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THE IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITING AND RETAINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

by

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A DISSERTATION

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Dedications

This paper is dedicated to my wife, daughter, and parents. Thank you for encouragement, support, and most importantly, your love.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the individuals listed below. Without your support, this would not have been possible.

Soojin, without your support, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for the patience you showed to me over all these years. We had to sacrifice doing so many things, but you never complained one time. Thank you for allowing me to complete this lifelong endeavor. I love you so much.

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Abstract

A steady decline in enrollment among postsecondary institutions and cuts in educational funding, both at the state and federal level, have caused these institutions to look for alternative sources of revenue. With postsecondary institutions struggling to financially survive, international enrollment has become the focus of higher education. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding on the importance of recruiting and retaining international students. This study used a phenomenological approach and epistemology was used to provide the conceptual framework of the study. Qualitative methods were used to conduct this study. A series of semi-structured interviews provided the data for this study and was collected from a group of higher education administrators. The results from the data were coded and emergent themes identified from the data. The themes from the data provided awareness on how administrators and institutions view the impact international students have on postsecondary institutions. Although five participants from five separate institution participated in this study, the responses from the participants were strikingly similar. Due to the participants' similar views regarding international students, the implications and recommendations from this study can provide invaluable insight to administrators and U.S. postsecondary institutions.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background

International enrollment has become a major initiative for postsecondary institutions due to the educational, cultural, and economic benefits that international students bring to campus (Mamiseishvili, 2011). Research shows that internationalization plays an important role in higher education and has been spurred by several drivers, such as academic, economic, and cultural rationales (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011; de Wit, 1998). This internationalization effort is being fueled by the energetic efforts of U.S. postsecondary institutions in striving to find ways to diversify student bodies. Ault and Martell (2007) argue that postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to diversify student bodies through established admission policies and criteria. Having a diversified student body aids the academic component by having various cultures represented in multiple classroom settings and promotes a global awareness into the curriculum that might not otherwise be present (Ault & Martell, 2007).

Currently, enrollment at postsecondary institutions in the United States is in a steady decline. Since 2014 alone, there was a 7.9% decrease in enrollment according to the National Student Clearing House Research Center (2017). To complicate matters more, postsecondary institutions must be conscientious of possible state and federal budget cuts centering on higher education. As Dustin Weeden of the National Conference of State Legislatures states, "Higher education is called the balance wheel of state budgets" (Rosenbaum, 2017). Simply put, higher education is a large area of discretionary spending that is at the disposal of states. Not only are postsecondary institutions at the mercy of state budgeting, they also must deal with federal budget cuts, represented largely by student financial aid. According to the *Chronicle of Higher*

Education, President Trump is proposing a $9 billion cut in funding for the U.S. Department of Education, spread across from K-12 to higher education (Kamenetz, 2017).

Cuts in educational funding pose a serious problem for non-profit institutions where tuition is the principle source of revenue (Marcus, 2016.). Postsecondary institutions will need to find an alternative source of revenue to make up for the lack of funding from state allocations and federal budget cuts directed at higher education. An alternative source of revenue may not be as difficult to identify as postsecondary institutions realize and may already exist on most campuses across the United States. One potential source of tuition revenue is in the form of a specific student population, international students. Postsecondary institutions should make every effort to formalize a plan to recruit and retain international students.

Although the educational and cultural benefits that international students bring to postsecondary institutions are important, postsecondary institutions are benefiting from the revenue generated by international students (Cantu, 2013). Varn (2017) reiterates this statement by pointing out that postsecondary institutions have turned to international students as a lucrative source of tuition revenue, since many international students pay the full cost of tuition and provide an estimated 10% of all net tuition revenue. In addition to the economic benefits that international students provide to postsecondary institutions, these similar economic benefits are felt within local, state, and even the national economy. According to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), over one million international students contributed 36.9 billion U.S. dollars to the U.S. economy and supported 450,000 jobs in in the 2016-17 academic year alone (NAFSA, n.d.).

Postsecondary institutions in the United States are focusing efforts on the recruitment of students from foreign countries. To do this, postsecondary institutions must have a well-

established international recruitment campaign (Onk & Joseph, 2017). Institutions in the U.S. and around the world are thinking strategically and developing plans to recruit, retain, and graduate international students (McFarlane, 2015). According to Ozturgut (2013), universities in the U.S. are incorporating five main methods in recruiting international students. These five methods include attending recruitment fairs, providing academic support, utilizing international alumni, passive marketing strategies, and the use of staff and faculty to recruit international students.

Due to the amount of time, effort, and money that is spent on the recruitment of international students, Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010) suggest that postsecondary institutions' enrollment management plans and international recruitment strategies look at the bigger picture of international student success and retention and not just the recruitment of international students. Issues that international students face upon matriculation into a new cultural and educational setting need to be identified and addressed to enhance the reputation of postsecondary institutions as being student centered and promoting student success.

Owing to financial situations, budget cuts, and fiscal crunches, universities are stepping up their efforts of recruiting international students (Hu, 2011). Hu (2011) further supports this statement by saying that according to Dr. Carlos Santiago, chief executive office of the Hispanic College Fund, public universities are not focusing priority on state residents due to a decrease in state funding. With the higher fees that international students pay, postsecondary institutions can easily find themselves depending on international enrollment due to declines in state support and mid-academic year reductions in state allocations (Boulard, 2010).

Unfortunately, it is easy to see how postsecondary institutions are often viewed as institutions that look at international enrollment from a strictly revenue-orientated perspective.

Postsecondary institutions should not be viewed as institutions that are influenced by the financial impact alone that international students provide. Rather, international enrollment should focus on diversification, both socially and culturally (Boulard, 2010). Since higher education faculty and administrators are concerned with enrollment management and international education, postsecondary institutions should remain true to their central focus of producing quality students (Arnold, 2004).

To achieve this, special attention should be paid to admission standards and enrollment management plans that contain active agreements with recruitment providers. Hanover Research (2014) suggests that some institutions are ignoring this aspect and are choosing numbers over quality by lowering admission standards to boost enrollment numbers of foreign students. In some cases, language scores are being lowered in addition to the lowering of admission standards. Ozturgut (2013) suggests that universities should exercise caution since recruitment providers work on commission rates and that postsecondary institutions should be mindful of the quality of students who are applying.

Statement of the Problem

Farber (2016) states that enrollment has dropped at colleges and universities since 2011. This enrollment drop has been linked with students focused on finding employment rather than attending college. Employment over college is not the only factor contributing to decreased enrollment. A decrease in high school graduates has also contributed to a decrease in university enrollment.

According to Moody's Investor Services, the higher education industry is struggling to grow revenue, something that has not been a problem in years past (Selingo, 2013). With no signs of higher education enrollment expected to improve and state allocations for higher

education questionable, institutions must find new ways to increase enrollment to offset any loss in revenue.

Despite research showing the importance of recruiting international students and the benefits they provide to postsecondary institutions; more information is needed on how much emphasis should be placed on international recruitment efforts and whether international recruitment is a top priority of postsecondary institutions.

Significance of the Problem

With enrollment decreasing, universities are struggling to survive financially. Savenije (2013) boldly suggests that universities could face possible extinction due to greater operating costs, increased tuition costs, substandard planning, and the availability of more economical educational alternatives. Looking for a strategy, or plan, to deal with this growing financial crisis should be a top priority of postsecondary institutions.

In higher education, enrollment management is a term that is being used to discuss strategies and plans to shape an institution's policy on enrollment. Enrollment management can be viewed as an institutional response on recruiting and retaining the right student body to maintain and sustain an institution's financial health, image, and academic quality (Baker, n.d.). One might enquire as to what constitutes the right student body. Undoubtedly, any student body will consist of domestic students, whether they are in-state or out-of-state students. These students will constitute a student body that ranges in demographics, academic performance, diversity, inclusion, and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, domestic students alone are not enough to sustain a postsecondary institution's financial health, image, and academic quality. Recently, postsecondary institutions have turned their enrollment management efforts towards the recruitment of international students to help with the internationalization and diversification

of campuses, as well as attracting a larger number of full tuition paying students (Schulte &

Chouda, 2014).

Calls for the Study

Literature has reiterated that international enrollment is having an impact on

postsecondary institutions in the United States. The international enrollment impact is

multifaceted and includes multiple areas such as financial gains and constraints, enrollment

issues, institutional integrity and credibility, and budget concerns. Several articles have

highlighted these areas and have indirectly suggested that further studies should be conducted on

the importance of international recruitment.

In *Governing: The States and Localities* (2017), Alan Greenblatt mentions that the

traditional goals of recruiting international students have been centered on the importance of

diversity and globalization. However, university administrators have also admitted that foreign

students are a source of revenue that cannot be overlooked. Renée Romano, vice chancellor of

the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said, "International Students definitely

contribute to our financial strength and health. In some ways, the international students are

keeping this place open and keeping it strong (as cited in Greenblatt, 2017, p. 1).

However, key findings from multiple sources indicate that American postsecondary

institutions could be experiencing a decline in international enrollments. A recent article in

Inside Higher Ed stated that a recent Open Doors Report shows that international student

enrollments at U.S. postsecondary institutions started to flatten in fall 2016 and that there was a

seven percent average decline in fall 2017 international enrollments (Redden, 2017, November

13). In a release by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

(AACRAO), responding institutions have reported a 39% decline in international applications for

fall 2017. Institutions also reported a decline in the number of Indian and Chinese applications. This is extremely troubling since these two countries currently account for 47% of our international student enrollment ("Largest decrease," 2017).

Articles in the *New York Times* and in the *Atlantic* have supported the survey from AACRAO and have indicated that U.S. postsecondary institutions are concerned about the outlook on future international student enrollment since fewer international students are pursuing educational opportunities in the United States. Both articles highlight potential reasons for the decrease in international enrollments and the potential impact that lower international enrollments will have on U.S. higher education system.

Saul (2017) suggests that uncertainty in the social and political climate have attributed to the decline in international enrollments, especially with recent travel bans and personal safety concerns stemming from incidents involving international students. However, low enrollments cannot be blamed on the social and political climates alone. Increased competition for international enrollments is coming from other English-speaking countries, such as Canada, Britain, and Australia (Saul, 2017).

Both Bendix (2017) and Saul (2017) suggest that the United States government or universities cannot afford to ignore these warning signs since international students normally pay full tuition rates, which helps subsidize the cost of tuition for American students. Bendix (2017) specifically states that Chinese and Indian students contributed $16 billion dollars to the U.S. economy. Financial concerns are at the forefront of university's worries since universities are witnessing decreased international enrollments. This decrease in enrollment could signal financial difficulties for universities who have relied on international students in the past for tuition revenue (Saul, 2017).

