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She is currently a Just-Julian Fellow conducting independent research on international student experiences at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, a Spencer ICQCM Scholar, and the founder of International HBCU Xchange.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established by missionaries and religious groups with the goal of educating formerly enslaved Black people (Anderson, 1988). During the time of 'separate but equal,' these colleges were the only integrated institutions in the United States and have served students from all populations for decades (Gasman, 2008). Often absent from discussions of HBCU student body composition, international students enrolled in HBCUs as early as 1869 (Howard University Archives). Currently, international students make up a small minority on HBCU campuses, but they are present at most HBCUs.

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of international student support services (ISSS) in creating a welcoming environment for international students at HBCUs. Using a qualitative approach, I interviewed international student support representatives at 16 HBCUs across the country, including two and four-year, public and private colleges. Currently, there is little to no research that specifically examines international student enrollment trends and ISSS at HBCUs. This study highlights the advances of ISSS at HBCUs including recruitment, preparation before and after enrollment social supports, and activities, as they pertain to international students. Additionally, this study makes recommendations for HBCUs as they seek to recruit and create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for international students. The guiding questions for this research study are:

1. What marketing strategies are used to recruit international students?
2. What role does the international student support office play in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for international students at HBCUs?

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BACKGROUND

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were founded to provide education to formerly enslaved Black people. HBCUs were the only integrated higher education institutions in the United States, as most of their professors and college administrators were white. As early as 1869, historically Black university, Howard University, enrolled international students (Howard University Archives). These international students were from China, Prussia, the Caribbean, Greece, France, and Canada (Howard University Archives). Many of these students were inspired to attend college in the U.S. by missionaries who worked in their countries. Christian missionaries connected students with Black pastors affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal, which was associated with HBCUs. These pastors arranged for international students to enroll at Howard University (Howard University Archives). Many of these students sought to study theology, medicine, and liberal arts.

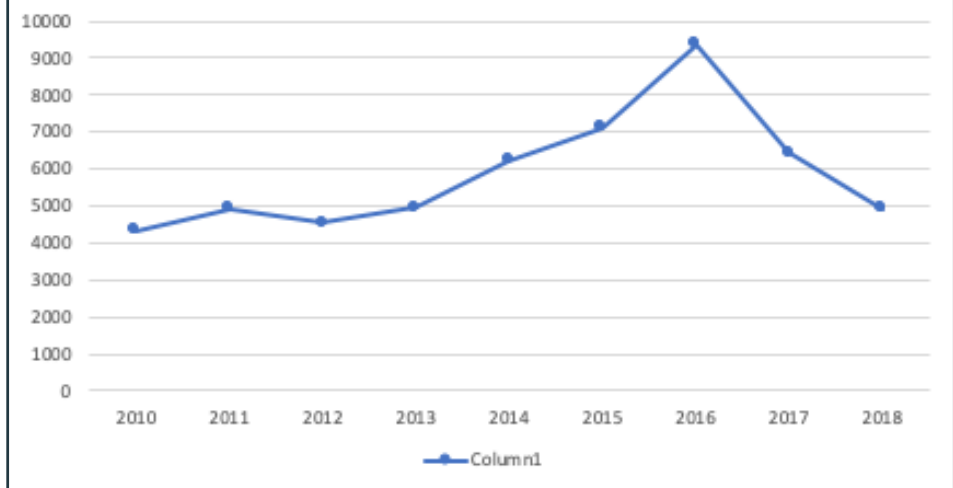
Today, HBCUs continue to serve underrepresented students of all backgrounds and produce well-educated and highly-skilled workers. These institutions enroll over 300,000 students of which 80% are Black and 70% are low-income (TMCF, 2016). According to the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (2016), HBCUs account for 17% of bachelor's degrees earned by Black students and 24% of degrees earned by Black students in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) fields.

International Student Enrollment in the U.S.

International students are defined as students who entered the United States to obtain a postsecondary degree and possess an F-1, M-1, or J-1 Visa (U.S. State Department). For the second consecutive year, the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2017), reported that international student enrollment has declined by six percent.

According to international student enrollment data from 2016-2018, HBCUs saw a 68% decrease in international student enrollment (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2019). This decrease in international student enrollment could be related to recent travel restrictions and advisories issued by the Trump administration (Redden, 2018).

FIGURE 1: 8 Year International Student Enrollment Trends



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics. 2012-2018. Enrollment trends by race/ethnicity and gender and HBCUs.

