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**THE CHALLENGES THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE WHEN  
INTEGRATING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

Raja Almurideef

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education  
at  
Rowan University  
October 24, 2016

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

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## **Dedications**

I would like to dedicate my thesis work to my family, my husband Michael Baker, and my two children Shahla and Rakan who were always by my side and are very special to me. I also dedicate my work to my loving parents Ahmed and Shahnaz who supported me throughout the process.

A special appreciation goes to my husband without whom I would not have completed this journey. His constant support and encouragement helped me withstand and overcome all the obstacles.

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## Abstract

Raja Almurideef

THE CHALLENGES THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE WHEN  
INTEGRATING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES  
2015-2016

Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education

For the last two years, the number of international students aspiring to obtain a qualification in U.S. universities has been exponentially growing by 8% (IIE, 2014). The purpose of this study was to discuss the challenges faced by international students in the United States. Although international students benefit universities, they encounter adjustment difficulties that differ from those of domestic students, such as culture shock, homesickness, loss of social support, discrimination, language barriers, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and academic adjustments. This quantitative study was conducted with undergraduate international students from different countries enrolled at Rowan University during the spring semester of 2016. The effect of cultural differences and experiences of the international students can be used to expose the challenges which help them to integrate better into Rowan University. This study helps increase awareness about the adjustment factors that international students face so that universities can better help them succeed.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                           |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Abstract .....                                                            | v    |
| List of Tables .....                                                      | viii |
| Chapter I: Introduction.....                                              | 1    |
| Statement of the Problem.....                                             | 2    |
| Purpose of the Study .....                                                | 3    |
| Significance of the Study .....                                           | 3    |
| Assumptions and Limitation .....                                          | 4    |
| Operational Definition of Important Terms .....                           | 4    |
| Research Questions.....                                                   | 5    |
| Overview of the Study .....                                               | 5    |
| Chapter II: Review of the Literature .....                                | 7    |
| Introduction.....                                                         | 7    |
| Historical Overview of International Students in the United States .....  | 9    |
| Tinto's Theory of Retention and Social Integration.....                   | 11   |
| Understanding Academic Culture Shock of International Students .....      | 13   |
| Cultural Influences on International Students' Learning.....              | 15   |
| English Language Challenges and International Students' Performance ..... | 17   |
| International Student Success in the United States.....                   | 19   |
| Summary of the Literature Review .....                                    | 20   |
| Chapter III: Methodology .....                                            | 22   |
| Context of the Study .....                                                | 22   |
| Population and Sample Selection.....                                      | 23   |

## Table of Contents (Continued)

|                                                                        |    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Instrumentation .....                                                  | 23 |
| Data Collection .....                                                  | 24 |
| Data Analysis .....                                                    | 25 |
| Chapter IV: Findings.....                                              | 26 |
| Profile of the Population .....                                        | 26 |
| Analysis of the Data.....                                              | 28 |
| Research Question 1 .....                                              | 28 |
| Research Question 2 .....                                              | 30 |
| Research Question 3 .....                                              | 32 |
| Research Question 4 .....                                              | 34 |
| Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations ..... | 38 |
| Summary of the Study .....                                             | 38 |
| Discussion of the Findings.....                                        | 39 |
| Conclusions.....                                                       | 42 |
| Recommendations for Practice .....                                     | 43 |
| Recommendations for Further Research.....                              | 43 |
| References.....                                                        | 45 |
| Appendix A: Survey Instrument .....                                    | 49 |
| Appendix B: IRB Approval Letter.....                                   | 56 |
| Appendix C: Approval of the International Center Director .....        | 59 |
| Appendix D: Permission Letter .....                                    | 60 |
| Appendix E: Permission Letter .....                                    | 61 |



## List of Tables

| Table                                                                                               | Page |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Table 4.1. Demographic Information (N = 30).....                                                    | 27   |
| Table 4.2. Concerns and Needs of International Students (N = 30) .....                              | 29   |
| Table 4.3. Orientation Expectations (N = 30).....                                                   | 30   |
| Table 4.4. Orientation (N = 30) .....                                                               | 30   |
| Table 4.5. Enhancement Activities (N = 30) .....                                                    | 31   |
| Table 4.6. Campus Experiences at Rowan University (N = 30).....                                     | 33   |
| Table 4.7. Reflections on the General Experience at Rowan University and the<br>United States ..... | 35   |

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

International students are often excited to start the first semester of college in the United States, but there are some obstacles that naturally arise in a new country and academic environment. The experience gained during their studies in the United States positively influences the lives of other international students. This study sought to identify the factors that come into play when international students are transitioning to study in the United States. International students play an important part in U.S. higher education, because their diverse perspectives help internationalize American classrooms, and enhance the quality of teaching, research, communities, and the economy (Glass, Buus, & Braskamp, 2013). Ejiofo (2010) explained the issues that international students can face when they have new professors, such as some college professors wanting the learning experience to be collaborative, and encouraging participation inside and outside the classroom. International students may experience culture shock when they have to approach American faculty members.

There is a growing knowledge base about the issues international students face in American colleges and universities. A major part of the college experience happens after class, and for international students integrating socially can be a problem (Ejiofo, 2010). The academic advisor's responsibility is not just to register students for classes, but also to encourage them to be involved at the college, and become familiar with the academic curriculum. There are many ways that universities have addressed international students' needs; these include developing a global philosophy, the skills needed to understand, and

how sensitivity to international students' perspectives enhance their experiences in U.S. higher education institutions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study investigated the perceptions of selected international students attending a university in the United States. There are many international students who face challenges as they pursue higher education outside of their home countries. The success of international students depends on many factors, such as the adjustment to their new environment, academic pressure, finances, language barriers, and loneliness. The stressors that international students face need to be explored, but the language barrier is the first challenge that should be addressed for students who do not use English as their first language. The success of international students with the English language is important because it helps to build social relationships with other students, which can affect their academic performance (Yeh & Inose, 2003). According to Cheng and Erben (2012), Chinese students who use the English language often in college during their study in America become more successful in their language competency and their goals.

Additionally, Arthur (2004) discussed issues such as culture shock, alienation, and even simple things in daily life that may have a psychological impact on international students, which in turn may cause them to experience serious problems related to their academic and social experiences. International students are less likely to experience social and academic challenges if they have a good relationship with their academic advisor. International students are a part of both the academic and social community in the country where they live and study. That is why it is important to encourage

international students to integrate into college activities (Lin & Scherz, 2014). It is not easy for international students to adapt to a new learning environment because there are different styles of study in their home country.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges faced by international students during their study in the United States. The study focuses on the factors that may have some influence on international students' success in their academic and social lives, which are of great importance to international students. This study is also intended to give international students an opportunity to not only reflect on their own experiences and perspectives, but also to help other students become more successful as well. This research explores the need for greater support programs to assist international students with both general and individual needs. Additionally, American institutions, faculty, and students need to be made aware of the international students' experience, in order to better facilitate their adjustment.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study explored the challenges faced by international students in the USA using quantitative research. The findings may show how international students dealt with academic challenges, social communication, and cultural adjustment. According to the Institute of International Education (2014), the number of international students enrolled in the U.S. higher education institutions for the 2013/2014 academic year was 886,052. In order to meet these challenges, American institutions should recognize students' needs and effectively provide supportive campus resources and services. Conclusions from the

research findings could help eliminate or minimize the challenges international students have at colleges or universities.

### **Assumptions and Limitation**

This study involved a limited group of international students at Rowan during the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters. The research gathered focused on the reflective experiences of a small sample of international students, so the study may reveal some commonalities in the experience. Using a larger sample size could have provided more accurate information, and help discover the main issues that challenge the students. It is assumed that of the many issues faced by international students all are equally important to their success. This study is limited by the participants involved. Also, there is the potential for researcher bias as I am an international student enrolled in a master program at Rowan University. I have my own beliefs on what would help international students at Rowan and at other American universities.

### **Operational Definition of Important Terms**

1. Challenges: The challenges that international students face during their study in the United State such as language, culture, education style, and new professors.
2. Culture: The characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts.
3. Higher Education: Optional stage of formal learning that occurs after secondary education, typically received at colleges and universities.
4. Integration: The act of merging racial or religious group within an existing community.