Authors of several articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *U.S. News & World Report* have expressed concerns in the decreased number of international students attending postsecondary institutions in the United States and how to bring new students to campus (Jordan, 2015; Korn & Omran, 2016; Ross, 2017). With the cancellation of government scholarships from Brazil and changes made to scholarships offered through the Saudi government, recruitment of international students has picked up momentum (Jordan, 2015; Ross, 2017). One of the newest and controversial trends is the use of overseas student-recruitment agencies for recruitment purposes. A recent ad in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* highlights the concerns, misconceptions, and rewards for universities who are considering in partnering with agents ("International recruitment," 2018).

Purpose of the Study

Although research has been conducted on the benefits of enrolling and retaining international students, additional research needs to be conducted on the importance of recruiting international students and why having a recruiting strategy is crucial for U.S. universities. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding on the strategic importance of recruiting and retaining international students, especially from a financial perspective, and why developing an international enrollment management plan is of the upmost importance among public institutions of higher education. This study provides administrators of postsecondary institutions information on how other institutions view the importance of enrolling international students, the importance of an enrollment management plan, and potential concerns that postsecondary institutions are experiencing due to the recruitment of international students.

Research Questions

Due to the nature of the problem presented, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study, the following questions were instrumental in guiding this study:

1. What roles do international students play at postsecondary institutions besides being students?

2. How do international students impact the financial health of postsecondary institutions?

3. What recruitment strategies and initiatives are utilized to recruit international students to postsecondary institutions in the United States?

4. What challenges are postsecondary institutions facing in recruiting international students?

Organization of the Study

This study is qualitative in nature and is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction, statement of the problem, significance of the problem, calls for the study, purpose of the study, and research questions. Chapter two is a review of the literature on the financial impact international students have on universities (state budgets and allocations, ramifications of budget cuts, and economic value), the benefits of international students (internationalization, diversity and inclusion, and academic), the importance of establishing an effective international enrollment strategy (enrollment management and recruitment strategies), and institutional academic and ethical integrity. Chapter three discusses the research methodology used, the selection of participants, data collection and analysis, reliability, and validity. Chapter four consists of the qualitative findings of this study. Chapter five presents the conclusions of the study and proposes further recommendations.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on why postsecondary institutions should enroll international students. The primary goal of reviewing the literature is to highlight the importance of international students on postsecondary institutions in the United States. Central to this review is the financial impact international students have on higher education institutions, the benefits international students provide to postsecondary institutions, the theory of academic capitalism, strategic enrollment management, and the importance in establishing an effective international enrollment plan.

States are seeing a decrease in state funding and are seeking alternative methods to compensate for the shortfall of revenue (McNichol & Waxman, 2017). Having a large contingency of international students who pay increased tuition costs serves as a mechanism to lessen the financial impact universities are experiencing due to a lack of state appropriations (Fisher, 2010). For U.S. postsecondary institutions to have a populous international student body, a successful recruitment strategy is imperative. Ross, Grace, and Shao (2013) stressed the importance of an international student recruitment (ISR) strategy using market orientation by highlighting what postsecondary institutions can offer to students and how they deliver that offering by services. As postsecondary institutions understand the financial impact international students can have on an institution, are postsecondary institutions recruiting and admitting students for the wrong reasons? Some believe that postsecondary institutions are enrolling international students to generate more revenue and that financial implications were major reasons behind these decision-making processes (Cantwell, 2015).

Financial Impact International Students Have on Universities

Funding is always a major concern for higher education, and public postsecondary institutions usually compete for limited amounts of state allocated funding (Delaney & Doyle, 2014). The economic health of a state is usually a determining factor on the amount of state funding that is allocated for higher education (Delaney & Doyle, 2011). Hovey (1999) puts forth the argument that during prosperous times, higher education benefits by receiving higher funding than other categories in the state budget. However, during the bad times the opposite happens, and higher education funding is usually the first part of the budget to be cut. Delaney and Doyle (2011) go on to state that this uncertainty can limit planning and is a factor in raising tuition rates. Although most postsecondary institutions are non-profit organizations, this can be viewed as a misnomer. Postsecondary institutions strive to be profitable (Freedman, 2013). With states cutting educational budgets and reducing state appropriations to postsecondary institutions, finding an alternate source of revenue becomes a primary focus of universities. Budget cuts are becoming synonymous with higher education as states are continuously grappling with budget decisions (Rosenbaum, 2017). With no sign of a reprieve in sight, postsecondary institutions are going to have to come to the realization that difficult decisions lie ahead, and the very existence of public postsecondary institutions is at risk (Barrett & Dancy, 2017). Postsecondary institutions will need to evaluate possible ramifications of stringent budget cuts, develop plans of action, and accept the possibility of life without state allocations.

A decrease in funding and state allocations can lead to painful budget cuts for postsecondary institutions. With any budget cuts, there are ramifications. Research indicates that cost cutting could have ramifications including possible layoffs amongst postsecondary institutions. Wilson (2013) states that faculty positions are often targeted to deal with budget

cuts. Wilson (2013) further supports the research by citing Gumport and Pusser (1999) in saying, "as institutions reallocate resources and eliminate some of the functions they have traditionally provided, they make choices about what the future priorities of universities should be" (p. 153).

Public colleges and universities across the United States have increased their tuition to compensate for the declining state funding and rising costs (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011). In addition to increasing tuition rates, public colleges and universities have had to cut faculty positions, eliminate course offerings, close campuses, and eliminate services (Oliff, Palacios, Johnson, & Leachman, 2013).

Although not the ideal choice, many public colleges and universities have eliminated academic programs. Public colleges and universities have continued to make these types of cuts, even as states have begun to reinvest in higher education (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016). The Pennsylvania State System eliminated 95 academic programs between 2011 and 2014 (Herzenberg, Price & Wood, 2014) and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has eliminated 390 class sections to counteract a $4 million budget cut (Newsom, 2014). Other ramifications from budget cuts have included the implementation of furloughs, decreasing the numbers of hours in a workday, and cuts in salaries (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011).

A final ramification is that funding cuts and tuition increases have shifted costs from states to students. This shifting has created difficult financial positions for many families, especially those with low incomes, due to annual incomes not increasing and becoming stagnant. According to Hemelt and Marcotte (2011), this has deterred students from enrolling into colleges. In return, this has created an enrollment gap between higher and lower income students. McMahon (2015) stresses that if higher education budgets continue to be cut, then the

results will be earnings stagnation, widening income inequality, and poor quality of higher education teachers.

For many public universities, a decrease in state allocations is becoming the norm. As a result, schools and state governments are having to make necessary adjustments to so compensate for the lack of state funding. According to Johnson and colleagues (2011), all but seven of the 50 U.S. states have made large increases in tuition or have made significant cuts to offset a decrease in state funding. This has been happening since 2011 with states such as Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, and Georgia having to raise tuition rates anywhere from 8 to 32% (Johnson et al., 2011). Postsecondary institutions in Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, and Michigan have experienced cuts in the form of layoffs, furloughs, and the elimination of scholarships.

State governments are also involved by developing policies that tie funding with performance. Fain (2016) states that approximately 35 states are using some type of performance-based funding. This is true for public universities in Kentucky. Governor Bevin's budget proposal to the Kentucky General Assembly outlined his budget cuts for higher education and that state appropriations will be subject to performance funding metrics, making postsecondary institutions compete against each other for funding (Bevin & Chilton, 2016). Postsecondary institutions and administrators will need to be more creative and innovative when dealing with limited financial resources and resource allocations (Knight, Folkins, Hakel, & Kennell, 2011).

One of the most pressing educational policy issues postsecondary institutions is facing centers on the cost of tuition or tuition policies (Kim & Ko, 2015). Due to a decrease in tax revenues, states have been forced to cut spending on higher education. As a result,

postsecondary institutions have turned to tuition increases as a reliable source of funding to make up for the loss revenue (Hulsey, 2010). According to Baum (2017), the 2016-17 average published tuition and fees for full time, in-state undergraduate students at public four-year institutions was $9,650 per year.   For out-of-state students, including international students, the average published tuition and fees was $24, 930, two and half times greater than the price paid by in-state students. The higher tuition rate international students pay, as compared to their U.S. peers, could be viewed as a short-term solution for institutions to increase their revenue (García & Villarreal, 2014). This infusion of revenue could help stem the cutting of academic programs and services amongst postsecondary institutions. Therefore, it becomes an incentive for a postsecondary institution to have large international student enrollments due to international students generally paying a higher amount of tuition. This financial impact has not gone unnoticed among postsecondary institutions. Schools across the United States have intensified their efforts to recruit and retain international students. 62% of institutions have increased efforts to recruit international students (Hegarty, 2014).

There are numerous benefits that international students provide to postsecondary institutions, including the previously discussed economic and financial impact international students provide to postsecondary institutions in the form of tuition revenue. However, there are other notable benefits that are sometimes overlooked. These benefits include internationalization efforts, an increase in diversity, academics, and economic development (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009).

<p align="center">**Benefits of International Students**</p>

Internationalization is no stranger to higher education and has gained great significance and prominence in postsecondary institutions (Lumby & Foskett, 2016; McFarlane, 2015;

Seeber, Cattaneo, & Huisman, 2016). Cantu (2013) describes internationalization as "strategies by which colleges and universities respond to globalization" (p. 1). Jiang (2008) further describes the internationalization of higher education as a "reciprocal exchange of national culture and ideas" (p. 348). To promote this reciprocal exchange, postsecondary institutions can take several steps to achieve internationalization (Cantu, 2013). These steps include, but are not limited to, the establishment of institutional partnerships with overseas institutions and education abroad programs, internationalizing the faculty, and the recruitment of international students.

To have a better understanding of internationalization, it is important to understand what drives internationalization and the significance of internationalization. Lumby and Foskett (2016) suggest that internationalization is driven by two distinct forces: philosophical and economic. The philosophical force centers on the education experience where the economic force views internationalization as a business endeavor. According to Qiang (2003), if teaching, research, and service contains an international dimension, then the quality of a higher education system has added value. Qiang (2003) further states that this academic rationale goes hand in hand with the economic rationale by suggesting that the internationalization of higher education contributes to the economic benefits of an institution, such as institutional income and economic effects of international students. McFarlane (2016) adds further support to this viewpoint by stating that universities have a desire to increase international enrollment to build a global community of learners and citizens, but to also increase tuition revenue. Therefore, it is easy to understand why postsecondary institutions are displaying more corporate like tendencies that are influenced by consumers and market-oriented economies (Ilieva, Beck, & Waterstone, 2014). Ilieva et al. (2014) suggest that postsecondary institutions use caution and refrain from

predominantly focusing on the economic sustainability of higher education that is often hid behind the rhetoric of the importance of academic endeavors and goals.

Without a doubt, there are both benefits and costs of internationalization with higher education. Jibeen and Khan (2015) argue that academic exchanges promote scholarship as well as building economic and social capacity amongst western universities. Most importantly, internationalization improves academic quality and enriches learning environments (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). However, enriched learning environments should not be overshadowed, or overlooked, by the economic motives of attracting revenue through the recruitment of international students.