According to IPEDS data (2019), most HBCUs saw a steady increase in international student enrollment from 2012-2016. During the 2015-2016 academic year, HBCU international student enrollment peaked at 9,361. According to 2012 enrollment data, 75 HBCUs enrolled international students (IPEDS, 2012). In the 2017-2018 academic year, admissions data show only 44 HBCUs that enrolled international students. Many HBCUs have limitations when recruiting international students, which include, but are not limited to, financial challenges and limited support staff.

International Student Recruitment

James-MacEachern (2018) defines international student recruitment as a practice by which institutions of higher education connect with, and attempt to attract, students from other countries. International student recruitment has become a massive practice among U.S. colleges and universities. After the 2008 recession, many institutions began recruiting international students as a means to increase institutional revenue, in response to state government cuts (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Briggs & Ammigan, 2017). Most international students attending postsecondary institutions pay the full cost of tuition as they do not qualify for federal student loans or Pell Grants (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Ditousas, 2018).

Third-party recruiting agencies, parents, and sponsors generally take the lead in investigating and selecting colleges and universities on behalf of international students (Hoekje & Stevens, 2017).

The 2017 State of College Admissions report found the top recruiting strategies used nationally at PWIs to attract international students were direct email and institutional websites; this is also true for HBCUs. Social media also plays a significant role in international student recruitment. Additionally, staff reported that they actively recruited in about 10 countries. Such recruitment activities include periodic travel and regularly engaging with high schools or conducting site visits with prospective students (Clinedinst & Koranteng, 2017). Simultaneously, private and more selective universities were able to recruit in 15 countries (Clinedinst & Koranteng, 2017). In a study conducted by Vrontis et al. (2017), about the impact social media has on international recruitment, researchers found that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Google+, and YouTube were the highest-ranked recruitment tools preferred by international students (Vrontis, El Namar, Ouwaida, & Shams, 2018).

Chang et al. (2014) recommend that universities tailor their efforts to student's technology usage. According to Chang et al. (2014), 56 percent of millennials use smartphones when applying to U.S. colleges and universities. To best accommodate these students, universities must create mobile-friendly websites and provide clear and concise information, so it is easier for international students to find information and to understand the university application process. Institutions must also make the international student page easily accessible from the institution's main webpage. ISSS staff should also consider the expansion of the university's reach to its alumni network—particularly the international network, as a recruitment tool. All stakeholders, including international alumni and current students, faculty, administration, etc., at institutions play a role in the university network. University leadership should leverage international student relationships and interact with them through social media platforms. University content should be adapted to communicate the institution's value to prospective students as well as the value that international students bring to the overall campus community. Postsecondary institutions should generate relevant and quality content to actively engage international students (Chang et al., 2014). Adapting institutional content to reflect current international students allows

prospective students to see themselves at the institutions. Additionally, universities should have a mission that reflects their commitment to diversity and campus internationalization (Chang et al., 2014). Although most international students speak English as a second language many students may face language barriers. With this in mind when creating media content, institutions should use jargon-free language and engaging pictures for information dissemination. Additionally, using YouTube videos to highlight current international students is a great way to showcase international student presence on campus. Moreover, YouTube can be a way for currently enrolled international students to share their experiences related to navigating the university application process, on-campus events, their host community, and more.

Student Support

It is important for international students to participate in activities that allow them to share their cultures while simultaneously learning about their host country. Researchers (Bista & Foster, 2016; Briggs & Ammigan, 2017; Harper, 2008; Martirosyan, Bustamante, & Saxon, 2019a) emphasize the importance of all departments working collaboratively and cohesively to provide an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for international students.

Faculty play a huge role in creating intercultural understanding and relationships within the classroom. Making modifications to classroom pedagogy, faculty are able to provide a more rewarding learning experience for international and domestic students (Croese, 2011). Through various teaching methods, faculty members can support international students by helping them acclimate to their host community and class environment (Croese, 2011). Tinto (2012) also recommends faculty assess and give feedback about performance in a timely manner to help provide peers, faculty, and staff an opportunity to adjust to the student's needs. In addition, faculty should have an academic intervention plan for all students who may be in need of academic support (Tinto, 2012).

Counseling center staff should inform campus faculty and professors about services available to international students (Poyrazli, 2015). It is important for counseling center staff to have a clear presence at international student gatherings including international student club activities and international student orientation. Lastly, "counseling center

staff should provide training to students, faculty, advisors, and staff about psychological symptoms and concerns that international students tend to experience and how to recognize them” (Poyrazli, 2015, p. 311).