5. International Students: Students attending American institutions of higher education and are not US citizens but hold a student visa, and are following the prevailing immigration rules attending Rowan University during the 2015/16 academic year.
6. Language Barrier: The difficulties faced when people do not speak the same language.
7. Perspectives: Point of view about something.

### **Research Questions**

The study sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the concerns and needs of selected international students prior to enrolling at Rowan University
2. What do selected international students report about the orientation activities and enhancement provided to them at Rowan University?
3. What do selected international students report about their campus experiences at Rowan University?
4. What do selected international students report about their general experiences at Rowan University and in the United States of America.

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter II discusses what attracts and motivates international students to come to the USA to further their education, and issues facing international student when they arrive at an America university. The history of international students is also discussed.

Chapter III discusses international students at Rowan University and the advances Rowan has made since its transformation from Glassboro State College. Also included in this chapter is a description of the context of the study, the population and sample selection, how data were collected and how the data were analyzed.

Chapter IV presents the findings, of the study in table and narrative form. Chapter V summarizes the study, discusses the findings, offers conclusions, and makes recommendations to improve practice and for future research.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

The value of an American education attracts international students from around the world. Each year, thousands of international students travel to the United States to study (Domville-Roach, 2007). The primary motivation for students to study abroad is to learn a foreign language and improve their career opportunities (Domville-Roach, 2007). The Institute of International Education (IIE, 2014) notes that new international student enrollment increased at U.S institutions by 7.5% in 2013 from 2012, and is expected increase over the next two years. The number of international students enrolled in the U.S. higher education institutions for the 2013/2014 academic year was 886,052; that means enrollment increased by 8% over the prior years (IIE, 2014). The highest numbers of international students are from Asian countries with China supplying the largest number of international students (235,597), followed by India (102,673), South Korea (68,047), Taiwan (21,266), and Japan (91,334), and the highest numbers of international students from non-Asian countries Canada, Mexico, Turkey, Germany, and the United Kingdom (IIE, 2014).

There are many benefits for international students who study in the United States in regards to an educational exchange between two countries; “higher-diversity” gives an opportunity for the faculty who are involved in the international student guidance in expanding and developing their perspectives and their thinking by interacting with



international cultures (Glass, Buus, & Braskamp, 2013). International students contribute to the education benefits of the financial security of American institutions (Domville-Roach, 2007). The study using detailed outlines of the data from NAFSA found that "the country supported 340,000 jobs and contributed \$26.8 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2013-2014 academic years" (NAFSA, 2003, p. 1). It has been noted that international students provide benefits generated on an academic basis to higher education through tuition and fees (NAFSA, 2003).

There are many studies that reveal challenges faced by international student in the United States. For example, Ejiofo (2010) conducted a survey on the adjustment problems of international students in the United States. Ejiofo (2010) described many problems for international students in Texas and California including financial aid, English language barriers, faculty, and administrative support. Also, Heyn (2013) explains the major issues for Saudi Arabian international students coming to the U.S. to study, include culture, education background, language, religion, family, economics, and gender issues.

For the purpose of this study, this literature review discusses, and addresses the gaps of expectations, culture, language, and academic advising challenges that international students face during their study in the United States. This chapter provides an overview of the history of international student access to higher education in the United States. The review provides a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study and discusses how to address the problems that face the achievement gaps for international students in the U.S. The review of literature focuses on some of the

experiences international students face including differences in culture, language barriers, adjustment problems, pedagogical challenges, and lack of support services. The literature also highlights some of the effective measures higher education institutions can take to help international student meet challenges of adjusting to study in the United States of America.

### **Historical Overview of International Students in the United States**

International students are a group of people from different countries who bring a diversity of cultures and educational background from their home countries that can be both useful and hindering to their new life in the American environment (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). Bevis and Lucas (2007) describe the history of foreign students who integrated into American colleges and universities since the 1920s. The enrollment number of students abroad by the mid-century had increased about 4% for international students in U.S. higher education which contributed to about one billion dollars to the American economy (Beavis & Lucas, 2007). In the 18th century international students were less lucky to enroll in American institutions because of immigration laws and policies that affected international student's opportunity in the U.S. for higher education (Becker & Kolster, 2012). More recently the U.S. Immigration Service has made the student visa policy easier through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) system by granting student visas for duration of study. This has opened the educational opportunities for international students to study higher education in America (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

There are many reasons to support international students in higher education that started in the early 1900s and provided opportunities for learning and development (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Because of increasing student mobility at higher education institutions in the United States international students have become an important demographic (Becker & Kolster, 2012). World War I and II, the Great Depression, the Cold War, and their aftermath are the primary world events that Bevis and Lucas describe being related to the development of international student exchange programs in higher education. In the 1980s international student's rates were growing at community colleges (Becker & Kolster, 2012). By the end of 20th century, the international student enrollment percentage was the highest in community colleges, compared to other institutions (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). After World War II, the United States invested a large amount of money in research and scholarship, and subsequently, these research funds attracted international scholars to U.S. institutions of higher learning (Thelin, 2004).

The growth of foreign students and the change of research through various technological and scientific advances helped make the United States remain competitive in the face of global challenges (Thelin, 2004). Unfortunately, for some reasons including security and visas issues "hundreds of Middle Eastern students withdrew from U.S. institutions and returned home rather than live in fear of reprisal after September 11, 2001" (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 382). NAFSA (2003) said "The task force believes strongly that international education is part of the solution to terrorism, not part of the problem" (p. 3). The issue of declining international student enrollment in American higher education institutions gave researchers the opportunity to explore and analyze the

problems of international student experiences during their study in the U.S. (Lee & Rice, 2007). The Institute of International Education (2014), described that “over 75% of institutions reported taking active steps in increasing or maintaining enrollment” (p. 7). The history of international students provides a comprehensive example of international student integration into institutions of American higher education, and their exchange programs, as well as the historical knowledge of international students’ impact on American higher education and society (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

### **Tinto’s Theory of Retention and Social Integration**

Tinto’s theory of Retention and Social Integration addresses student retention in higher education for students who decide whether to stay in or drop out of college. The Tinto model (1975, 1998) presents the negative result as failure, and dropout. Tinto (1975) suggests there are direct and indirect impacts on performance in college because students have a variety of educational experiences, and values as well as family socioeconomic status and community backgrounds before they enter college. According to Tinto (1975), individual and social attributes influences a student’s integration into higher education. The central idea of the “integration” is strongly predicted by international students’ degree of academic integration, and social integration to institutions. This integration requires participating in the student culture, both within and outside the immediate context of the learning environment or inside or outside the classroom (Tinto, 1998).

Tinto's model provides a useful way to identify and describe theoretical issues and external factors for programs of research and prospective studies. One of the ways in which Tinto's approach can find empirical answers is which of these levels determines a student's success. Tinto's (1975) model suggests that integration in both the social and academic realms has a positive impact on international student's goals and institutional commitment. Tinto (1998) defined retention and student success as educational goals whether they are course credits, career advancement, or achievement of new skills. Also, student success is the primary indicator of institutional performance, and reflects the overall quality of student learning on campus. The first principle of effective retention programs, assuring student success is institutional commitment to students (Tinto, 1993).

Eringa and Huei-Ling (2009) argue that the academic and social integration of international students in higher education is different from Tinto's model. According to Mannan (2007) there is a negative relationship between academic and social adjustment and study performance, which is in contrast to the theoretical model of Tinto. This analysis indicates that the academic success of students is primarily determined by academic integration, in particular by the degree of academic adjustment (Mannan, 2007). For instance, students who are involved in social activities may devote less time to academic activities, which leads to lower study performance and lower academic integration (Mannan, 2007). Because the number of international students on U.S. campuses is steadily increasing, it is important to provide international student support services that they can use to feel welcome (Mannan, 2007).