Although internationalization can easily be associated with economic factors, postsecondary institutions must not lose sight of developing and maintaining quality education (Knight, 2013). As Altback and Knight (2007) point out, earning money is often associated with internationalization projects, especially nonprofit postsecondary institutions with financial problems. However, not all nonprofit postsecondary institutions fall under this classification. For the most part, nonprofit postsecondary institutions' internationalization efforts are associated with enhancing knowledge capacity and increasing cultural understanding. Knight (2013) supports this by stating that internationalization should incorporate intercultural understanding and include an international component in curricular studies.

Postsecondary institutions that attract and recruit international students to their institutions can benefit in a variety of ways. The financial impact that international students have on postsecondary institutions cannot be easily ignored (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman, & Paleari, 2016). However, there are other benefits that international students provide through the internationalization efforts of higher education. Two main benefits that international students

help promote internationalization are diversity and academics. In fact, Natali (2015) states that the collegiate experience is enriched with the presence of international students on the campuses of U.S. postsecondary institutions. According to Wilcox (2014), global diversity and interconnectivity should be central components of postsecondary institutions' missions. Linking academic excellence and international activities help promote and encourage diversity and multicultural understanding. One way to achieve this is through the role of international exchange programs. Ault and Martell (2007) define international exchange programs as programs offered by postsecondary institutions that promote the exchange of faculty and students between overseas partner institutions to promote cross-culturalism and diversity. Ault and Martell (2007) argue the importance of exchange programs in that international student participants add to the diversity of the host institution's student body. In addition, exchange programs offer the opportunity for the exchange of faculty which also aids in diversification and cultural exchanges.

In the current global environment, Gacel-Àvila (2016) promotes the concept of fostering a global awareness and consciousness among students and suggests that this should be one of the basic and fundamental functions of a university. Therefore, the objective of internationalization would be focused on updating academic content to help explain global phenomena to promote intercultural understanding. Postsecondary institutions are fully taking notice of the relevance of academic internationalization by enabling students to develop their intellectual capabilities (Burduşel & Oprean, 2014). Prioritizing diversity and internationalization initiatives that focus on recruiting underrepresented students, injecting curriculum with multicultural perspectives, and promoting international exchange programs, will allow postsecondary institutions to better

prepare students for a global workforce and for exposure to diverse perspectives and interactions with others (Wong, 2007).

International students have a major impact other than internationalization and diversity efforts. Winkler (1984) highlights the numerous benefits that international students provide. These benefits include tuition payments, purchases of living resources, and taxes at the local, state, and Federal levels. Due to the amount of money international students pay in tuition, Stephens (2013) argues that international students are reinforcing the finances of America's postsecondary institutions. The tuition international students pay is becoming increasingly important as government support decreases. The financial impact international students have on universities also impacts the U.S. economy as well (Hegarty, 2014). According to NAFSA's *International Student Economic Value Tool*, international students were responsible for contributing billions of dollars into the U.S. economy for the 2016-17 fiscal year. In addition, for every seven international students enrolled in a U.S. postsecondary institution, three U.S. jobs were created and supported (NAFSA, n.d.).

There is little doubt as to the impact that international students have in promoting economic development (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallet, 2012). Higher education is being viewed as an economic development tool in which states are transforming themselves in a more diverse knowledge-based economy (Owens, Srivastava, & Feerasta, 2011). Encouraging international students to attend college in a particular state can benefit local economies through direct expenditures and add a global dimension to firms and businesses who employ these students. Owens et al. (2011) also state that international student enrollment will become increasingly important as competition for students increases and states look to supplement growing budget deficits.

With presidents viewing themselves more like a CEO of a company, faculty viewing themselves as small business people, and units being analyzed on the revenue they generate, Rhoades (2005) argues that universities are changing culturally where capitalism tendencies are taking on a more prevalent role. As a result, universities are trying to find their way and are struggling to find a balance between their quest for knowledge and their exploration of financial support (Rubins, 2007). Rhoades and Slaughter (2004) suggests that one way universities can find a balance is to generate revenue through their core educational and research functions. This relates directly to the idea of academic capitalism.

Academic Capitalism

The concept of academic capitalism was first introduced by Slaughter and Leslie (1997). Academic capitalism encourages the privatization of learning and the perusal of profit and is defined as "the involvement of colleges and faculty in market-like behaviors" (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004, p. 37). Since peaking in 2010, college enrollment in the United States has dropped every year since (Long, 2016). As a result, higher education in the United States is in a peculiar situation. Fewer students means less tuition revenue, and this poses a serious financial problem for universities trying to balance budgets (Wu, 2017).

To compound the situation, tuition at four-year public institutions has increased for eight straight years, with a 1.3% increase for the 2017-2018 academic year (Seltzer, 2017). With a decline in enrollment, less state funding, and rising tuition that domestic students cannot afford, it is easy to understand the trend in which universities are moving to academic capitalism and profit-oriented practices. In doing so, institutions are acting more like economic enterprises rather than centers of education (Jessop, 2017). Faced with a major loss in state support, Rhoades and Slaughter (2004) state that postsecondary institutions are creating new policies and

academic practices that prioritize potential revenue generation, rather than the diffusion of knowledge.

For most public postsecondary institutions, direct state appropriations and tuition are the traditional sources of revenue. With states reducing appropriations to postsecondary institutions, tuition and fees have become the primary source of revenue (Arnott, 2012). Decrease in state funding and internal funding have led to the privatization of higher education by shifting budget burdens to students in the form of tuition and fees and encouraging active competition amongst postsecondary institutions for external funding, such as grants, corporate funding, and student tuition (Hanley, 2005). Arnott (2012) suggests that these economic burdens on students are transforming how postsecondary institutions are viewing students.

Student are gradually being viewed as customers that generate revenue, rather than learners. In addition, Schulze-Cleven and Olson (2017) state that postsecondary institutions have adapted by increasing tuition and seeking to grow the share of out-of-state students that can be charged higher rates. One such group of potential fee-paying students are international students. Many postsecondary institutions are viewing these students as an attractive source of revenue due to the income they generate from tuition fees (Cantwell, 2015). If the United States is going to continue leading the international education market and continue enrolling large numbers of international students (Kim, 2017), postsecondary institutions will need to entertain the idea of developing enrollment management plans, both strategic and international.

Strategic Enrollment Management

The term enrollment management is a phrase that is being heard throughout the higher education realm, both at private institutions and public colleges and universities (Bontrager, 2004; Jones, 2003). To have a better understanding of this term and the impact it has on higher

education, a definition needs to be established. Kalsbeek and Hossler (2009) define enrollment

management as:

> A deliberate process of achieving an institution's preferred enrollment profile, starting by
>
> identifying the strategic purposes and mission of the institution, and then orchestrating
>
> the marketing, recruitment, admissions, pricing and aid, retention programs, academic
>
> support services and program development required to achieve those outcomes. (p. 4)

Bontrager (2004) simplifies the phrase enrollment management by referring to it as resource

management and defining it as "a complex of concepts and processes that enables fulfillment of

institutional mission and students' educational goals…" (p. 12). Finally, Ward (2005) explains

enrollment management in terms of an enrollment plan that "serves as the road map for

achieving specific institutional goals, typically connected to student body size, enrollment mix,

and revenue, while also providing specific indicators on the effectiveness of the learning

environment" (p.7).

Enrollment management (EM) in the United States can trace it origins back to the mid-

1970s when it was first introduced by Jack Maguire (1976) describing the recruitment and

retention efforts of Boston College. Now, EM is a commonplace term used in higher education

and is being replaced with the term strategic enrollment management (SEM) (Hossler, 2015).

With a decrease in the level of support for public postsecondary education, postsecondary

institutions are vigorously recruiting students. Although the recruitment of students is important,

it is the tuition dollars that these potential students will bring that will assist postsecondary

institutions in recovering funds from decreases in state appropriations (Hossler, 2015).

According to Ward (2005), an EM plan is just as important as a postsecondary

institution's mission statement and serves as an institutional road map for specific goals related

to study body size, enrollment mix, and revenue. Postsecondary institutions are faced with many challenges that range from declining enrollments to staying competitive among peer institutions (Jones, 2003). Jones specifically states that enhancing revenue is becoming more prevalent amongst postsecondary institutions. Therefore, postsecondary institutions are recognizing the need to establish a nonresident student population. This student population not only enhances the learning environment, they also provide intangible assets to postsecondary institutions in the form of enrollment numbers, filling classrooms, inhabiting student housing facilities, and providing tuition and fees (Goff & Snowden, 2015).

With declining international enrollments, postsecondary institutions will need to rethink their approaches to enrollment management. Wilkie (2018) offers several suggestions on how postsecondary institutions can maintain their recruitment numbers. These include, but are not limited to, re-evaluating communication approaches, promoting a safe environment, offering support services, readjusting tuition rates, and offering employment opportunities. Recruiting international students is a costly venture for postsecondary institutions. What becomes costlier is when postsecondary institutions fail to retain the international students that were recruited (Schulte & Choudaha, 2014). Therefore, it becomes important to know the reasons why postsecondary institutions fail to retain international students. Schulte and Choudaha (2014) state that the top three reason why international students decide to leave their university are reputation, finances, and academic difficulties.

Postsecondary institutions must view EM with a beginning-to-end concept. The beginning is the recruitment process and the end-point is graduation (Dolence, 1998). Goff and Snowden (2015) state that postsecondary institutions are moving to SEM strategies that maintain and increase international student enrollment in response to the worldwide competition of

attracting international students. Wecker (2017) suggests that these SEM strategies focus on

providing adequate international student needs, exercising caution when working with external

partners (i.e. third-party recruiters and partner universities, implementing the use of social media

for recruitment purposes, exercising patience in establishing branding awareness, and utilizing a

customer relations management system. According to Sinclair (2010), when developing an

effective SEM plan, postsecondary institutions must look at both internal and external factors.

These include, but are not limited to, student mobility trends, changes in foreign educational

systems, current economic factors, state and federal policymaking, the decision-making process

of international students, institutional budgets, the mission of the institution, staffing, and the

culture of the institution.

The Importance of Establishing an Effective International Enrollment Strategy

As postsecondary institutions struggle with enrollment declines, decreases in state

funding, and raising tuition rates, enrollment management plans should focus on finding

alternative revenue sources (Harris & Smith, 2016). One way to do this is to increase student

enrollment. Shaw (2011) suggests that a potential market to fill this need is the international

student. For many postsecondary institutions, international students will pay a substantially

higher tuition rate. These higher rates will help bolster revenue for universities facing loss of

state allocations and other budgeting constraints (Redden, 2015).