Martirosyan et al (2019b) found that the top 20 universities that enroll international students, all offered academic support and student services. ISSS offices host programs such as new student orientation, provide advising and counseling, offer academic tips and tutoring, host workshops and webinars on U.S. academic life, and provide supplemental instruction specifically for international students. Furthermore, Briggs & Ammingan (2017) stated “ISSS office staff were forced to devote a majority of their time administering U.S. government regulations and maintaining compliance with visa requirements” (p. 1084).

Internationalization plans are internal documents used to help university leaders articulate desired outcomes within international education, research, engagement, and more (Olson, Green, & Hill, 2005; Indiana University, 2020). Internationalization plans are written by university leaders with the help of key stakeholders including, but not limited to, faculty, staff, students, consultants, and university administrators. These plans enable institutions to review areas including strategic partnerships, policies, international education goals, and campus culture. International strategic planning helps university administrators set clear measurable goals and encourages them to progress toward achieving those goals (Olson et al., 2005). Davis (2014) provides recommendations for HBCUs seeking to internationalize their campus. As mentioned above HBCU leaders must “1) create clear policies and consistent practices to support internationalization; 2) provide institution constituents a shared understanding of the importance of internationalization and what it entails; 3) create a strategic plan to internationalizing campuses; and 4) understand internationalization happens in phases” (p. 10). Xavier University of Louisiana had a five-year internationalization for years 2013-2018. Xavier’s internationalization plan focused on five areas of improvement including internationalization of the curriculum; increasing international research and faculty development; promoting and supporting international recruitment, retention, and alumni services; expanding international campus and community outreach; and enhancing campus and community communication (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2012). Internationalization plans clearly outline measurable

goals, policies, and targeted areas to strengthen international education and development on HBCU campuses (Olson, Green, & Hill, 2005). NAFSA provides examples of international strategic plans, mission, and vision statements for various higher education institutions on their site that institutions can model (NAFSA, 2020).



INSTITUTIONAL SPOTLIGHT: GADSDEN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Gadsden State Community College is a public two-year institution located in Gadsden, AL. In the fall of 2018, the institution enrolled 55 international students. Due to state restrictions, the institution relies solely on word of mouth for international recruitment. Faculty and staff who have traveled abroad share information about the institution. The institution provides on-campus housing for all students on a first-come, first-serve basis. ISSS staff provide students with a list of community renters for students to contact for housing. Additionally, the office assists students with finding work on campus mostly in the cafeteria or the bookstore.

Social Activities/Support Groups

Social activities and support groups are very important to the success of all college students but even more so for international students. Briggs & Ammigan (2017) state that international students are valuable educational and cultural addition to college campuses that is often overlooked.

More specifically, they note that it is important for institutional administrators to build an intercultural campus by offering training that enhances communication skills and the ability to support and engage effectively with students.

Practitioners must create meaningful cultural programs for students. These programs should allow students to interact with critical information needed to understand and focus on the history, culture, practices, and the infrastructure of various cultures (Harper, 2008). Creating meaningful cultural programs allows international students to share their cultural norms with domestic students.

Simultaneously, such programs promote cross-cultural exchanges and understanding between domestic and international students. Across the country, colleges and universities take part in international education week (IEW) activities. During IEW students are able to share information about their country and culture with domestic students (Martirosyan et al., 2019b). Throughout the year, ISSS offices at various institutions host activities to engage international students such as global festivals, world fairs, heritage and cultural celebrations, various trips around the U.S., and so on (Martirosyan et al., 2019b). These activities help students feel at home at their institutions and allow opportunities for cultural exchange beneficial to international student acclimation.

METHODS

Participants interviewed in this study included 19 ISSS staff from 16 HBCUs across the U.S. The HBCUs included three two-year colleges, eight four-year public universities, and five four-year institutions. All participants work directly with international students, but their specific roles engaging the students varied. Many institutions do not have a centralized international office and many participants also manage a number of other programs including diversity and inclusion, Title IX, and

student enrollment in addition to their role as ISSS staff.

Using a qualitative approach, I collected data through semi-structured phone interviews with participants that lasted between 45-90 minutes. The interviews focused on participants' background as international students support staff or administrators. The questions focused on the following areas: recruitment, preparation before and after enrollment, training for administrators and social support, and campus climate surveys. I transcribed the interviews and coded for common themes to generate an analysis of the findings.