## Understanding Academic Culture Shock of International Students

International students play a crucial role in the internationalization of education, and they provide much influence to their home countries in the political, educational, and social realms once they return from their studies in the U.S. (Arthur, 2004). For many international students, adjusting to American culture can be difficult and at times frustrating because American customs and values are very different from those of their home country (Arthur, 2004). According to Myles and Cheng (2003), “Adaptability can be defined as the capacity for an individual to suspend or change behavior common to his or her native culture, to learn and accommodate some of the new cultural ways” (p. 249). Rienties, Nanclares, Jindal-Snape, and Alcott (2013) observed that international students from the same cultural background have highlighted how to become invaluable for classroom instruction, and incorporate group work, as compared to working with different cultural backgrounds.

Cultural values may influence how students learn and engage with instructional content, as well as how they relate with others (Rienties et al., 2013). American customs and values can be very different from those of their home country, and they might have “culture shock” (Rienties et al., 2013). According to Arthur (2004), international students need to develop cultural flexibility, because it is the best way to adapt to culture shock. Facilitating a diverse academic environment where international students can interact with fellow international students as well as domestic students is crucial to academic success (Rienties et al., 2013). Rienties et al. (2013) emphasize the benefits of engaging and assigning group work in classroom discussions and sharing of ideas with experiences

to improve international students' academic performance, and to gain the best from their classmates' experiences, perspectives, and cultures. Baier (2005) found through interviews with 45 international students who were studying at a Michigan community college that the different cultural and adjustment process to integrate into U.S. culture had a positive impact on student's success.

According to Aydinol (2013), culture is about the values of acknowledgment, interpretations, expectations, and behaviors. International students who come to the United States from different cultures find sociocultural adjustment is difficult for them. International students face the shock of being unfamiliar with the language of the new country (Aydinol, 2013). Baier (2005) describes culture shock for international students as the feeling of confusion, and anxiety from exposure to a new culture. Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010) stress how "academic culture shock is directly associated with the learning environment of an academic institution" (p. 5). Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the ecological system theory that a person's behavior cannot be separated from his\her environment. International students who come from different countries to study in the United States often think about what is appropriate or expected for their religious practices, family values and traditions, and societal norms. International student academic, cultural, and social experiences are important for students who study in American university (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Understanding of the students' needs and recognition of the challenges they face is important for their academic and social success.

## **Cultural Influences on International Students' Learning**

Understanding how cultural factors influence the improvement of international students in higher education is necessary for faculty to learn the best practices in the education of international students (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010). The majority of international students studying in America are used to different teaching styles and interactions with professors (Li et al., 2010). For example, the Saudi Arabia education system focuses on Islam in traditional curriculum, and segregates female and male students at all levels of education. As a result, the academic expectation of Saudi Arabian students in their county is dramatically different than their perceptions in studying in the United States (Heyn, 2013). International students often feel pressured and less knowledgeable compared to American students because they are unfamiliar with the American educational system and teaching styles (Myles & Cheng, 2003). According to Li et al. (2010), international students' learning experiences play a significant role in how they adjust to higher education in the U.S. As the result, they argue that it is the responsibility of American colleges and universities to provide opportunities, resources, and programs that promote academic success for international students (Li et al., 2010). The faculty and administration at American colleges and universities play a significant part of support for international students protecting them from unfair situations, providing a safe environment, and making them feel comfortable and able to be successful at school (Lee & Rice, 2007). The experiences and social integration of international students affect their academic success with the faculty, classroom, and campus community (Lee & Rice, 2007). "For example, even before 9/11 women who wore veils or saris had



difficulties integrating with campus life and suffer unpleasant experiences” (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 385). Eringa and Huei-Ling (2009) describe cultural differences attributed to national and ethnic identity and how both factors influence students socially. Higher education leaders must strive to understand the international students’ learning styles and various cultures, values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that distinguish international students. Moreover, they should help guide learning rates that align with international students’ learning styles by enhancing learning and improving academic performance (Li et al., 2010). The authors the importance of “increasing the awareness of the cultural diversity in the higher education settings to better support international students’ learning experiences and gain competitiveness in the international higher education market” (Li et al., 2010, p. 3). They point to evidence comparing Chinese students with other international students in the learning behavior of academic achievement that the increasing population of international students in higher education institutions by encouraging the student’s learning behavior and awareness of culture variety (Li et al., 2010). Lin and Scherz (2014) advocate using cultural strategies to decrease the academic challenges experienced by international graduate students from Asia. For example, by encouraging collaboration and promoting student interaction of cultural differences, some students become interested in learning about American sport. George, a Chinese student who lived 3 years in the United States said, “I learned how to play basketball and watch football” (Lin & Scherz, 2014, p. 25).

## **English Language Challenges and International Students' Performance**

Language difficulty is a big challenge for international students. Domville-Roach, (2007) states, "Language is one of the tools students must use to bring about interaction and sharing with others" (p. 37). A lack of English skills is likely to impact international students' academic performance (Kuo, 2011). For instance, English teaching in China has received more attention, and become more popular especially through writing, and reading books then speaking (Kuo, 2011). There are many Chinese students who do not see the importance of grammar and vocabulary in English (Kuo, 2011). Studies indicate that "English plays a crucial role in successfully completing their studies in an English-speaking learning environment" (Li et al., 2010, p. 4). Students who are less fluent in English have more trouble integrating in peer groups and experience lower levels of academic success. These various challenges often put international students at a greater risk for academic difficulties when compared to domestic students. Most American college and university admission departments require international students to have an English test certificate (TOEFL or IELTS) in order to evaluate their English language level abilities in writing, reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Li et al., 2010).

Language barriers can have a negative influence on making friends with Americans. Many international students do not feel comfortable building relationships with Americans because some Americans students find it difficult to understand them or do not have patience to listen to international students who cannot speak English fluently (Kuo, 2011). Most studies focus on English only for academic purposes, but also for the social adjustment of international students. The English language helps international

students build social relationships with other students, and it affects their academic performance (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yeh and Inose (2003) believe that providing higher education levels of English language in some academic classes helps international students with their academic success. Cheng and Erben (2012) found in their study of Chinese students who were studying in American institutions felt anxiety when using English language whether in writing, reading, or speaking in the classroom. Also, Cheng and Erben observed Chinese students who stayed longer in America became more proficient in their language competency as opposed to other students who stayed less time (Cheng & Erben, 2012). As the result, Kuo (2011) describes the factors of the students who feel comfortable in the classroom when they have a difficult time understanding the lecture by the professor.

Linguistic strategies focus on addressing linguistic and academic barriers of international students from Asia (Lin & Scherz, 2014). Linguistic strategies let international students help to improve their ability in practicing English in their daily life by watching television, and talking to American people in the cafeteria or supermarket. A Chinese student named Bruce indicated, “I go to different churches to make friends and practice my English” (Lin & Scherz, 2014, p. 25). Engaging international students in sharing their interests, experiences, and interactions led them to improve their language skills, and learning performance (Lin & Scherz, 2014).

## **International Student Success in the United States**

Moloney-Egnatios, Mielke, Trinh, and Young (2014) conducted a comparative analysis study on the international student journey in the United States and The Netherlands. The main goal of their research project was to identify the best practices with enrichment and welcome programs for international students in the United States and The Netherlands and to discover what practices serve to create a bond between the students, the host country, and the institution.

Harris (2013) studied the international students' attitudes on their experience at Rowan University. Harris found that most of negative attitudes and feelings were "perceived" during the initial transition for international students when they arrived in the United States of America. Harris also discussed that international students did in fact develop feelings of "belonging" to their college community. A majority of the potential struggles for international students were not realized or reported by students in his study (Harris, 2013).

Demetriou and Schmitz-Sciborski (2011) presents the factors that influence academic student retention in college, including academic preparation, academic engagement, social engagement, financing college, and demographic characteristics. Student satisfaction levels have been found to be one of the factors that affects the quality and overall effectiveness of increasing students' ability, and also has been more likely to positively influence student persistence, retention rates, and graduation rates (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Korobova (2012) also describes international students'

satisfaction can be in many various aspects such as satisfaction with educational experience and academic success, satisfaction between international and American students, and satisfaction with college, including administration, faculty, and campus. Attribution theory emphasizes that there are many causes for an individual's perceptions, which is a very important factor that influences motivation for learning has a positive impact student's performance (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). "Taking an attributional approach to working with these students may help students develop a sense of responsibility for their academic performance and a sense of control over their current situation" (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011, p. 7).