According to Sinclair (2010), international enrollment management (IEM) is a hot topic

of interest in educational settings. Before proceeding further, it is imperative that an international

enrollment management is defined. Aw and Levinson (2012) define international enrollment

management as "a focused and holistic strategy involving the successful recruitment, admission,

enrollment, retention, graduation, and reentry of international students translated into an

operational plan" (p. 27). Sinclair (2010) also defines international enrollment management as a synergistic process that focuses on the recruitment, admission, advising, enrollment, and retention of international students.

Postsecondary institutions are increasingly depending on international students as a means for financial health and stability (Loudenback, 2016). The recruitment of international students is gaining popularity, but more importantly, is becoming extremely competitive and costly (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Although there are numerous strategies and practices for the recruitment of international students, three to four practices seem to be repeatedly suggested and discussed. These practices include the use of social media, recruitment providers, recruitment fairs, and institutional agreements (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallet, 2012; Onk & Joseph, 2017; Ozturgut, 2013).

Use of Social Media

Amirali and Bakken (2015) states that international higher education has been impacted with the emergence of social media. Adapting to the use and benefits of social media will be crucial in postsecondary institutions achieving their international recruitment goals. Social media is defined as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2018). According to Chang and Gomes (2017), social media provides a valuable source of information for international students. In fact, more and more students are using the internet to explore various institutions and facilities (Royo-Vella & Hünermund, 2016). Social media platforms, such as Facebook and You Tube, can allow potential students to gather large amounts of information correctly (Amirali & Bakken, 2015). How well these platforms are designed can

ultimately impact a potential student's decision process on which institution they will attend (Sandlin & Peña, 2014). Chang and Gomes (2017) also state that as postsecondary institutions put more information about their institutions online, it is equally important that postsecondary institutions understand how information is accessed and the type of information that is deemed important.

Social media is being used in recruitment strategies, such as armchair recruitment. Canty (2009) defines armchair recruitment as "cost effective recruiting that is conducted by means of print publications and electronic and web-based communications, which is done without leaving one's desk" (p. 92). According to the National Association of International Educators (NAFSA), armchair recruitment is recruitment strategy that does not require administrators and faculty to leave campus (NAFSA, n.d.). There are some aspects of armchair recruiting that are extremely beneficial. Universities that effectively use social media to recruit international students will find this strategy to be cost effective and productive, especially when there are budget constraints that that limit international travel to potential markets (Kono, 2012). In addition to being cost effective, social media offers a more credible way of connecting with students and their families (Amirali & Bakken, 2015).

Choudaha (2013) states that social media offers postsecondary institutions an ideal opportunity in the recruitment of international students by offering four distinct advantages: Social media adapts to different communication styles; Social media provides for prompt communication over larger geographic areas; Social media provides cost efficiency over traditional recruitment methods; and Social media allows for custom communication in multiple languages. In addition to social media, Ryo-Vella and Hünermund (2016) suggests that that postsecondary institutions should consider web-bases solutions such as web content and layout

designs, as well as the addition of foreign language translations. In addition, blogs and interactive social networking tools could be used to market the institutions' brands.

Recruitment Providers

To assist with the enrollment of international students, postsecondary institutions are looking at a variety of options. One option is relying on the services of recruitment providers, also known as recruiting agencies or third-party providers. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) agencies are defined as "companies or individuals (agents) in the business of recruiting international students." Coffey (2013) further adds to the definition of agents as an individual who paid a fee by students and or a commission by an institution for offering postsecondary educational advising services. Pimpa (2004) states that these agencies offer a one-stop shop for international students wanting to study abroad and offer a multitude of services that include counseling, assistance with admission applications, help with visa processing. An executive summary published by NACAC indicates that there could be 20,000 agencies in operation worldwide.   However, less than one quarter of postsecondary institutions in the United States contract with agencies to conduct international student recruitment (West & Addington, 2014).

This could be changing as Legusov (2017) suggests that postsecondary institutions are relying on the use of recruitment agencies as a part of their international student recruitment efforts. Even though postsecondary institutions still incorporate the use of more traditional recruitment strategies (i.e. promotional videos, university websites, and interactive online approaches), postsecondary institutions are turning to a more effective means of international recruitment with the use of agents (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2016). Ozturgut (2013) supports this by stating that the use of agents is becoming a common strategy in the recruitment of international

students. These agents, or providers, can provide a quick source of applicants for a university by helping universities reach out to potential students who they would normally not have access to.

For many postsecondary institutions, international student recruitment targets are being reached with the use of agents (Huang, Raimo, & Humfrey, 2016). Huang et al. (2016) go on to state that postsecondary institutions are devoting a considerable amount of resources working with agents. These resources primarily include financial resources, but also includes the time spent by postsecondary institution administrators in working with agents. Zhang and Hagedorn (2011) state that international student enrollment is becoming more competitive amongst postsecondary institutions and therefore, effective recruitment is becoming essential for postsecondary institutions to be successful.

Huang, Raimo, and Humfrey (2016) suggests that postsecondary institutions establish a strong plan in working with agents. This plan should address the appointment, the monitoring, and if necessary, the termination of agent agreements and contracts. Ozturgut (2013) warns that agents are not just working for one university exclusively, they are working for multiple universities that pay varying commission rates. This leads into a discussion on the quality of the students being recruited. Are students qualified, or is it a matter of quantity over quality? These factors should be considered carefully before incorporating the use of agents as a recruitment strategy.

Recruitment Fairs and Institutional Agreements. The final strategy addressed in this literature review is the recruitment of students through partner universities and attending overseas recruitment fairs. For the 2013-14 academic year, over 800,000 international students were enrolled in universities and colleges in the United States. A suggested cause for this increase was the overall expansion of student mobility (Cantwell, 2015). Student mobility is in

refence to international mobile students, and UNESCO (2014) defines international mobile students as students who have crossed a national border to study abroad and who are not citizens of the country in which they are studying in.

A recruitment strategy that postsecondary institutions incorporate, other than the use of social media and recruitment agents, is the attendance of international student education fairs. According to Roy and Lu (2016), recruitment trips and in-person education fairs were the two most popular recruitment initiatives used by U.S. postsecondary institutions. Education USA, part of the United States State Department, is a network of advising centers located in hundreds of countries. The advising centers arrange more than 40 in-person education fairs each year. In addition to in-person fairs, Education USA arranges forums and conferences that help aid U.S. postsecondary institutions in achieving their internationalization and recruitment goals (United States Department of State, n.d.). Another possible suggestion is the idea of collaboration with other universities (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Establishing partner relationships with overseas universities can ensure a reliable source of potential students for years to come, especially if the institutional relationship is well maintained. Partnerships with overseas educational institutions will help postsecondary institutions increase international enrollment while avoiding the financial risk that is common with other recruitment strategies (Di Maria, 2018).

Conclusion

In 1966, Richard Dremuk wrote an article titled, "Will We Be Admitting Foreign Students in 1975?" Even forty years ago, there was a recognition of the importance of admitting international students. It could be argued that Dremuk (1966) was introducing the concept of a global citizen when he put forth the argument that by enrolling international students,

universities were allowing domestic students an opportunity to interact with students from other countries. This interaction would lead to the learning of new cultures and new ideas.

So, have things changed since 1966? The answer is yes and no. According to Aw (2012), universities are admitting international students in record numbers, but not necessarily for the same reasons outlined by Dremuk (1966). Instead of admitting international students based on humanitarian grounds and for creating new global citizens, U.S. institutions are enrolling students for revenue purposes and this international recruitment business is becoming lucrative for many universities.

Youssef (2014) argues that globalization and internationalization are major factors in today's international student mobility and there are several reasons that contribute to this. One reason is that there is a strong demand for higher education in the global market, aided by information technology. Another reason for international student mobility is the limited access to education for students in developing countries. Youssef (2014) goes on to state that international student mobility includes students who may not be able to enroll in programs in their home country but are admissible to programs outside of their national borders. It also includes students from families with sufficient financial resources who recognize the importance of an overseas education. A final reason is the economic advantage a foreign degree provides in today's competitive labor market and the possibility to migrate to another country.

Additional research supports Youssef's (2014) claims above and offers additional insight as to why students choose to study abroad and how student mobility is tied to globalization. Garcia and Villarreal (2014) mention the push/pull phenomenon where students are pushed out of their home countries and pulled in by other countries due to their social and academic needs. Other factors include stringent admission policies and discriminatory practices in the home

county, the inability to accommodate the demand for higher education within a country's own borders, and research resources that are prevalent in developed countries.

A university must be able to maintain its educational integrity along with its ability to actively recruit international students. The amount of tuition revenue that international students can bring to a university should be kept separate of the admission and educational standards. Unfortunately, this is not that simple. Haigh (2014) states that many university leaders only see the recruitment of international students as a means of financial survival and is the only task of those with financial management responsibilities. To ensure that universities can benefit from tuition revenue and maintain their educational integrity, Choudaha and Chang (2012) strongly recommend that institutions develop some type of institutional risk management process, especially regarding admission standards. Thus, only the successful universities will be able to develop a fine line between actively recruiting international students and the admission office acting as a gatekeeper to ensure the integrity of the institution is maintained.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the strategic importance international students have on five public four-year universities located in the Southern and Midwest United States. Primary interest focused on the financial impact that international students have on these universities, enrollment management plans that are being utilized, and potential concerns or worries concerning the future trends of international enrollment. Qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach were used as the basis for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to gather data on the roles and impacts of international students, support services, recruitment strategies, and marketing techniques. The interviews primarily focused on why institutions think recruiting international students is important and any issues or challenges that might be experienced because of recruiting international students. In addition to the interviews, questionnaires were distributed to gather additional information on the participants.

Larkin and Thompson (2012) state that in a phenomenological study, the topic of the study is of interest to the participants and participants have first-hand knowledge of the subject matter. In addition, research questions were open-ended and focused on the experiences and understanding of the participants. Four research questions laid the foundation for this study:

1. What roles do international students play at postsecondary institutions besides being students?

2. How do international students impact the financial health of postsecondary institutions?

3. What recruitment strategies and initiatives are utilized to recruit international students to postsecondary institutions in the United States?

4. What challenges are postsecondary institutions facing in recruiting international students?

Research Design

Philosophical assumptions and paradigms, also known as worldviews, lay the foundation for the design of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Creswell's (2007) philosophical assumptions, in conjunction with the researcher's own personal views, were used to guide this study. In addition to philosophical assumptions, paradigms, or worldviews, helped further shape this qualitative research. Simply stated, paradigms are personal beliefs. Creswell discusses four paradigms that influences qualitative research: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism. The philosophical assumptions mentioned above are embedded in interpretive frameworks. These interpretive frameworks are a set of beliefs that guide the qualitative research, and a thorough understanding of these assumptions and interpretive frameworks are needed when conducting qualitative research (Carnaghan, 2013).

