Are/Were you on J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa?

☐Yes ☐No

2. Have you completed at least one academic semester at your current institution?

☐Yes ☐No

### *Demographics*

3. What is your gender?

☐Male ☐Female

4. What is your nationality?

Please specify, \_\_\_\_\_

5. What type of institution you are studying at?

☐A Community College

☐A four-year private university

☐A four-year public university

6. What is your current level of study?

☐Associates

☐Undergraduate

☐Graduate

☐Doctoral

7. Have you studied at another country other than the U.S. and your home country?

☐Yes ☐No

If yes, where \_\_\_\_\_

8. How long have you been studying in the U.S.?

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

9. Where did you complete your Associates degree (if completed)?

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

10. Where did you complete your undergraduate degree (if completed)?

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

11- Where did you complete your graduate degree (if completed)?

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

12- What major are you studying?

Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Survey Questions

### Survey

13. Please respond to the items on the scale from *very* important to *not* important as appropriate to indicate why you chose to study in the U.S. at your current institution. Please mark only one response for each statement.

Reasons for leaving home country.	Very-Important	Important	Neutral	Fairly-Important	Not-Important
Employment opportunities are much greater with a foreign degree upon return to home country	1	2	3	4	5
Future income is much greater with a foreign degree upon return to home country	1	2	3	4	5
My intention to learn, speak and write better in English	1	2	3	4	5
Higher benefits of having foreign degree than having national degree in home country	1	2	3	4	5
I was dissatisfied with the political instability at home country	1	2	3	4	5
I was dissatisfied with the quality of higher education at my home country	1	2	3	4	5
I was dissatisfied with the economic condition/situations at home country	1	2	3	4	5
I was dissatisfied with of ethnic and religious treatment in home country	1	2	3	4	5



I wanted to escape from overall country's problems	1	2	3	4	5
I had nothing else to do at home country	1	2	3	4	5
It is difficult to gain admission in institution at home country	1	2	3	4	5
There are no scholarships or financial aid for further education at my home country	1	2	3	4	5
My family (parents, siblings, or other relatives) encouraged me to study abroad	1	2	3	4	5

Reasons for coming to the United States	Very-Important	Important	Neutral	Fairly-Important	Not-Important
The quality of life style is higher than home country	1	2	3	4	5
There is a need to understand how different economies function	1	2	3	4	5
The quality of higher education in the U.S. is better than my home country	1	2	3	4	5
U.S. visa policies are friendly to foreign students	1	2	3	4	5
My desire to learn more about other countries/cultures	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of employment opportunities while studying	1	2	3	4	5
U.S. is closer to my home country	1	2	3	4	5
There are many choices of schools and academic programs in the U.S. than in my home country	1	2	3	4	5
I would like to live and work in the U.S. after graduation	1	2	3	4	5
I intend to do business with the United States in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I was influenced by the American movies and television programs	1	2	3	4	5

Reasons for specifically choosing the Institution	Very-Important	Important	Neutral	Fairly-Important	Not-Important
This institution has strong international student support services	1	2	3	4	5
Tuition is cheaper in this institution than other institutions	1	2	3	4	5
This institution offers scholarships and financial aid opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
It will cost less money to live here than other locations in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Application process for this institution is easier than others	1	2	3	4	5
It is safer place for me to study than my other options in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
My home institution has sister school/dual degree or other exchange programs with this institution	1	2	3	4	5
I was influenced by recruiters and recruitment materials of this institution	1	2	3	4	5
Admission to this institution is easier than other institutions	1	2	3	4	5
My family recommended this institution	1	2	3	4	5
My friends recommended this institution	1	2	3	4	5
My friend/family member graduated from this institution	1	2	3	4	5
I have/had family members/friends living in the location where my school is	1	2	3	4	5
This institution has higher rank than my other options	1	2	3	4	5
This institution has a high reputation in my home country	1	2	3	4	5
The good reputation of academic programs	1	2	3	4	5

The good reputation of faculty members	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of wide choices of academic programs that fit my goals	1	2	3	4	5
There are students from different cultures on campus	1	2	3	4	5
There are students from my home country on campus	1	2	3	4	5
Alumni support is strong both in the U.S. and at home country	1	2	3	4	5
Please write any other motivations (that you have not mentioned above) you have to study in the U.S.					

14- What is the main reason for you to study abroad?

Please specify, \_\_\_\_\_

15-What is the main reason for you to study abroad in the United States?

Please specify, \_\_\_\_\_

16- Why did you choose to study at your current institution?

Please specify, \_\_\_\_\_

17- How did you choose your current institution to study?

Please specify, \_\_\_\_\_

17. Would you be willing to meet with the researcher for a face-to-face interview to expand on your answers?    ☐Yes        ☐No

If yes, please provide your email address or telephone number and a time convenient for the researcher to contact you.

E-mail and/or Telephone number:

## **Appendix G: Interview Questions**

### Demographics

(Ice Breaker: Tell me little bit about your-self.)

1. What is your nationality?
2. What type of institution you are studying at?
3. What is your current level of study?
4. Have you studied at another country other than the U.S. and your home country?
5. How long have you been studying in the U.S.?
6. Where did you complete your Associates degree (if completed)?
7. Where did you complete your undergraduate degree (if completed)?
- 8- Where did you complete your graduate degree (if completed)?
- 9- What major are you studying?

### Interview Protocol

10. How did you decide to get a further education? (in general, not abroad)
11. Did you have specific educational and/or career plans? If so what are they?
12. How did you decide to study abroad?
13. How did you decide to study in the United States?
14. How did you learn about this institution?
15. How did you select your current institution?
16. What other options did you have before selecting this institution?
17. Is your family supportive of your goals? In what ways? Do they support your studies?
18. What problems or difficulties did you have when planning to come to this institution?

19. Have you considered studying in another institution either in the U.S. or in another country?
20. How did you learn about your other institutions you didn't choose?
21. What other options did you consider before choosing to study here?
22. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your experiences as an international student?