FINDINGS

In this study, I sought to understand international student recruitment efforts at HBCUs. Additionally, I understood the role that international student support offices play in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for international students at HBCUs. The findings of this study highlighted some common themes among HBCUs pertaining to international student recruitment and student support. The most prominent themes fall within the categories of recruitment strategies, preparation prior to enrollment, specific preparation upon enrollment, training for administrators, specific social supports, and campus climate support.

Recruitment Strategies

Most participants reported that financial constraints present serious challenges to international student recruitment. Many HBCUs do not have a budget specifically for the recruitment of international students. Although they cannot officially recruit, many institutions rely on referrals by word of mouth, third-party recruiters, and international partnerships. One institution has partnerships with study abroad and exchange programs and shares information about their institution on an international scale. A medium-sized HBCU in the mid-Atlantic region has academic partnerships with several embassies that provide assistance with recruiting students to the institution. Another partnership that yields international student enrollment can be found between a small liberal arts HBCU in the South and a faith-based organization; the two entities collaborate on international programs and work together to increase international student recruitment—specifically in Honduras. International

partnerships allow institutions to establish a presence within a foreign country and create a pathway for recruiting.

Student Athletes

In this study, I found that HBCUs struggle to recruit athletes for sports teams. One participant shared that the reason is largely because HBCUs compete directly with PWIs for top athletes. The participant shared that PWIs offer Black athletes' full scholarships to play sports at some of the nation's most reputable institutions. According to the participant, as a result, many HBCUs rely heavily on international students to play sports such as baseball, golf, soccer, tennis, and track. Most HBCUs in this study use third-party international sports recruiters to find qualified athletes. This recruitment strategy helps HBCUs meet their athletic goals and diversify their campus.

Data also reveal that some HBCUs have a hard time recruiting international students who can pay full tuition, as international students are not eligible to receive federal financial aid or work-study. Financial assistance is limited for international students who are not athletes. Many institutions offer scholarships or discounted tuition for international students to mitigate the financial burden.

Institutional Aid and Scholarships

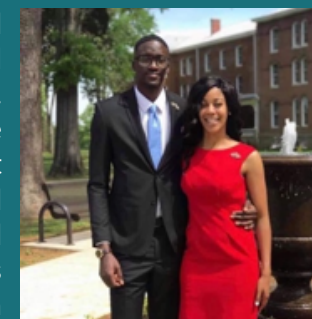
This study explored the ways in which ISSS staff supported international students interested in applying to the institution. Many institutions provide students with pre-orientation guides, assistance with completing admissions applications, and information about the local climate, community, and institution.

International students are eligible for both merit-based and athletic scholarships at some institutions. Due to the high percentage of Latinx and Caribbean international students, state institutions in Florida—HBCUs and PWIs alike—tend to offer scholarships to Latinx and Caribbean students to help with tuition costs.



INSTITUTIONAL SPOTLIGHT: TALLADEGA COLLEGE

Talladega College is a small private liberal arts institution located in Talladega, AL and the oldest HBCU in the state of Alabama. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the college increased its international student enrollment to a total of 87 international students. At the institution, international students are engaged in various programs and extracurricular activities. Recently, an international student was elected, by the student body, as Mr. Talladega College 2019-2020.



SOURCE: Mr. and Miss Talladega College 2019-2020. Used with permission of individuals pictured.

Across campus, there are several initiatives that aim to provide support to international students. In an effort to show a commitment to international student success at the institutional level, the College's administration recently established a strategic partnership with Walmart to provide job opportunities for international students with a F-1 Visa. According to the Director of Career Services, many of the international students on the campus receive athletic scholarships. Although international recruitment funds are minimal, Talladega College uses third-party international student recruiters and word of mouth to attract international students.

On-Campus Housing

Most of the institutions in this study provide on-campus housing for international students, and most international student advisors reported that their international undergraduate students live on campus while most graduate international students live off-campus. Many institutions partner with community members to assist students with finding off-campus housing. For example, a community college in the southern region offers on-campus housing on a first-come-first-serve basis to all students including international students.

None of the participating institutions provided dorms or sections of dorms specifically for international students. Most participants stated their goal is to acclimate students to the U.S. and the American college culture. According to the ISSS Director at a small liberal arts college in the southern region, international students are better adjusted to living on campus and the U.S. when paired with domestic students as roommates.

Job Opportunities

Job and internship opportunities for international students are very sparse on HBCU campuses. International students and J-1 and F-1 Visa students who attend colleges in the United States are not permitted to work off-campus. With the help of international student advisors, some international students have to find work on-campus in areas, such as in the cafeteria or in facilities; however, these positions have limited availability on-campus.