This study was based on a phenomenological approach and used the philosophical framework of epistemology as a basis for conducting research. Scotland (2012) defines epistemology as "What it means to know" (p. 9). Epistemology was selected as one of the approaches to have a better understanding of multiple opinions on the research topic and allowed for multiple viewpoints from the research participants (Creswell, 2009). A phenomenological approach was utilized for this study due to the study describing the strategic importance international students have on postsecondary institutions. A combination of methods, such as conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires, were incorporated to understand the meaning the participants place on the strategic importance of international students. The

participants' own perspectives were used to provide insight into their motivations. According to Sauro (2015), a phenomenological study does not start with a well-formed hypothesis. Therefore, numerous interviews of participants were conducted to look for emerging themes and validate findings. The interviews incorporated open-ended questions to encourage interactions with the research participants.

Site Selection

For this qualitative study, purposive sampling was used for the site selection and participant selection. Maxwell (2013) states that in purposeful selection, settings and people will be chosen deliberately to provide relevant information concerning research questions and goals. This study focused on five public four-year institutions of higher education. These postsecondary institutions were classified as regional competitors that have shared similarities. Similarities were based on data such as freshman retention rates, average ACT scores, overall enrollment numbers, and international enrollment percentages. These institutions included five separate universities in five different states located in the southern and mid-western portion of the United States.

Participant Selection

After IRB approval of the research materials, each postsecondary institution was contacted by either phone or email to identify the appropriate administrator, or administrators, that oversee the functions of international admissions, international recruitment, and international student and scholar services. The Executive Director or Chief Operating Officer of the postsecondary institutions' international office served as an initial point of contact and in some instances, also served as an interviewee. Selected participants were contacted by email explaining the rationale for this study and determining their willingness and availability to

participate. Once the participants committed to the study, a follow up email was sent outlining the subject material that would be discussed during the interview. The email also contained an informed consent form and a demographic questionnaire. This allowed for ample time for the subject material to be processed. The real names of the participants were changed to protect the identity of the individuals. The rationale for the selection of the participants was based on the participants expertise and role in their current positions, in addition to the participants being the most appropriate individuals to best answer the study's research questions.

Five participants participated in this study and were identified only by their pseudonyms (Table 1). Each of the participants had more than 10 years of experience in various levels of higher education. Of the five participants, two held executive director positions. These included Ben and Will. Two other participants, Sarah and Christine, held director positions in international programs and international admissions respectively. The final participant, George, held an upper administrative level position at that vice president level. All participants, except for Christine, held terminal degrees. Although the participants had a long history of service in higher education, the participants were relatively new in their current role and institution.

Table 1

List of Participants by Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Years in Higher Education	Highest Degree Earned	Years in Current position
Ben	17	Ed.D.	2
Christine	11	Master's	2.5
George	43	Ph.D.	3
Sarah	16	Ph.D. (ABD)	1.5
Will	28	Ph.D.	4

Data Collection

  To achieve consistency, an established protocol was established for the interview process. The protocol process included the gathering of demographic questionnaires, recorded interviews, and detailed hand-written notes. Prior to interviews being conducted, a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) was distributed to each participant. Information asked included information such as the length of time spent in higher education, the length of time spent in international services (i.e. international recruitment, international student and scholar services, and international admissions), the amount of time spent at the current institution, the time spent in the current administrative role, and the education level of each participant. The demographic questionnaire was administered electronically as a Word document.

  Once the informed consent forms and demographic questionnaires were collected, data was collected through a series of tape-recorded phone interviews with each participant. Interviews were conducted by asking a series of open-ended questions (Appendix B) to each participant. During the interviews, hand written notes were also taken to highlight key points that were made by the participants. After all interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were downloaded on a personal computer and were sent to a transcription service for transcribing. This was done for authenticity, consistency, reliability, and accuracy purposes. The transcriptions were received electronically as Word documents and were reviewed and compared to the corresponding audio recording.

Data Analysis

  Data analysis is an important part of qualitative research and requires decisions on how the analysis will be done (Maxwell, 2013). Although there are different strategies that can be used for qualitative analysis, this study focused on categorizing strategies that include coding and

interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Saladana (2016) defines a code as a word or short phrase that assigns a summative attribute to a portion of data. The process of splintering this data and rearranging this information into categories that facilitates comparison is known as coding (Maxwell, 2013). Simply put, coding is a process of scrutinizing data for categories and themes.

Since this study used a phenomenological approach and the framework of epistemology, IPA was used to assist with data analysis. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) states that IPA is a "…qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences" (p. 1). Sine the goal of IPA is to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences, IPA was utilized to generate rich and detailed descriptions from the study's participants on the phenomena of the study's investigation. In addition, IPA was also used due to the small and homogenous sample size of this study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

NVIVO software was used to identify reoccurring themes that related directly to the research questions. Identified themes were categorized into main ideas that established a connection of patterns from the interviews. Data analysis primarily consisted of reading transcriptions, field notes, and coding of the data. Coding was specifically used to summarize and arrange the data gathered from the study. Before coding took place, a brief sentence was written to help establish what ideas were communicated, to guide how the data was coded and organized, and provided a basic structure to the coding blueprint. Once the coding blueprint was established, a process of coding was set up that incorporated priori codes and emergent codes (Stuckey, 2015).

Trustworthiness

Like other research methodologies, this qualitative study demonstrated rigor so that the research findings of this study had integrity or trustworthiness (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Billups

(2014) states that trustworthiness will be necessary to evaluate any qualitative research. Drawing

upon the concept promoted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), four elements were utilized to assist

with establishing trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility looked at establishing truth to the results. To accomplish this, time was spent

conducting interviews. Notes on observations during the participants' interviews were written

down in the filed notes. Dependability attempted to show consistent results. Dependability was

achieved by keeping track of detailed documentation that included interview notes and field

notes. This helped support and attest that data, findings, and recommendations were supported.

Transferability strove to demonstrate comparability. To achieve transferability, special attention

focused on details and descriptions from the responses generated from the interview questions.

The interview questions, in addition to prompts, were formulated to probe and generated detailed

responses. Billups (2014) suggests that the more detailed information generated, the findings

will be more likely applicable to similar settings and studies. Finally, confirmability was used to

demonstrate that the results of the study were accurate. To ensure accuracy, a methodological

device known as bracketing was used. Bracketing is defined as putting the researcher's own

personal beliefs and knowledge of the study's subject matter aside so that the participants'

experiences are accurately described in the collection of data (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013).

Triangulation and Member Checking

Two strategies used in establishing credibility, member checking and triangulation, were

used to establish trustworthiness in this qualitative study. Once interviews were conducted, the

recordings of the interviews were sent to a transcription service for transcribing purposes. After

receiving the transcriptions, copies of the transcription were sent to each individual participant.

Participants were asked to review the transcription for accuracy and for verification of whether

the findings reflect what was said to the researcher. This process is known as member checking. All member checking activities were conducted electronically, via email. This included any feedback and additional comments the participants wanted to provide to the researcher.

The second strategy that was used to establish trustworthiness is triangulation. Triangulation was used as a method to identify common and reoccurring threads mentioned by interview participants. One method of triangulation that was used included data triangulation. By interviewing different participants from different postsecondary institutions, all within the same study, common and reoccurring threads will help produce greater depth and understanding of the study and will help produce an overall picture of the study itself (Billups, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to the philosophical assumptions and paradigms of the study's participants. In addition, the study will also be limited to a small sample size of participants and universities that participated in the study. To make the study more manageable, the study will not look at other postsecondary institutions except for four-year public universities. With studies of this nature, data collected will be limited to the honest feedback received from administrators who participated in the study. A final limitation that could be encountered will be the amount of information participants are willing to disclose to the researcher. Due to the nature of the study itself and the researcher being a fellow peer as a postsecondary institution administrator, data from the study will be limited to certain information provided by the participants due to fear of revealing recruitment strategies, ongoing initiatives, and operating procedures.

Researcher Positionality

The reasoning for this study came about from my own professional experiences as a higher education administrator and working directly with international enrollment, recruitment,

and retention efforts at a postsecondary institution for more than 17 years. During my tenure in higher education, I have realized the importance of having international students in a postsecondary institution. However, I wanted to see how other higher education administrators viewed the importance of having international students on their campuses. Ultimately, this desire led me to conduct a qualitative study to see if other administrators felt the same way.

I started the study with preconceived thoughts and ideas and assumed that other administrators and institutions shared my beliefs. Although I recognized the multiple benefits that international students provided postsecondary institutions, the tuition revenue that international students generated was at the forefront of the benefits. I always believed that tuition revenue from international students played a critical role in supporting the operating budget of the university and institutional endeavors. Another preconceived bias that I believed centered on the importance of recruitment, especially working with overseas agents. Although a costly endeavor, active recruitment was viewed as a necessity to have a large international student population. My mission in undertaking this study was to listen to the participants of this study and share their responses as they were told and not let my preconceived biases influence the outcome of this study. It was the responses of the participants that became the critical component of this study.

Conclusion

The methods summarized in this chapter provided a medium of exploring the strategic importance international students have on public four-year universities. Special emphasis was placed on the financial impact of international students, the utilization of enrollment management plans, and future trends of international enrollment. Qualitative methods, a phenomenological approach, and the framework of epistemology provided a means of attaining

insight on how postsecondary administrators view the importance of recruiting and retaining

international students. Purposive sampling provided the rationale for the selection of the

postsecondary institutions of this study and for the selection of the study's participants.

A series of non-structured interviews from the participants provided the data for this

study. Interviewing participants from different postsecondary institutions provided adequate

means for achieving triangulation. All interviews have been recorded and properly stored to

ensure proper Institutional Review Board (IRB) audit procedures are being met. Although only

five participants participated in this study, the data that was produced could provide invaluable

information to other postsecondary administrators across the United States.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

Postsecondary institutions in the United States have often struggled with funding, both at the state and federal levels. Decreased budgets, lack of state allocations, and reductions in federal benefits have constantly plagued U.S. postsecondary institutions. Now, a new nemesis has emerged in the form of decreased enrollments. For the past four years, U.S. postsecondary institutions have witnessed a steady decline in overall enrollments and have been concentrating efforts in finding an alternative source of tuition revenue to compensate for decreased enrollments, lower operating budgets, and decreases in both state and federal support. As a result, U.S. postsecondary institutions are focusing their efforts on the recruitment of international students as a new source of tuition revenue, as well as promoting diversity and internationalization efforts on campuses. The admittance of international students by postsecondary institutions is not a new phenomenon and was deemed important more than fifty years ago. However, despite the renewed and increased recruitment efforts being made by postsecondary institutions, concerns amongst institutions on the overall importance of recruiting international students are becoming more prevalent.

The purpose of this study was to provide a better understanding on the strategic importance of recruiting and retaining international students, especially from a financial perspective, and why developing an international enrollment management plan is of the upmost importance among public institutions of higher education. The remaining part of this chapter will discuss the study's findings based on the following research questions:

1. What roles do international students play at postsecondary institutions besides being students?

2. How do international students impact the financial health of postsecondary institutions?

3. What recruitment strategies and initiatives are utilized to recruit international students to postsecondary institutions in the United States?