In 2009, more than 40,000 students had to receive diverse training by counseling program services with international counseling to support and promote diversity in its broadest sense (Reid & Dixon, 2012). International students tend to experience more psychological problems than American students as a result of this separation from love ones (McFarlane, 2013).

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

Some international students may experience difficulties due to cultural differences, depression, and anxiety. Some students may even experience the harmful effects of discrimination or racism. International students often experience trouble adjusting to a new culture with different values, traditions, and customs (Reid & Dixon, 2012). However, American institutions provide a great opportunity for international students studying abroad because they offer many opportunities for research and other

academic endeavors (Reid & Dixon, 2012). This study investigated the levels and quality of life experienced by international students studying higher education in the United States. The cultural experience of international students has a positive impact on bringing diversity and internationalization to the U.S. college communities. There are many factors that are frequently cited as keys to promoting cultural variation in the classroom. International students appear to adapt better and achieve a faster sense of belonging in discussion-filled classrooms characterized by positive interaction (Glass et al., 2013). For example, "leadership programs that stress collaboration, and engage in events and activities sponsored by their own culture, enhance international students' sense of community" (Glass et al., 2013, p. 12). Having foreign students in colleges can create a diverse collegiate culture, languages and educational experiences which can be beneficial for American students and professors (Glass et al., 2013). The American economy has benefited from international students in terms of tuition and other fees (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). In addition, international students provide opportunities for American students and communities to learn more about foreign languages, cultures, and traditions (Heyn, 2013). The experience of international students in the United States may include their engagement in purposeful activities that contribute to higher levels of learning and personal development (Glass et al., 2013). Thus, more research is needed to better understand the experiences of international students attending higher education institution in the United States of America.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### Context of the Study

This study investigated the challenges that international students experience in their academic studies at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University was founded in 1923 as a normal school, with a mission to train elementary school teachers for South Jersey classrooms; today it is comprehensive, coeducational, non-sectarian, and state-supported research institution attracting a variety of students, including international students (Rowan University, 2015).

The International Center provides services for international students such as helping them become orientated with all Academic Program at Rowan and improve their English language skills. The center also helps them maintain their academic requirements and support their needs during enrollment at Rowan University. The International Center helps increase diversity among the student population at Rowan University.

In 2007, Rowan University received more than a dozen awards for green initiatives. The *Princeton Review* included the William G. Rohrer College of Business in its edition of the “Best 296 Business Schools: 2015 Edition” from among more than 1,800 business schools nationwide. There are more than 14,000 students who can choose from 124 academic programs (Rowan University, 2015). Rowan has advanced through the rankings of regional universities on the strength of its excellent undergraduate programs, and its noteworthy development of a learning-centered environment.

## **Population and Sample Selection**

The population used in this study consisted of international students from Rowan University attending 2015- 2016 academic year. I acquired the number and names of the students from the International Center at Rowan. There were 102 international students with a F1 visa enrolled in different programs. There were 79 international undergraduate students who started in fall 2015, and 23 international graduate students. Only undergraduate international students were including in my study. The number of undergraduate international students was provided to me from the International Center at Rowan University. A total population study was conducted for data collection.

## **Instrumentation**

This study focused on the experiences of international students while studying at Rowan University. I used a survey as my data collection instrument. The survey was developed from a review of previous research on international students. The first survey I reviewed was developed by Moloney-Egnatios, Mielke, Trinh, and Young (2014) from the American University School of International Service Cultural Diplomacy and International Exchange Practicum. The permission was requested and granted from the authors, and the approval can be found in Appendix D. The other survey used was developed by Harris (2013) whose research focused on the experience of international students at Rowan University. Harris's permission was also granted and can be found in Appendix E. Both surveys gave me insights into creating my own unique set of questions.

The survey (Appendix A) measured the challenges of international students' levels of cultural adjustment, culture shock, cultural background, and English language



skills. Also the survey focused on international students' experiences with the U.S. culture from the student's point of view during their education at Rowan.

After receiving approval from the (IRB) (Appendix B), I had two people take my survey to check for readability of the survey. The first 14 questions in the survey provided demographic information of the students participating in the survey. Items 16-19 covered some orientation questions offered by Rowan University. Items 20-26 focused on adjustment experiences of international students to the Rowan community. Items 27-38 asked the international students to disclose what their campus experiences were like at Rowan University. The remaining items (39-53) focused on international students' general experiences at Rowan University. I asked students to return the survey within two weeks of acceptance. Items 27 to 53 followed a Likert scale based on a 5 point scale with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 given respectively to responses strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), not sure (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA).

To check for the reliability of the instrument a Cronbach Alpha test was administered with the Likert scale items (27-53). The coefficient measures for the Likert scale sections were 0.693, and 0.901 respectively; coefficient scores of 0.7 or above is an indicator of a stable and consistent instrument.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place during the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The International Center at Rowan provided the number of existing undergraduate international students to gather more detailed information about the context and challenges being examined. The director of the International Center, Jacqueline

McCafferty, gave her permission to administer the survey and provided a list of the international student's names and their email addresses (Appendix C). A total of 69 undergraduate international students received the survey by email around the end of April 2016 and they were given two weeks to complete the survey. A week later a reminder was sent to all the students asking them to participate in the survey. On May 13, 2016, an email was sent out to all the undergraduate international students informing them that the survey was closed.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis took place after the data were collected. The independent variables in this study included cultural background, gender, educational background, employment, marital status and how long the student had been studying in the United States. The dependent variables in this study included the academic success of the student, and their attitude toward their experience at Rowan University, including the orientation, enhancement activities, campus experience, and general experience at Rowan University.

I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to calculate descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

## Chapter IV

### Findings

#### Profile of the Population

The subjects of the study were the international students enrolled in the undergraduate programs at Rowan University the main campus in Glassboro in spring 2016. A total of 69 surveys were distributed with 30 surveys completed for a return rate of 43.5%. Table 4.1 shows the demographic distribution of the subjects; there were 18 females (60%) and 12 males (40%). The subjects were between the ages of 18 years and 27, with the majority (50%) being between the ages of 21 to 26 years old. The majority of the subjects were from the Middle East (30%), while 27% identified as others, Asian represented 23%, and 17% were from Europe, and only 3% were from Latin America. Table 4.1 also shows how long the subjects have been in the United States of America; 26% of the subjects reported that they have been in the US for one year, 22% have been here for two years, 19% have been here for three years, 19% have been here for four or more years, and 15% have been here for only one semester. The majority of the subjects (95%) were enrolled in the undergraduate programs and only 5% were enrolled in the ESL program. The majority of the subjects (44%) were second year students, 31% of them were in their first year, 19% in third year, and 6% in their fourth year. The subjects in this study were divided in 10 different programs in the university as follow; 19% engineering, 15% Math, 15% Education, 11% Computer, 11% Biology, 11% Business, 7% Geography, 4% Physics, 4% Communication, and 4% Nursing.

Table 4.1.