New Student Orientation

HBCUs with established international student offices provide a central location for students to receive the resources and assistance needed to navigate the college campus. Upon enrolling in institutions, all students are required to attend the new student orientation. According to participant responses, several HBCUs host orientations specifically for international students, which include pertinent information about campus life and required documentation. Providing this information ensures that international students will have a better transition into the college or university. New student orientations allow international students to establish relationships with students who have similar experiences and opportunities for international advisors to have one-on-one meetings with students to build relationships and help with their specific needs.

Cultural Programming

International student advisors at HBCUs host several cultural and educational workshops and events throughout the year specifically for international students. These events help students update travel documents and secure jobs and internships. Several institutions also host annual trips for international students. For example, a community college in the southern region has taken students to Disney World and New York City. Most international student advisors shared that they host and participate in the annual International Education Week programming, a national initiative at many colleges and universities, and encourage students to represent their respective countries and share their culture with their peers.

Training Offered for Faculty, Staff, and Administration

Many international advisors report that there are currently no workshops or training available on international student engagement for faculty, staff, or administration. Several participants reported that international advisors and staff are required to attend training through the U.S. Department of State, but nothing more. In addition to the Department of State training, some international advisors and staff attend the NAFSA: Association of International Educators conference to obtain knowledge, resources, and strategies used to better support international students. NAFSA's website offers e-learning courses for international educators. The e-learning courses include Gaining J Designation Approval, SEVIS compliance, Foundations of Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Adjustment and Adaptation, and more (NAFSA, 2020).

Social Support

Social support groups allow international students to come together to celebrate, embrace, and share their culture. A mid-sized university in the southern region of the U.S. has a partnership with the local Nigerian community that is very active with and hosts events for Nigerian students on campus. Organizations such as sororities and fraternities, student government, and other campus student groups, even those not specific to international students, provide an opportunity for students to develop a social network of support. Many institutions report a high number of international students who participate in these groups.

Campus Climate Surveys

International student advisors from six institutions reported that campus climate surveys are sent specifically to international students. They seek to understand how the institution can better meet their needs. International advisors from eight HBCUs reported that their institutions do not send surveys specifically to international students; however, they are sent to the general student body. The two remaining institutions did not provide information on campus climate surveys.

LIMITATIONS

This study had several limitations. First, little to no research has been conducted on international student recruitment or international student support at HBCUs. Secondly, due to challenges contacting participants, I was only able to interview ISSS staff from 16 HBCUs. In some cases, contact information for staff was not visible on the ISSS webpage; I had to call the institution to receive contact information for the ISSS office. My experience was a bit discouraging and this may also be the experience of a prospective international student. Thus, for some HBCUs, institutional websites are more detrimental to their international recruitment than beneficial.

This study was also limited to the perspective of international student support staff. The study did not include the voices, experiences, and perspectives of international students attending HBCUs. Future research on this topic should focus on the international students' perspectives to better understand their experiences at HBCUs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Webpages should have up-to-date information for international students. ISSS staff contact information should be visible and easy to find on the institution's home page. Direct links to the ISSS webpage should be placed on the main institution's page. Institutions should use secure online application platforms for application submission.



INSTITUTIONAL SPOTLIGHT: MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Morgan State University is a public research institution located in Baltimore, MD. As of the 2018-2019 academic year, the institution enrolled 629 international students. According to the IIE Open Doors report (2018), Morgan State was the only HBCU recognized as having over 1,000 international students during the 2016-2017 academic year. The institution continues to see an increased enrollment of international students.

Social networking is an important aspect of the college experience. Morgan State's several international groups created affinity groups such as the Saudi, Kuwaiti Association, and the African Student Association. These organizations provide social support for international students and have allowed them to create connections with those who come from similar backgrounds. Additionally, the ISSS office hosts a week-long international program for students to share their culture with the student body.