4. What challenges are postsecondary institutions facing in recruiting international students?

This qualitative study was designed to highlight the importance of recruiting and retaining international students. To achieve this, the researcher collected data from higher education administrators from a sampling of five four-year public institutions located in the United States. The findings of this study are of importance considering they will provide administrators of postsecondary institutions information on how international education administrators at other institutions view the importance of enrolling international students, the importance of an enrollment management plan, and potential concerns that postsecondary institutions are experiencing due to the recruitment of international students.

The participant selection of this study consisted of five participants, who are higher education administrators, from five separate four-year public universities. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms have been provided to each participant. Referenced participants of this study is listed in Table 1 according to their pseudonyms. In addition to the pseudonyms, other pertinent information for each participant is listed in Table 1. This information includes the participants' number of years in higher education, the participants' highest degree earned, and the participants' number of years at their current institution.

The site selection of this study provided an excellent sampling of five four-year public institutions of higher education. The site universities are in five different states in the south and

Midwest portion of the United States. Each of the five site universities is not that different with one another, and with other universities across the region, due to shared similarities in freshman retention rates, average ACT scores, and international enrollment percentages. The international enrollment at each of the five site universities is significant in the sense that these numbers help augment the overall enrollment numbers of the universities and make significant contributions in terms of diversification, internationalization, and financial incentives.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, there is a strategic importance among postsecondary institutions to recruit and retain international students. To support this claim, findings of this study will be discussed in five main sections that represent the five prominent themes of this study: internationalization, financial benefits, recruitment strategies, enrollment management plans, and support services. These five themes surfaced through the analysis of data and will present a better understanding on how postsecondary institutions view the importance of recruiting and retaining international students and potential concerns due to the recruitment of these students.

The first theme discusses internationalization and how international students contribute to the internationalization efforts of U.S. postsecondary institutions. The second theme examines the financial impact that international student enrollment has on U.S. postsecondary institutions, especially regarding budgeting concerns, tuition revenue, and scholarships. The third theme explores recruitment strategies that U.S. postsecondary institutions use to enroll international students, especially the use of agents, overseas recruitment fairs, and social media. The fourth theme considers the enrollment factors that U.S. postsecondary institutions deem as important components in their strategic enrollment management plan, especially components such as cost, application processes, communication, and rankings. Finally, the fifth theme looks at support

services that are needed to aid in the retention of international students. At the end of this chapter, a section on the interconnection of the five themes is discussed.

Theme 1: Internationalization

This section takes an in depth look at internationalization and why it became a theme of this study. As outlined in Chapter 2 of this study, there is a significant amount of literature on the benefits of enrolling international students in U.S. postsecondary institutions, especially notable benefits of internationalization efforts and diversity (Douglass & Edelstein, 2009). The participants in this study reiterated some of the same benefits supported by the literature during the interview process. Particularly, the data revealed the recurring theme of internationalization.

Participants in this study stated that one of the biggest roles that international students have, or play, at U.S. postsecondary institutions is the internationalization impact they have on institutions, especially diversity. "International students play a critical role in diversifying the student population," said Will. Sarah, another administrator, said,

> The stage of the internationalization is quite initial. So, the mindset, the global awareness on campus throughout is not very high. [International students] play a significant role to improve our domestic students' mindset, and/or not even students, probably, general faculty and staff members' awareness regarding internationalization or global awareness.

Gacel-Àvila (2016) clearly agrees with Sarah's statement on fostering global awareness and suggests that this should be a fundamental function of any university.

On-campus employment opportunities were a specific area mentioned by participants that help promote diversity, especially with the academic component of the university. A prime example of this was given by Will when he said, "they [international students] help with the academic component of the university by either teaching or monitoring labs." George added,

"they're [international students] working in people's labs. They're serving as graduate assistants, they are probably doing a little bit of teaching." The idea of employment opportunities being tied to diversity and internationalization was expanded further by Ben, when he added:

Student employment opportunities…we really stress the notion that these are experiential learning opportunities. It diversifies a lot of the departments that we have on campus. We put them [international students] in positions whether it's with student organizations, or in these employment opportunities, to become leaders on campus and in that regard, a lot of our students take charge of putting on a lot of the cultural types of activities that we offer across campus.

He continued by saying:

So, getting international students as employees in these different departments give offices [a] much valued perspective on who international students are you know, gives them a little bit of a different worldview and it-it really kind of changes their approach….

According to the participants, the mere presence of international students adds to the diversity of postsecondary institutions. In fact, international students enhance the collegiate experience (Natali, 2005). Christine stated that she has "actually been very fortunate to see the impact that international students are able to make on American students' lives." Enrolling international students at postsecondary institutions in the United States allows institutions to diversify their student body. In return, this diversity aids in the internationalization efforts being put forth by postsecondary institutions.

Multiple participants highlighted the impact that international students are having on domestic students. The presence of international students on U.S. postsecondary campuses are often the only international experience that domestic students may encounter, especially for

those domestic students who are not eligible to participate in an education abroad experience. Christine reiterated this notion by stating, "our [international] students provide that study abroad opportunity for our domestic students who might not have the chance to study abroad in another country." Christine expanded on this topic with the following:

> We tell them [international students] that they are the ambassador for their country and we really listen to them on what- all they would like to do to make our campus and the community aware of their country, their culture, their language, through all of those, activities and events and things that they do on campus and in the community, they actually help them [domestic students] know and learn about diversity….

Will also agreed with Christine's statements stating that at his institution, "a small percentage of our students go abroad." By increasing the number of international students on campus, Will stated that "they [domestic students] will at least have an opportunity to interact with someone from a different cultural and linguistic background." Interactions such as these will better prepare domestic students for the ever-changing global landscape that we live in.

Theme 2: Financial Impact

In addition to the benefits of internationalization and diversity, international students also provide a financial impact to postsecondary institutions in the United States (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman, & Paleari, 2016). For many U.S. postsecondary institutions, operating budgets are still centered around the enrollment of international students. In fact, all the participants supported this statement. George noted that at his institution, "they [international students] play a valuable part of our efforts to-to-to make-make a budget." Will followed by saying that he thought "institutions are impacted by the enrollment of international students" and noted that his institution received over 10 million in revenue from international students. Ben agreed and

because of budget issues with state appropriations, he noted that "without a doubt, international students play an important role in-in how their tuition revenue affects the overall health of the institution." Christine stated that at her current institution, international enrollment is "not that big of an impact" when it comes to budgeting purposes. However, she did mention that this was not the case at other institutions that she previously worked at:

> We spent a lot of resources and time in recruiting international students, and they all you know, paid out-of-state tuition. Um, many of them were not on scholarship, and we saw major financial impact that those students had on our institution.

Sarah also agreed with Christine in saying that her institution "does not consider international student tuition as a significant contribution to the financial benefit… but it is still important."

Although he did not want to come across as harsh, George suggested that the underlying reason behind institutions emphasizing international student enrollment is primarily financial. Rather than prioritizing the diffusion of knowledge, priority is given to revenue generation (Rhoades & Slaughter, 2004). George simply stated, "the international students tend to pay more." As a result, universities have grown accustomed to the financial benefits that international students provide. Will specifically mentioned how he was using international student revenue to fund faculty grants. Will said, "out of those revenues they also support faculty grants. Um, I'm sponsoring about $140,000 in faculty grants, grants to academic departments and faculty for international travel, for the international session and things like that." In addition to grants, participants mentioned that international tuition revenue was being used to fund university initiatives. Sarah specifically mentioned how institutions that she had been a part of benefited from international student tuition revenue:

We were able to renovate those buildings on campus, we were able to like hire additional

staffing in the housing, in the student health center, and those wouldn't have been

possible if it had not been for international students paying that extra tuition there. So, I

can see that there is [a] huge financial benefit to the institution and to the community as

well.

George followed up with Christine's comment by stating that at his institution, international

student tuition revenue was used for similar purposes. George specifically said that, "Tuition

from the first- I forget how many- 100, 150, whatever it is, international students goes to retire

the debt on that building…. the building that houses international programs is a major use of

tuition revenue from international students."

Throughout the course of the interviews, the participants made it clear that postsecondary

institutions are benefiting from the tuition revenue generated by international students. Whether

it is tuition revenue going to the general fund of the institution, or tuition revenue directly

funding university initiatives, the financial impact is real. However, the participants suggested

that a new trend is emerging, and that international student tuition revenue might not have the

same financial impact it once had.

The participants hinted that the new trend might be a reduction in the overall international

student tuition rate that postsecondary institutions are charging. One possibility would be to

offer more scholarships to help lessen the financial impact international students experienced

when paying international tuition rates (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010). Bista and Dagley

(2015), suggest that scholarships and other financial support heavily influence an international

student's decision to study at a postsecondary institution in the United States. One participant,

George, offered his own viewpoint on why scholarships might be needed for international students:

> How do we scholarship these folks? Because we're-we're not as competitive as we need
> to be with other institutions. It almost seems like the idea that was once upon a time we
> could charge international students more, we may be moving into a time when we can't
> really do that to the extent that maybe we, we once did. And maybe they maybe we're
> looking at something where the international rate gets closer to the other, other state rate,
> something, something along those lines.

Sarah stated that she has already noticed the change in the financial impact change due to the amounts of scholarships her institution is offering. Will also stated, "scholarships and tuition waivers play a big role is in those students that are not so poor but are not so wealthy that they can afford any schools."

There are many individuals in, and outside, of higher education that are still living in the past by thinking that postsecondary institutions can still charge international students more. As Ben mentioned, "there's no additional charge for international students, and I think, by and large, people don't quite understand how competitive the international student market is." For postsecondary institutions to be competitive in the international student market, change is inevitable. Postsecondary institutions are going to have to look at ways to reduce tuition. As Ben mentioned, "if we're not giving away financial aid and-and scholarships and things like that, we're just not going to be competitive so, we-we do have to discount our tuition as much as possible to be competitive." Ben probably summed it up best when he said:

> Every student, you know, counts in the enrollment picture so, I-I think maybe some years
> ago that might have been a different case but, we're really having to look at ways to cut

back our tuition to just get the students to be interested or, just entice them to come here because I think they have a lot of choices out there now. Scholarships are-are incredibly important.

Regardless of changing trends, the enrollment of international students continues to affect the financial health of many U.S. postsecondary institutions. The financial impact might not be the same as it was in the past, however, U.S. postsecondary institutions are still dependent on the tuition revenue generated from international students. As Ben mentioned, every single student is magnified in the overall enrollment picture. Like domestic students, international students also have a plethora of institutions to choose from. Therefore, it will become increasingly important that postsecondary institutions identify and implement a viable international recruitment strategy.