*Demographic Information (N=30)*

|                                  | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| <b>Gender</b>                    |          |          |
| Female                           | 18       | 60       |
| Male                             | 12       | 40       |
| Missing=0                        |          |          |
| <b>Age</b>                       |          |          |
| Under 18                         | 0        | 0        |
| 18-20                            | 6        | 20       |
| 21-26                            | 15       | 50       |
| 27 and older                     | 9        | 30       |
| Missing=0                        |          |          |
| <b>Country of origin</b>         |          |          |
| Europe                           | 5        | 17       |
| Asia                             | 7        | 23       |
| Latin America                    | 1        | 3        |
| Middle East                      | 9        | 30       |
| Other                            | 8        | 27       |
| Missing=0                        |          |          |
| <b>Length of Stay in America</b> |          |          |
| 1 semester                       | 4        | 15       |
| 1 year                           | 7        | 26       |
| 2 years                          | 6        | 22       |
| 3 years                          | 5        | 19       |
| 4 years or more                  | 5        | 19       |
| Missing=3                        |          |          |
| <b>Academic Program</b>          |          |          |
| Undergraduate                    | 17       | 95       |
| ESL                              | 1        | 5        |
| Missing=12                       |          |          |
| <b>Year enrolled</b>             |          |          |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> year             | 5        | 31       |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> year             | 7        | 44       |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> year             | 3        | 19       |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> year             | 1        | 6        |
| Missing=14                       |          |          |

Table 4.1. (Continued)

| <i>Demographic Information (N=30)</i> |          |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                       | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Major                                 |          |          |
| Math                                  | 4        | 15       |
| Biology                               | 3        | 11       |
| Education                             | 4        | 15       |
| Physics                               | 1        | 4        |
| Communication                         | 1        | 4        |
| Business/Finance                      | 3        | 11       |
| Nursing                               | 1        | 4        |
| Civil Engineering                     | 5        | 19       |
| Computer                              | 3        | 11       |
| Geography                             | 2        | 7        |
| Missing=1                             |          |          |

### **Analysis of the Data**

**Research question 1.** What are the concerns and needs of international students prior to enrolling at Rowan University?

Table 4.2. contains data on the concerns and needs selected international students had making their decision to study in the U.S., the factors that affected their decision on choosing Rowan University, and additional information prior to arriving at Rowan. The majority of the subjects reported having experience living or studying abroad (93%). Most of the subjects (30%) reported that academic success was the main concern about studying in the U.S., and 17% reported that language skills was a main concern, 17% were concerned about the personal adjustment, 17% were concerned about financial resources, 10% were concerned about fitting in socially, and 7% were concerned about health and safety. The largest percentage (30%) reported that the location of Rowan University was the main reason in choosing the institution, and 23% choose the university for professional opportunities whereas the financial aid provided, the academic

reputation, and the desire to learn a language were 13% each. Almost half of the subjects (43%) reported they wished they were provided more information about job opportunities, 27% wanted additional information on the academic program, 17% reported they needed information on housing, 7% choose language and culture, and only 3% choose other.

Table 4.2.

*Concerns and Needs of International Students (N=30)*

|                                   | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Studying abroad                   |          |          |
| Yes                               | 28       | 93       |
| No                                | 2        | 7        |
| Concerns                          |          |          |
| Fitting in socially               | 3        | 10       |
| Academic success                  | 9        | 30       |
| Language skills                   | 5        | 17       |
| Personal adjustment               | 5        | 17       |
| Health/safety                     | 2        | 7        |
| Getting things done               | 0        | 0        |
| Financial resource                | 5        | 17       |
| Missing=1                         |          |          |
| Reason to choose Rowan University |          |          |
| Location                          | 10       | 30       |
| Financial aid provided            | 4        | 13       |
| Academic reputation               | 4        | 13       |
| Desire to learn a language        | 4        | 13       |
| Professional opportunity          | 7        | 23       |
| To learn about culture            | 0        | 0        |
| Other                             | 1        | 3        |
| Missing=0                         |          |          |
| Helpful information               |          |          |
| Housing                           | 5        | 17       |
| Academic Program                  | 8        | 27       |
| Job opportunity                   | 13       | 43       |
| Language/culture                  | 2        | 7        |
| Other                             | 1        | 3        |
| Missing=1                         |          |          |

**Research question 2.** What do selected international students report about the orientation and enhancement activities provided to them at Rowan University?

To answer the second research question about the orientation and enhancement activities provided at Rowan University, Table 4.3. presents data on the orientation expectations; the majority of the subjects (79%) reported that the orientation met their expectations. Table 4.4. presents data on the benefits of the orientation; the majority of the participants (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that the orientation made them feel welcomed at Rowan University, and the majority of the subjects (78.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the orientation was a valuable experience.

Table 4.3.

*Orientation Expectations (N=30)*

|                               | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Orientation Meets expectation |          |          |
| Yes                           | 22       | 79       |
| No                            | 1        | 4        |
| Not applicable                | 5        | 18       |
| Missing=2                     |          |          |

Table 4.4.

*Orientation (N=30)*  
*(Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=2, Not Applicable=1)*

|                                                      | Strongly Agree |          | Agree    |          | Disagree |          | Strongly Disagree |          | Not Applicable |          |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|                                                      | <i>f</i>       | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>          | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>       | <i>%</i> |
| Orientation made me feel welcome at Rowan University | 11             | 39.3     | 13       | 46.4     | 1        | 3.6      | 1                 | 3.6      | 2              | 7.1      |
| <i>n= 28, M= 3.43, SD=.82</i>                        |                |          |          |          |          |          |                   |          |                |          |
| Missing=2                                            |                |          |          |          |          |          |                   |          |                |          |

Table 4.4. (Continued)

*Orientation (N=30)*

(*Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Disagree=3, Strongly Disagree=2, Not Applicable=1*)

|                                                                                    | Strongly Agree |          | Agree    |          | Disagree |          | Strongly Disagree |          | Not Applicable |          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
|                                                                                    | <i>f</i>       | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>          | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>       | <i>%</i> |
| Orientation was a valuable experience<br><i>n=28, M= 3.29, SD=.96</i><br>Missing=2 | 7              | 25       | 15       | 53.6     | 1        | 3.6      | 2                 | 7.1      | 3              | 10.7     |

Table 4.5. presents data on enhancement activities at Rowan University and the subjects' ability to connect with other students; nearly 80% of the subjects were able to connect with U.S. students, and 82% were able to build friendships with international students. The majority of the students (75%) did not have barriers to enter the Rowan community, and 92.9% found Rowan activities helpful. More than 70% of the subjects reported that they were comforted by the fact that their contributions were valued by their instructors.

Table 4.5.

*Enhancement Activities (N=30)*

|                                                   | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Meaningful friendship with U.S students           |          |          |
| Yes                                               | 22       | 78.6     |
| No                                                | 6        | 21.4     |
| Missing=2                                         |          |          |
| Meaningful friendship with international students |          |          |
| Yes                                               | 23       | 82.1     |
| No                                                | 5        | 17.9     |
| Missing=2                                         |          |          |



Table 4.5. (Continued)

| <i>Enhancement Activities (N=30)</i>            |          |          |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
|                                                 | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> |
| Meaningful<br>friendship with<br>Rowan students |          |          |
| Yes                                             | 25       | 89.2     |
| No                                              | 3        | 10.7     |
| Missing=2                                       |          |          |
| Rowan activities<br>were helpful                |          |          |
| Yes                                             | 26       | 92.86    |
| No                                              | 2        | 7.14     |
| Missing=2                                       |          |          |
| Barriers to enter<br>the Rowan<br>community     |          |          |
| Yes                                             | 7        | 7        |
| No                                              | 21       | 21       |
| Missing=2                                       |          |          |

**Research question 3.** What do selected international students report about their campus experiences at Rowan University?

To answer the third research question, Table 4.6. presents data on the students' experience at Rowan University and specifically on the interaction with the instructors and on students' integration. The items are arranged by activity level based on mean scores from most to least active. More than 70% of the subjects very much or moderately agreed that their contributions were valued by their instructors, and 50% of the subjects very much or moderately agreed that they were supported by people on campus on both the individual and the academic level. Only 3% of the subjects moderately agreed that

sometimes the instructors simply do not listen to what they have to say and only 3% moderately agreed that the instructors sometimes ignore their comments or questions.

Table 4.6.