- ISSS office staff should reply to student's inquiries via phone calls and emails within 48-72 hours. Additionally, staff should provide students with all information regarding the institution's international application process and relevant information for enrollment.
- While conducting a website analysis of HBCUs, none of the institutions had an internationalization plan visible on their website. However, during a random Google search, I found that Xavier University of Louisiana had a five-year internationalization for years 2013-2018. Xavier's internationalization plan focused on five areas of improvement including internationalization of the curriculum; increasing international research and faculty development; promoting and supporting international recruitment, retention, and alumni services; expanding international campus and community outreach; and enhancing campus and community communication (Xavier University of Louisiana, 2012). Internationalization plans clearly outline measurable goals, policies, and targeted areas to strengthen international education and development on HBCU campuses (Olson, Green, & Hill, 2005). NAFSA provides examples of international strategic plans, mission, and vision statements for various higher education institutions on their site that institutions can model (NAFSA, 2020).
- ISSS offices would benefit from using social media platforms to reach international students. Creating a social media presence will allow prospective students to learn about the institution as well as the support and resources offered by the ISSS office. This is an opportunity for the ISSS office to showcase their international students, international student activities and events, academic support, and campus life of the college or university. Institutions can start small and focus on increasing international student content on the ISSS social media pages. This could be done by highlighting an international student of the week or month.
- The ISSS office can and should interact with prospective international students via social media. Institutions should also continue to use traditional forms of communication with international students through email.
- Institutions should consider asking international students to become student ambassadors as a tool for recruitment. Using current international students as student ambassadors allows them to talk to potential students about their experiences at the institution. HBCUs should also leverage their relationships with international student alumni to communicate with potential applicants.
- According to Light (2001), International Student Orientation (ISO) sets the tone that a campus is a welcoming place where discussions about differences can be approached with openness and support. They also provide opportunities for new students to be educated about campus leadership positions (Harper, 2008). ISO is the first opportunity for students to be welcomed as members of the campus community (Hoekje & Stevens, 2018). ISSS offices should consider offering both new student orientation and international student orientation. Additionally, scheduling one-on-one meetings with international students can provide students with support and on-campus resources.
- Prior to international students' arrival on campus the ISSS office should host webinars and workshops. These webinars should provide international students with information regarding academic integrity, classroom expectations, and how to successfully maneuver the American classroom culture (Martirosyan et al., 2019b).
- Faculty members have a responsibility to shape the culture of the classroom into an inclusive, encouraging, and welcoming space for students (Maseus & Jayakumar, 2012). This includes being cognizant of student's cultural differences and not excluding them from classroom discussions.
- Faculty and staff should also provide academic assistance for students who struggle with class assignments. It is important for student support staff to ensure that international students are aware of on-campus supports. The ISSS office should work with other departmental offices to host English-speaking programs that helps international students with language barriers learn and understand English better. Other important supports include mentoring services, course structure modifications, and social engagement programs

(Hoekje & Stevens, 2017).

- Many students on college campuses look forward to participating in on-campus organizations and building their own social networks. Affinity groups provide much-needed logistical and social support for newly arrived students and ease the possibility of a difficult transition to campus life in the United States (Hoekje & Steven, 2018). The researchers suggest using international student leaders to get their peers to join student organizations on-campus (Hoekje & Steven, 2018).
- Social networks have the potential to include international and domestic students. International students can draw on peers from their networks for support as they cope with culture shock (Hoekje & Steven, 2018). Students should be encouraged to join or establish student organizations (Hoekje & Steven, 2018). Establishing country-specific affinity groups can provide international students with leadership experience and agency on campus. These groups can be run by international students and have a faculty advisor to manage the group's activities. The school should also leverage community support by partnering with local international organizations and affinity groups.
- Survey data can allow institutions to see what changes need to be made to create a welcoming environment for international students. Student surveys should focus on the attitudes, feelings, thoughts, and experiences about cross-cultural engagement (Harper, 2008). Harper also recommends that institutional representatives be prepared to hear things that challenge existing institutional culture and be prepared to invest in necessary resources for students (Harper, 2008).
- HBCUs should provide campus climate surveys for international students to better understand the needs of that population. These data will help ISSS staff make changes to ensure the success of international students; this will be helpful when considering programming, academic supports, and training for faculty and staff.



INSTITUTIONAL SPOTLIGHT: SAVANNAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Savannah State University (SSU) is a four-year public institution located in Savannah, GA. During the 2018-2019 academic school year, the institution enrolled 68 international students. The institution does not provide scholarships but does offer a few fee waivers for international students. The ISSS office has started the Funding Tigers Campaign to raise scholarship money for international students. The office supports students with finding housing both on and off-campus. The Assistant Director of the International Education Center has collaborated with several private homeowners and apartment complexes that rent to international students.

SSU has an established international student association; however, most international students are focused on coursework and do not frequently participate in school-sponsored activities. Many of the international undergraduate students are athletes and are members of the International Student Association.

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