Theme 3: Recruitment Strategies

The recruitment of international students is becoming increasingly important due to a variety of factors: financial stability, enrollment declines, and alternative funding opportunities (Harris & Smith, 2016; Loudenback, 2016). To ensure that postsecondary institutions are being competitive in their approach to recruiting international students, Ben mentioned that institutions should be "committed to an approach" and not be quick to give up on that approach if immediate results did not materialize. He stated this best by saying:

> I think that data-driven decisions are important. I-I think that it-it's really important to understand what you're already doing and-and how that is or isn't effective that, if-if there's anything, I think, to take away from international recruitment is that there is no silver bullet, there is no one size fits all, different markets require different approaches and so, making smart decisions based on-on truly understanding what it is you're doing and whether or not that's effective, is important…

Talking with the five participants of the study revealed similarities in the various recruitment strategies and some differences amongst the institutions that were represented. Regarding Sarah's institution, one of the strategies that was being implemented focused on a "digital campaign". When asked what she meant by the wording of "digital campaign" she specifically referenced online advertising, such as Google AdWords and Facebook. Sarah went on to mention that traditional overseas recruitment fairs were still important, especially in emerging markets such as Vietnam and Nepal. However, they were not very effective in more traditional markets such as India and China. According to Sarah, society is more informed than ever, and she referred to our current society as being an "informative society". As a result, her institution was focusing recruitment efforts more toward online advertising and recruiting. In fact, institutions looking for a cost-effective recruitment strategy and are budget conscientious are resorting to the use of social media (Kono, 2012).

Sarah's institution was not the only one who recognized the impact that social media had on international student recruitment. Will mentioned how social media, or web portals, could be used, especially if the institution was not well known overseas. Christine also mentioned that social media was an important international student recruitment tool for her institution. "That's because we don't have a budget for international recruitment. We don't have a budget to go out and recruit and travel with, you know, with tours and companies and things like that," remarked Christine.

Another popular recruitment strategy that the participants referenced was the use of overseas recruitment agencies, a strategy that more and more postsecondary institutions are relying on (Legusov, 2017). Both George and Will mentioned that their institutions used agents for recruitment purposes, but George shared that he had mixed experiences about the use of such

agents. Ben, on the other hand, had a different take on the use of overseas agents. "We kind of rely heavily on agents. And really that's about the only kind of recruitment that we do there." Ben stated that the key to their recruitment success with agents was knowing how to effectively work with them:

> We've created training videos for them. We do video conference trainings for their- their agents, their- their counsellors. And so, I think that has probably been like I said the most productive professional development thing that I've done in a long time. And just knowing how to work with agents better has really paid dividends.

In addition to the use of social media and working with overseas recruitment agencies, there were several other recruitment strategies that the participants mentioned were effective measures in recruiting international students. These included university partnerships, working with foreign governments, scholarships, and by word of mouth. All these strategies were mentioned as being important international student recruitment tools. However, two strategies stood out as recurring themes among the participants, scholarships and word of mouth.

Although scholarships were mentioned earlier as being an influencing factor on the financial impact that international students have on U.S. postsecondary institutions, scholarships were also viewed by the participants has having a positive effect on international recruitment. Sarah commented that scholarships are a significant piece in the enrollment decision making process. "Giving a small scholarship or a small tuition waiver can tip your scale to make, make-could make me decide to go to X or Y school," shared Will. George agreed and stated that scholarships have made is institution more attractive and have made getting a visa easier for students. Ben also thought that scholarships were important. He felt that students would be

more likely to choose an institution this is rewarding them, or giving them something, that they perceived would be of value and specific to their needs.

George also agreed with Ben's statement saying that his institution was told on several occasions that receiving a scholarship was a bit of an honor. Christine suggested that receiving a scholarship was more than just an honor and receiving money. "It's more about making them [students] feel special," stated Christine. Sarah reiterated Christine's thoughts on students feeling special:

> The finance is very important. So, if the institution has the affordable tuition rate and then, and the scholarship is very important too. So, most of the time, scholarships would be significant for international students to survive, or to have, extra funding is always good. They'll just make the students feel special if you can provide scholarships.

In addition to other scholarships, Christine specifically mentioned the impact merit scholarships had on a student's enrollment decision process. Students expect that because they are academically strong, they should be rewarded. Christine summed it up best by saying, "I would rather go to a school that recognizes my hard work versus, yeah, you're just going to get that 10% that everybody gets."

Word of mouth was the last recurring recruitment strategy mentioned by the participants. If a student attends an institution and has a good experience, word of mouth can be one of the best recruitment tools available at postsecondary institutions, George commented. Not only is it a great recruitment tool, word of mouth is free advertising. The key is that students have a good collegiate experience. If students have a good experience, they go back home and talk to their friends, family members, and classmates about their positive experiences in school. "Sometimes students have friends, you know, friends' recommendation is very important too," stated Sarah.

According to George, this strategy works about as well as anything. An institution's own international student population would be the best recruiters, added Will.

Theme 4: Enrollment Management Factors

To help ensure that international recruitment efforts are successful, postsecondary institutions should have an enrollment management plan in place. In its simplest form, an enrollment management plan helps to serve as a road map for enrollment efforts (Ward, 2005). Sinclair (2010) specifically mentions that recruitment, admission, enrollment, and retention efforts should be the centerpieces of any enrollment management plans. The participants shared several factors that they thought were important parts of the enrollment management process. Each one of the participants mentioned how these factors contributed to the success of recruitment, admission, and enrollment efforts.

One of the factors mentioned focused on the effects communication and the importance it plays in the recruitment and admission processes. Sarah mentioned how she thought the application process was so important. Not only is it important; "it's critical," she added. Therefore, communication becomes essential in converting a potential applicant into an admitted student, commented Sarah. George could not have agreed more:

I think it's also important that we respond to folks in a very timely fashion or you probably can't be too fast in getting back to them and telling them that they've been accepted and what the terms of their admission are, that sort of thing.

Will was also a proponent of a good communication plan. He agreed that an established and effective communication plan was necessary during the application and admission process, but he also argued that communications should continue even after the student has been admitted and even upon arrival at the institution. This would aid in the retention process, stated Will.

Participants stated that an effective application process is another factor that contributes to a successful enrollment management plan. The application process must be straightforward and simple, stated Sarah. One way to achieve this, said Sarah, is to have an easy navigating and informative website. Will took it one step further and suggested that websites, in addition to be easy to navigated and informative, should be bilingual. Will supported this by saying, "If I have a website that is available in multiple languages, I am sending the message that, yes, you are welcome here, we welcome international students." This is important, especially for the message it sends out to potential students, added Will. Websites in multiple languages are also beneficial to parents of potential students. According to Will, parents might not have the language schools and having information in multiple languages will help parents have a better understanding of where their children will be attending school.

According to the participants, a third factor that contributes to a successful enrollment management plan is an effective and efficient admission workflow. Making sure applications are processed in a timely manner, establishing communication with students during the admission process, and working with department chairs and graduate coordinators are critical components of efficient admission workflow. According to Will:

> As we know, students who received the first I20 or the I20 from the first school that contacted them is typically the institution that gets these students because they need that document to-to secure the embassy interview for-for the student visa. So, having an efficient, admission process is-is a critical factor.

A school's ranking was yet another resounding factor that was mentioned by participants as having a positive effect on an institution's enrollment efforts. Christine, Sarah, and Ben commented on how they thought a university's ranking was very important. "People want to see

tangible results from the education and I, and again I kind of trace that back to having rank or reputation," added Ben. In support, Christine shared that Asian students from her institution "tend to place more importance on the ranking of the school." Will also thought that the university's ranking was very important. He supported this by saying:

They [Students] are investing a lot of money in their education and they want to make sure that the degree that they have is going to have some weight. So, the ranking of the university is definitely an important factor.

Will and Christine also added that rankings and reputation was not limited to just the university in general, but they were equally important for academic programs as well.

Financial factors were also mentioned by the participants as being an important piece of an enrollment management plan. One segment of financial factors included affordability. The participants stated that this played an important part in a student's decision to enroll in an institution. Christine mentioned that students at her institution placed "a high importance on the cost of attendance." Will also mentioned how the "affordability of the institution" was an important factor for students. Not only was the price of the institution important, but Will also mentioned a second segment of financial factors that included living expenses as being equally important. A third segment of financial factors looked at the possibility of employment. Sarah specifically referenced her Asian students and how employment opportunities were important for them. Christine agreed and shared that she was answering a lot of inquiries about the availability of internships and job prospects.

Theme 5: Support Factors

Postsecondary institutions spend a considerable amount of time, effort, and finances to recruit international students. However, this is only half the work. Once international students

arrive on campus, it is imperative that they have the necessary support needed to transition to a new environment, a new culture, and a new educational system. Inadequate support could negatively impact a postsecondary institution's recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts.

Arriving in a foreign country for the first time can be an overwhelming experience, even for the most seasoned traveler. Some postsecondary institutions are fortunate to be in a strategic geographic location with proximity to international airports and have access to public transportation. Other postsecondary institutions are not so fortunate.   George and Christine both talked about how postsecondary institutions should consider having an airport shuttle service for newly arrived international students, especially those institutions who are not geographically located. This type of service could prove to be beneficial in ongoing recruitment efforts.

Talk concerning support continued among the participants, especially in the form of on-campus support. Sarah mentioned her frustrations on how offices on her campus would direct any inquiry that an international student had directly to the international office, rather than directing it to the appropriate office. "This is something that we are working so hard to improve," and it requires the cooperation of the campus, said Sarah. Christine seemed to agree with Sarah regarding the importance of on-campus support. One role of our office is to "try to make them [international students] feel comfortable using all the services" on campus. Sarah specifically mentioned several offices that she thought international students seemed to utilize more than others. These included the housing office, the bursar's office, and the registrar's office. Expanding on her idea of making international students feel comfortable, Christine also suggested that postsecondary institutions could offer additional support to international students by assisting them in setting up a banking account, helping in securing off-campus housing, and providing advisement on class selections.

Participants stated that academic support was imperative to the success of international students. George stated that he thought international students could benefit from additional help with English language skills, both oral and written. Will fully supported this notion by saying how he thought English language training was a support service that was unique to international students. "Students need to have adequate language skills to succeed not only academically but, professionally and if they don't have a good command of the language, they are not going to succeed," Will added.

Due to the complex nature of immigration advising and immigration regulations, Christine and Will stated how they thought postsecondary institutions should offer support in terms of immigration services. "Immigration is regulated by federal law," Will stated. As a result, Will was adamant that universities provide some type of in-house services so that international students could maintain their immigration status.

One last area of support worth mentioning centered around programming activities. Ben had a unique perspective on programming activities and suggested how meaningful interactions among participants was crucial. Ben stated, "Getting international students meaningful interactions with domestic students. I think that that has always been a challenge anywhere that I have been." By creating meaningful interactions between international and domestic students, "You're really kind of creating some meaningful connections and developing some real learning opportunities for both sides. I think [this] would be a great service that goes above and beyond for a university to provide." These meaningful interactions not only provide real learning opportunities, they also aid in dismantling stereotypes that exist among varying cultures.