*Campus Experiences at Rowan University (N=30)*  
*(Not at all=1, Slightly=2, Somewhat=3, Moderately=4, Very Much=5)*

|                                                                                                                                         | Very much |          | Moderately |          | Somewhat |          | Slightly |          | Not at all |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                         | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>   | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>   | <i>%</i> |
| It is comforting to know that my contributions are valued by my instructors<br><i>n= 27, M= 3.85, SD=1.43</i><br>Missing=3              | 13        | 48.2     | 6          | 22.2     | 3        | 11.1     | 1        | 3.2      | 4          | 14.8     |
| People on campus are generally supportive of my academic needs<br><i>n= 28, M= 3.50, SD=1.15</i><br>Missing=2                           | 7         | 25       | 7          | 25       | 8        | 28.6     | 5        | 17.9     | 1          | 3.6      |
| People on campus are generally supportive on my individual needs<br><i>N= 28, M= 3.32, SD=1.26</i><br>Missing=2                         | 6         | 21.4     | 8          | 28.6     | 5        | 17.9     | 7        | 25       | 2          | 7.1      |
| I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people would be disappointed if I did not<br><i>n= 27, M=3.04, SD=1.45</i><br>Missing=3 | 7         | 25.93    | 2          | 7.41     | 9        | 33.33    | 3        | 11.11    | 6          | 22.22    |
| There are people at Rowan University who are concerned about my future<br><i>n=28, M=2.93, SD= 1.39</i><br>Missing=2                    | 4         | 14.3     | 7          | 25       | 7        | 25       | 3        | 10.7     | 7          | 25       |

Table 4.6. (Continued)

*Campus Experiences at Rowan University (N=30)*

*(Not at all=1, Slightly=2, Somewhat=3, Moderately=4, Very Much=5)*

|                                                                                                                                                           | Very much |          | Moderately |          | Somewhat |          | Slightly |          | Not at all |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                                           | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>   | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>f</i>   | <i>%</i> |
| I often feel isolated when involved in student activities<br><i>n= 28, M=2.36, SD=1.39</i><br>Missing=2                                                   | 3         | 10.7     | 3          | 10.7     | 7        | 25       | 3        | 10.7     | 12         | 42.9     |
| Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at the university.<br><i>n= 30, M= 2.32, SD=1.23</i><br>Missing=2 | 2         | 7.1      | 2          | 7.1      | 9        | 32.1     | 5        | 17.9     | 10         | 35.7     |
| Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan University<br><i>n= 30, M=2.25, SD=1.38</i><br>Missing=2                                                                  | 4         | 14.3     | 1          | 3.6      | 4        | 14.3     | 8        | 28.6     | 11         | 39.3     |
| I often feel socially inadequate at Rowan University<br><i>n= 30, M=1.85, SD=.97</i><br>Missing=3                                                         | 0         | 0        | 2          | 7.4      | 5        | 18.5     | 7        | 25.9     | 13         | 48.2     |
| I often feel my instructors care more about other things than me<br><i>n= 28, M=1.54, SD=1.02</i><br>Missing=2                                            | 1         | 3.6      | 1          | 3.6      | 2        | 7.1      | 4        | 14.3     | 20         | 71.4     |
| Sometimes my instructors simply do not listen to what I have to say<br><i>n= 28, M=1.46, SD=.82</i><br>Missing=2                                          | 0         | 0        | 1          | 3.6      | 3        | 10.7     | 4        | 14.3     | 20         | 71.4     |
| My instructors sometimes ignore my comments or questions<br><i>n= 28, M= 1.36, SD=.77</i><br>Missing=2                                                    | 0         | 0        | 1          | 3.6      | 2        | 7.1      | 3        | 10.7     | 22         | 78.6     |

**Research question 4.** What do selected international students report about their general experiences at Rowan University and in the United States of America?

To answer the fourth research question, Table 4.7. presents data on the general and over all experience of the students at Rowan University. The items are arranged by level of agreement based on mean scores from most to least positive. More than 90% of the subjects agreed or strongly agreed that they liked Rowan University and more than 80% of the subjects agreed and strongly agreed that the USA is a land of opportunity, and more than 75% agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed their time in the USA. Nearly 7% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt isolated as international students at Rowan University, and about 10% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt they received unequal treatment because of their color.

Table 4.7.

*Reflections on the General Experience at Rowan University and the United States (N=30)*  
*(Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Not Sure=3, Agree=4, Strongly=5)*

|                                                                              | Strongly agreed |      | Agree    |      | Not Sure |      | Disagree |     | Strongly Disagree |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|                                                                              | <i>f</i>        | %    | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i> | %   | <i>f</i>          | %   |
| The USA is a land of opportunity<br><i>n=28, M=4.11, SD=.90</i><br>Missing=2 | 10              | 35.7 | 13       | 46.4 | 4        | 14.3 | 0        | 0   | 1                 | 3.6 |
| I really like Rowan University<br><i>n= 28, M=4.04, SD=0.82</i><br>Missing=2 | 6               | 21.4 | 20       | 71.4 | 0        | 0    | 1        | 3.6 | 1                 | 3.6 |

Table 4.7. (Continued)

*Reflections on the General Experience at Rowan University and the United States (N=30)*  
*(Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Not Sure=3, Agree=4, Strongly=5)*

|                                                                                                                | Strongly agreed |      | Agree    |       | Not Sure |      | Disagree |      | Strongly Disagree |      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|----------|-------|----------|------|----------|------|-------------------|------|
|                                                                                                                | <i>f</i>        | %    | <i>f</i> | %     | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i>          | %    |
| I enjoy my time in America<br><i>n</i> = 27, <i>M</i> =3.85, <i>SD</i> =1.08<br>Missing=3                      | 7               | 25.9 | 14       | 51.8  | 3        | 11.1 | 1        | 3.7  | 2                 | 7.4  |
| Americans are easy to get along with<br><i>n</i> =28, <i>M</i> =3.79, <i>SD</i> =.94<br>Missing=2              | 5               | 17.8 | 16       | 57.1  | 4        | 14.2 | 2        | 7.1  | 1                 | 3.5  |
| The transition to studying at Rowan was easy<br><i>n</i> =27, <i>M</i> =3.41, <i>SD</i> =1.10<br>Missing=3     | 4               | 14.8 | 11       | 40.7  | 5        | 18.5 | 6        | 22.2 | 1                 | 3.7  |
| I feel challenged to fit in at Rowan University<br><i>n</i> = 30, <i>M</i> =2.93, <i>SD</i> =1.21<br>Missing=3 | 3               | 11.1 | 7        | 25.9  | 5        | 18.5 | 9        | 33.3 | 3                 | 11.1 |
| Adjusting to American culture was difficult<br><i>n</i> =27, <i>M</i> =2.89, <i>SD</i> =1.37<br>Missing=3      | 4               | 14.8 | 7        | 25.9  | 3        | 11.1 | 8        | 26.6 | 5                 | 18.5 |
| Others are bias towards me<br><i>n</i> = 28, <i>M</i> = 2.54, <i>SD</i> =1.02<br>Missing=2                     | 1               | 3.6  | 3        | 10.71 | 11       | 39.3 | 8        | 28.6 | 5                 | 17.9 |
| I am treated differently in social situations<br><i>n</i> = 28, <i>M</i> =2.43, <i>SD</i> =1.15<br>Missing=2   | 1               | 3.6  | 5        | 17.9  | 6        | 21.4 | 9        | 32.1 | 7                 | 25   |
| I am denied what I deserve<br><i>n</i> =27, <i>M</i> = 2.37, <i>SD</i> =1.06<br>Missing=3                      | 1               | 3.7  | 3        | 11.1  | 7        | 25.9 | 10       | 37.0 | 6                 | 22.2 |

Table 4.7. (Continued)

*Reflections on the General Experience at Rowan University and the United States (N=30)*  
*(Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Not Sure=3, Agree=4, Strongly=5)*

|                                                                                                            | Strongly agreed |     | Agree    |      | Not Sure |      | Disagree |      | Strongly Disagree |      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|-------------------|------|
|                                                                                                            | <i>f</i>        | %   | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i> | %    | <i>f</i>          | %    |
| I feel that some people discriminate against me<br><i>n=28, M=2.36, SD=1.01</i><br>Missing=2               | 0               | 0   | 4        | 14.3 | 9        | 32.1 | 8        | 28.6 | 7                 | 25   |
| I feel isolated as an international student at Rowan<br><i>n= 30, M=2.32, SD=.85</i><br>Missing=2          | 1               | 3.6 | 1        | 3.6  | 7        | 25   | 16       | 57.1 | 3                 | 10.7 |
| I feel that I received unequal treatment because of my race<br><i>n= 28, M=2.32, SD=1.08</i><br>Missing=2  | 0               | 0   | 6        | 21.4 | 6        | 21.4 | 9        | 32.1 | 7                 | 25   |
| I feel that I received unequal treatment because of my color<br><i>n=28, M= 2.18, SD=.93</i><br>Missing=2  | 0               | 0   | 3        | 10.7 | 6        | 21.4 | 12       | 42.9 | 7                 | 25   |
| I have contemplated dropping out of Rowan and going back home<br><i>n=26, M=2.12, SD=1.25</i><br>Missing=4 | 2               | 7.7 | 7.7      | 4    | 4        | 15.4 | 7        | 26.9 | 11                | 42.3 |

## Chapter V

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

This study investigated the experiences of selected undergraduate international students studying at Rowan University during the 2015/2016 academic year. The study focused on the challenges international students face with the ability to adjust to a new culture, the language, academia, and socialization with other students. It also looked at the importance of orientation in preparing the students for study at Rowan University. Also, this study investigated the students' general experiences at Rowan University and in the United State of America.

The subjects of the study were international students enrolled in undergraduate programs at Rowan University on the main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey during the spring of 2016. The survey used in this study was developed from a review of previous research on international students. The survey consisted of 53 items divided into 6 sections; the first section collected demographic data about the subjects; the second part was on orientation; the third section was on the enhancement activities; the fourth section was on the students' experience on campus; the fifth section was on students' general experience at Rowan; and the sixth section was on the students' reflections on their overall experience at Rowan and in the United States of America. The number of completed surveys was 30, which represented a 43.5% response rate.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The literature review revealed the many challenges international students face when studying in the United States; financial, language, administrative support, culture, religion, gender, and education (Ejiofo, 2010). The level each challenge affects students can be different based on the country of origin. According to Heyn (2013), the major concerns Saudi Arabian students face when studying in the U.S. are religion, language, and gender issues. The literature also describes the factors that influence student retention in college, including academic preparation, academic engagement, social engagement, financing college, and demographic characteristics (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Student satisfaction levels have been found to be one of the factors that affect the quality and overall effectiveness and positively influence student persistence, retention rates, and graduation rates (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011). Korobova (2012) describes international students' satisfaction can be in many various aspects such as satisfaction with the educational experience and academic success, satisfaction between international and American students, and satisfaction with college, including administration, faculty, and campus.

This study investigated the many challenges the international students faced and their main concerns such as academic success, language, personal adjustment, financial



resources, fitting in socially, and health and safety. The literature shows that the language is one of the biggest challenges for international students (Domville-Roach, 2007), and students who are not fluent in English have more trouble integrating in group activities (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010). Since only 13.3% of the subjects reported that the language was of a big concern for them, it can be inferred the majority of the students did not have issues integrating into campus activities.

The literature also shows different views on the impact of social integration on academic performance. According to Tinto (1975) there is a positive relationship between social integration and academic success and retention; integration requires participating in the students' culture within and outside the immediate context of the learning environment, and according to Lee and Rice (2007), the experiences and social integration of international students affects their academic success with the faculty, classroom, and campus community. Whereas, Mannan (2007) concluded that there is a negative relationship between academic and social adjustment and study performance. This analysis indicates that academic success is primarily determined by academic integration, in particular by the degree of academic adjustment (Mannan, 2007). According to Mannan, students who are involved in social activities may devote less time to academic activities, which leads to lower study performance and lower academic integration. This study showed that the majority of the international students were satisfied with their overall experience at Rowan University, and they reported that the activities on campus helped them get more connected with U.S. students. The majority of the subjects also reported that people on campus were supportive of their individual and

academic needs. The theme of support was evident in this study and it was of a great importance for the subjects; the majority of the students reported that the support for their academic and individual needs made them feel more connected and more integrated.

According to Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010), it is important that faculty members understand the cultural factors that influence the improvement of international students in higher education. The learning experience plays a significant role in how international students adjust to higher education in the U.S. (Li et al., 2010). The researchers argue that it is the responsibility of American colleges and universities to provide opportunities, resources, and programs that promote academic success for international students (Li et al., 2010).

Harris (2013) also emphasized that in order to encourage international student's academic success at Rowan University, it is important that faculty members and advisors understand international student needs when they face many challenges in their studies, and prepare to meet students not only academically but also socially and culturally (Harris, 2013).

The literature shows that thousands of international students travel to the United States to study with the primary motivation being to improve their career opportunity (Domville-Roach, 2007) and that was also noted in the study, as the majority of the subjects reported that the United States of America is a land of opportunity. The benefit can be reciprocal since the international students contribute to the financial security for American institutions (Domville-Roach, 2007). Data from NAFSA found that "the

country supported 340,000 jobs and contributed \$26.8 billion to the U.S. economy during the 2013-2014 academic years" (NAFSA, 2003, p. 1).

## **Conclusions**

Higher education is a challenging experience for students of all backgrounds and the transition is deemed not easy and presents many difficulties. This study investigated the challenges that are more unique to the international students in higher education in the United States and also shadowed on the practices that can enhance their academic performance. The findings illustrated the importance of a strong support system for the international students, since these students have special needs and many more concerns than their U.S. fellows. Even though most of the students were satisfied with the overall experience at Rowan University, it was noted that the students wished they received more information about housing, academic programs, job opportunities, culture, and language prior to starting their journey at Rowan University. Hence, the orientation can play a great role in introducing the international students to the institution and to the different programs offered.

The results of this study confirmed the findings in prior studies on the type of challenges international students face in higher education and the activities that enhance their performance. Even though the majority of the students reported that access to Rowan was smooth, and that they did not feel excluded, still more activities and cross cultural events should be planned and implemented to strengthen the international program and increase the body of this population.

## **Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following suggestions are presented:

1. Rowan should invest more resources in the International Center and link it to the strategic planning for development and expansion.
2. Provide multicultural activities on campus to raise awareness about international students' needs.
3. Encourage the International Center to work closer with other organizations within the University.
4. Encourage the International Center to conduct periodic surveys to assess the experience of international students.
5. Enhance the communications between the director of the International Center and the instructors of international students.
6. Invest more time on the orientation to cover broader topics and concerns related to international students.
7. Employ academic advisors to work closely with international students.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further in-depth qualitative research studies on the challenges international students face in higher education in the United States are necessary in order to understand the needs of these students, improve their experiences, and increase their chances for success. The importance of students' integration into the U.S. culture and the relationship with their success as students suggest that more emphasis should be placed on social events and thus more research should be conducted to create more multi-cultural and

inclusive activities. A follow up study can also be conducted with the subject students in a year or two to validate the findings in terms of retention and graduation rates.

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## Appendix A

### Survey Instrument

#### Survey on International Students Experiences

#### At Rowan University

2016

Dear International Student,

I am working on a research paper about the challenges international students face during their studies at Rowan University, please be so kind to fill out this questionnaire. Please use your personal experience and information to help me improve the quality of service offered to international students so that you can look back on your time here as a positive and enriching experience.

**Please return your completed survey by May 13 to [almurider0@students.rowan.edu](mailto:almurider0@students.rowan.edu)**

Thank you so much for your help!

Raja Almurideef

#### Demographics

##### 1) What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

##### 2) What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-20
- 27 and older

##### 3) What is your country of origin?

- Europe
- Asia
- Latin America
- Middle East
- Other:

**4) How long have you been in America?**

- 1 semester
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 or more years

**5) Which academic program are you in?**

- Undergraduate
- ESL

**6) What year are you enrolled in?**

- 1st Year
- 2nd Year
- 3rd Year
- 4th Year

**7) What is your major?**

**8) Before coming to Rowan University, what was your greatest concern about studying in the USA?**

Please check one

- Fitting in socially
- Academic success
- Language skills
- Personal adjustment
- Health/safety
- Getting things done
- Financial resources
- Other:

**9) Do you have previous experience studying or living abroad?**

- Yes
- No

**10) If yes please explain briefly**

**11) Where did you get the information about studying at Rowan University?**

**12) Why did you choose to study in Rowan University?**

Please check all that apply

- Location
- Financial aid provided
- Academic reputation
- Desire to learn a language
- Professional opportunities
- To learn more about the culture
- Other:

**13) What additional information do you wish you had been provided before arrival at Rowan? Please check all that apply**

- Housing
- Information about academic program
- Job opportunities
- Language/culture
- Other:

**14) What was the most valuable information you received before your arrival in the host country?**

- Housing
- Information about academic program
- Job opportunities
- Language/culture

Other:

**Orientation Questions**

**15) What information was most useful to you when you attended the orientation at Rowan?**

**16) Did the orientation meet your expectations?**

- Yes
- No
- Not Applicable

**17) Orientation made me feel welcome at Rowan?**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not Applicable

**18) Orientation was a valuable experience \***

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not Applicable

**19) How could orientation be improved?**

**Enhancement Activities**

**20) How do you feel Rowan University can help you better adjust and integrate into the campus community?**

**21) Have you made meaningful friendships with citizens of your host country?**

- Yes
- No

**22) Have you made meaningful friendships with other international students?**

- Yes
- No

**23) Have you made meaningful friendships with students at Rowan University?**

- Yes
- No

**24) Do you find these Rowan Activities helpful?**

- Yes
- No

**25) Did you find barriers to entering the Rowan community?**

- Yes
- No

**26) If so, what type?**

### Campus Experiences at Rowan University

|                                                                                                               | Not at all | Slightly | Somewhat | Moderately | Very much |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| 27) I often feel my instructors care more about other things than me.                                         |            |          |          |            |           |
| 28) People on campus are generally supportive on my individual needs                                          |            |          |          |            |           |
| 29) I often feel isolated when involved in student activities.                                                |            |          |          |            |           |
| 30) Sometimes my instructors simply do not listen to what I have to say.                                      |            |          |          |            |           |
| 31) Sometime I get so wrapped up in my personal problems that I isolate myself from others at the university. |            |          |          |            |           |
| 32) It is comforting to know that my contributions are valued by my instructors.                              |            |          |          |            |           |
| 33) Sometimes I feel alone at Rowan University.                                                               |            |          |          |            |           |
| 34) I sometimes feel pressured to do better because people would be disappointed if I did not.                |            |          |          |            |           |
| 35) People on campus are generally supportive of my academic needs.                                           |            |          |          |            |           |
| 36) I often feel socially inadequate at Rowan University.                                                     |            |          |          |            |           |
| 37) My instructors sometimes ignore my comments or questions.                                                 |            |          |          |            |           |
| 38) There are people at Rowan University who are concerned about my future.                                   |            |          |          |            |           |

### General Experiences at Rowan University

|                                                                   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Not Sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 39) I am treated differently in social situations                 |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 40) Others are bias towards me.                                   |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 41) I feel that some my people discriminate against me.           |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 42) I feel that I received unequal treatment because of my race.  |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 43) I feel that I received unequal treatment because of my color. |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 44) I am denied what I deserve.                                   |                   |          |          |       |                |

### Reflection on Your Entire Experience at Rowan University and the USA

|                                                                    | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Not Sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|-------|----------------|
| 45) I enjoy my time in America                                     |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 46) Americans are easy to get along with.                          |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 47) I really like Rowan University.                                |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 48) Adjusting to American culture was difficult.                   |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 49) I have contemplated dropping out of Rowan and going back home. |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 50) The transition to studying at Rowan was easy.                  |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 51) I feel isolated as an international student at Rowan.          |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 52) The USA is a land of opportunity.                              |                   |          |          |       |                |
| 53) I feel challenged to fit in at Rowan University.               |                   |          |          |       |                |

**Thank you for participating in my survey!**



**Appendix B**  
**IRB Approval Letter**

5/24/2016 <https://eirb.rowan.edu/eirb/Doc/0/GG9O7IR7PN24H7VHC2VVU4CKAA/fromString.html>

<https://eirb.rowan.edu/eirb/Doc/0/GG9O7IR7PN24H7VHC2VVU4CKAA/fromString.html> 1/2

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If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office \*\*

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111

IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman

IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy

Effective Date: 4/21/2016

**eIRB Notice of Approval**

**STUDY PROFILE**

Study

ID: [Pro2016000963](#)

Title: THE CHALLENGES THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE WHEN INTEGRATING INTO HIGHER

EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Principal Investigator: Burton Sisco Study Coordinator: None

CoInvestigator(s): Raja Almurideef Other Study Staff: None

Sponsor: Department Funded Approval Cycle: Twelve Months

Risk Determination: Minimal Risk Device Determination: Not Applicable

Review Type: Expedited Expedited Category: 7

Subjects: 100

## CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

Submission Type: Research Protocol/Study Submission Status: Approved

Approval Date: 4/21/2016 Expiration Date: 4/21/2017

Pregnancy

Code:

No Pregnant Women as

Subjects

Not Applicable

Pediatric

Code:

Not Applicable

No Children As

Subjects

Prisoner

Code:

Not Applicable

No Prisoners As

Subjects

Protocol:

Survey

Alternate

Consent

PROTOCOL

TEMPLATE

Consent: There are no items to display

Recruitment

Materials: There are no items to display

\* Study Performance Sites:

Glassboro Campus Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

5/24/2016 <https://eirb.rowan.edu/eirb/Doc/0/GG9O7IR7PN24H7VHC2VVU4CKAA/fromString.html>

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
3. Expiration of IRB Approval: If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.
4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.
5. Unanticipated Problems: Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
6. Protocol Deviations and Violations: Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
7. Consent/Assent: The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.
8. Completion of Study: Notify the IRB when your study has been stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor or the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application or final report.
9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.
10. **Letter Comments:** *There are no additional comments.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipients(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.

## Appendix C

### Approval of the International Center Director

Mon, May 2, 2016 at 2:47 PM

Dear students,

First, I want to thank you for attending the International Student Party last Thursday. It was great to see all of you!

Second, I would like to ask for your assistance. One of our international graduate students is doing an international student survey as part of her Master's Thesis. The link to this survey is below. I hope you will complete this survey, as it will assist a fellow graduate student. You can learn more about the purpose of the survey when you click on the link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7GJBXYH>

Thank you,

Jackie

Jacqueline McCafferty

Director, International Center +18562564292

Director, English Language Programs +18563612914

Rowan University

[mccafferty@rowan.edu](mailto:mccafferty@rowan.edu)

## Appendix D

### Permission Letter

Feb 25, 2016

Raja Almurideef

Rowan University  
Department of Education Services and Learning Ship

771 Andrews Ave  
Williamstown New Jersey, 08094

**Dear Corderrol M. Harris,**

I am a master of arts in higher education student from Rowan University writing my dissertation titled THE CHALLENGES THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE WHEN INTEGRATING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Burton R. Sisco, Professor of Higher Education, who can be reached at phone/email. The College of Education and Leadership Department Rowan University Chair can be contacted at 856/256-4500, ext. 3717 (o); 856/241-9624 (h) or by email at sisco@rowan.edu

I found your research to be very interesting and educational. I would like your permission to use ATTITUDES ON THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY survey/questionnaire instrument in my research study at Rowan University. I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through e-mail:

almurider0@students.rowan.edu

Sincerely,

Raja Almurideef

**Appendix E**  
**Permission Letter**

Feb 25, 2016

Raja Almurideef

Rowan University  
Department of Education Services and Learning Ship

771 Andrews Ave  
Williamstown New Jersey, 08094

**Dear Julie Trinh,**

I am a master of arts in higher education student from Rowan University writing my dissertation titled THE CHALLENGES THAT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FACE WHEN INTEGRATING INTO HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES, under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Burton R. Sisco, Professor of Higher Education, who can be reached at phone/email. The College of Education and Leadership Department Rowan University Chair can be contacted at 856/256-4500, ext. 3717 (o); 856/241-9624 (h) or by email at sisco@rowan.edu

I found your research to be very interesting and educational. I would like your permission to use The International Student Journey in the United States and The Netherlands: A Comparative Analysis survey/questionnaire instrument in my research study at Rowan University. I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:

- I will use the surveys only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.
- I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through e-mail:

almurider0@students.rowan.edu

Sincerely,

Raja Almurideef