Interconnection of Themes

The five themes that originated from the analysis of data are unique in the sense that all five themes interconnect with one another. In addition, each theme builds upon one another. The first theme, internationalization, sets the stage on the importance of having international students enrolled in postsecondary institutions in the United States. This builds upon the second theme of financial impact by showing that internationalization and diversity are not the only benefits that international students provide to U.S. postsecondary institutions. The financial theme interconnects with the third theme of recruitment strategies. Due to the internationalization, diversification, and financial benefits that international students provide to postsecondary institutions there is an inherent need to actively recruit these students. The theme of recruitment strategies is further connected to the fourth theme of enrollment management factors. Recruitment strategies are only successful if an enrollment management plan exists. Enrollment management factors, such as communication and easy to navigate websites, play an important part in ensuring that the recruitment strategies are successful. The fourth theme, enrollment management factors, and the fifth theme, support factors, interconnect with one another and are compared to enrollment and retention efforts. Interconnection is demonstrated by pointing out that once international students are admitted and enrolled, there is a need to ensure support factors exist to aid in the retention of these students.

Conclusion

The themes that emerged through the analysis of data revealed a great deal of insight on how current postsecondary institutions view the importance of recruiting and retaining international students. The five themes that were identified help set the foundation as to the importance postsecondary institutions place on international student enrollment. Within each

theme, subtopics were identified through data analysis that helped explain the role of each theme. The first two themes look at how international students benefit postsecondary institutions through internationalization efforts and impact them financially. The second and third themes discusses various strategies that postsecondary institutions incorporate when recruiting international students and how certain enrollment management factors can impact recruitment efforts. The final theme discusses the importance of support services and how this relates to the retention efforts of postsecondary institutions.

All five themes interconnect with one another, build upon one another, and relate back to one another. This allows a better understanding of the importance various postsecondary institutions place on the recruitment and retention of international students. As a result, this chapter has shown how administrators from differing postsecondary institutions have come together in agreement on identifying key reasons for recruiting and retaining international students.

Chapter 5

Recommendations and Conclusions

Introduction

In this chapter, the implications of the study will be discussed. The chapter will be divided into four main parts that will provide concise answers to the research questions, implications associated with the study, future research, and concluding thoughts concerning the study. The purpose for this study was to evoke responses from higher education administrators on the importance of recruiting and retaining international students.

The first section focuses on answering the four research questions that laid the foundation for this study. Each research question will become a separate subsection. The three subsections focus on the roles that international students play at postsecondary institutions, how the financial health of postsecondary institutions are impacted by international students, and the recruitment strategies and initiatives being utilized to recruit international students, as well as the recruitment challenges universities are facing. The second section discusses the implications of this study. The implications will be centered around recommendations for best practices at U.S. postsecondary institutions. Support for implications will be referenced back to existing literature referenced in Chapter Two. The third section of the chapter suggests future research, especially topics that the study did not address. The final section of this chapter offers concluding thoughts on the study as a whole

Answering the Research Questions

This study attempted to provide answers on how administrators at five four-year public postsecondary institutions view the importance of recruiting and retaining international students. In addition, this study looked at the roles international students play at postsecondary institutions

besides being students; how international students impact the financial health of postsecondary institutions, and; the recruitment strategies and initiatives being utilized to recruit international students to U.S. postsecondary institutions, in addition to the challenges universities face in their recruitment of international students. Answers to each of these three research questions will be provided in this section. References to the study's findings will be made to provide concise answers to each of the questions.

The five participants of this study hold significant positions within the international office at their respective institutions. Each participant offers invaluable insight to the study's findings based on their time spent in higher education and experience gained from working at different postsecondary institutions. Although similarities exist among the responses received from the participants, differences and new trend were identified. Overall, the findings from this study indicate that postsecondary institutions do recognize the strategic importance of recruiting and retaining international students. However, the findings also reveal the different levels of emphasis that institutions place on the recruitment and retention of international students. The piece that can add further support to this claim is absent: the participation of additional participants.

The first research question tried to find out what roles international students play at postsecondary institutions besides being students. Although this question elicited a variety of responses, the theme that best answers this question is the theme of internationalization. If this question was asked in a simpler context of what the biggest role international students play at postsecondary institutions, the immediate response would be a major source of tuition revenue. In contrast, the theme of internationalization suggests that international students play more substantial roles other than being a source of tuition revenue. One of the biggest role

international students play at postsecondary institutions, as suggested by the participants, is one of diversity. Comments from the participants illustrate that the presence of international students helps diversify the student body and increases global awareness.

The second research question solicited answers as to how international students impact the financial health of postsecondary institutions? The answer to this question is not easily answered due to the varying responses from the participants. Attempts to answer this question comes from the data found in the theme that centers on financial impact. The data reveals that the impact varies from institution to institution.   The data from this theme highlights that the financial impact international students have on postsecondary institutions is not the same as it once was. Although international student tuition revenue is still important, data shows that revenue is being offset by scholarships and tuition incentives.

The third research question asked what recruitment strategies and initiatives are being used to recruit international students to postsecondary institutions in the United States. There is a considerable amount of data that answers this question that emerged from the themes of recruitment strategies, enrollment management factors, and support factors. Although an overall best strategy did not present itself, the data highlights the importance of communication and grass roots advertising as being important recruitment strategies. Other important strategies that emerged from the data discusses the use of overseas agents, affordability, and an efficient admission process.

The fourth, and final, research question inquired about the challenges postsecondary institutions are facing in recruiting international students. This question is not adequately answered but data is presented that offers suggestions to this question. Suggestions from the data emerged from the theme of enrollment management factors. The data highlights the importance

of an enrollment management plan and the implementation of enrollment management strategies. Specifically, the data stresses the importance of a well-established communication plan, an effective application process, and an efficient admission workflow.

The themes in Chapter Four generated several areas of discussion that are worth mentioning and will be the catalyst for the discussion of the implications and recommendations section of this chapter. The areas of discussion originate from two main areas: the pre-conceived biases that were shared in the positionality statement of Chapter Three and from the theme data found in Chapter Four. The areas of discussion are:

1. International students were always believed to have a substantial financial impact on postsecondary institutions. However, many of the participants shared that that international students have a marginal impact on the financial health of institutions.

2. Scholarships and tuition incentives are crucial pieces of the recruitment and enrollment plans for U.S. postsecondary institutions. Without these pieces, postsecondary institutions cannot be competitive.

3. Diversification seems to be more important than the financial benefits international students offer.

4. Traditional recruitment methods, such as working with overseas recruitment agencies and student fairs, produces mix results.

5. For international recruitment to be successful, an enrollment management plan must be in place.

Implications and Recommendations

The framework of epistemology and a phenomenological approach provided the analytical lens in investigating the importance of recruiting and retaining international students at

U.S. postsecondary institutions. Implications from this study focus on recommendations and changes that can be implemented at postsecondary institutions in the United States. The findings that have the most interest to U.S. postsecondary institutions are a switch from viewing international students as a means of financial dependence to the justification for diversification, a need for scholarships and tuition incentives to keep a competitive edge, re-examining international recruitment methods, and the importance of establishing a strategic enrollment management plan.

Financial Dilemma

Postsecondary institutions in the United States have benefited greatly from international student enrollments. In general, international students tend to pay more in tuition revenue than other students attending postsecondary institutions (Garcia & Vilarreal, 2014). This extra tuition revenue provides postsecondary institutions extra financial flexibility, especially when institutions are faced with decreases in state and federal funding. The study's findings suggest that postsecondary institutions are dependent on the financial benefits international students provide. This financial dependency on international students is what finances postsecondary institutions in the United States (Stephens, 2013). As participants shared, university operating budgets are still centered around international student tuition revenue. In addition, university initiatives are often funded by the tuition revenue international students provide. Therefore, the dependency on the enrollment of international students is still alive and well.

Competition for international student enrollment is becoming increasingly important (Owens et al., 2011). However, an increase in competition among postsecondary institutions to enroll international students is having an immediate financial impact on postsecondary institutions. As a result, the financial impact international students have on U.S. postsecondary

institutions does not seem as relevant as it once was. The findings of the study offer suggestions on how postsecondary institutions can counter this new financial dilemma.

One recommendation is that postsecondary institutions remain active in their international recruitment efforts. Anything less would put postsecondary institutions at an immediate financial disadvantage. Since postsecondary institutions often struggle with the cost of tuition (Kim & Ko, 2015), a second recommendation is that postsecondary institutions should re-evaluate the amount of tuition that is being charged to international students. Postsecondary institutions should focus on recruiting more international students at a lower, discounted tuition rate. Even with lower tuition rates, a higher number of enrolled international students would offset the discounted rate.

The Need for Scholarships to Remain Competitive

Due to the competitive nature among postsecondary institutions to recruit international students (Owens et al., 2011), the findings of this study indicate that the postsecondary institutions can no longer charge a higher tuition rate to international students. As a result, the financial impact that international students have on postsecondary institutions is slowly lessening. International students now have more options to attend a postsecondary institution and postsecondary institutions in the U.S. will need to be more creative in attracting international students to their campuses. The findings of this study offer two recommendations for postsecondary institutions to consider due to the changing financial impact international students are having.

The first recommendation is for postsecondary institutions to embrace financial change. To remain competitive and to increase their international student enrollment, postsecondary institutions will need to focus on ways to reduce tuition. A possible suggestion that originated

from the data is to eliminate the international rate and lower the international rate closer to the in-state rate that current residents pay. Flexibility in tuition pricing is needed for postsecondary institutions to remain competitive in the international student market.

A second recommendation is to implement a competitive scholarship package to entice, or attract, international students to enroll in postsecondary institutions. Participants of the study indicate that scholarships are extremely important and might be the difference maker in whether an international student decides to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Literature also supports this and states that scholarships do make a difference where students choose to enroll (Bista & Dagley, 2015). To highlight the importance of scholarships, participants in this study state that a combination of scholarships and tuition waivers are already being utilized for recruitment purposes at their respective institutions. One type of scholarship that is having an immediate impact on international enrollment is the merit-based scholarship. Data from the study indicate that recipients of merit-based scholarships feel that they should be recognized for their academic accomplishments. Although not mentioned by the participants of this study, a second type of scholarship that can impact recruitment and enrollment efforts is a needs-based scholarship. This type of scholarship can entice potential international students to enroll in postsecondary institutions that normally would not be options for them.

Some might argue that scholarship packages will nullify any potential revenue postsecondary institutions would receive from international tuition revenue. However, postsecondary institutions will need to come to the realization that revenue, even at a discounted price, is still revenue nonetheless. More so than ever, every student is important in the overall enrollment plan of postsecondary institutions. With competition among postsecondary

institutions at an all-time high, institutions can no longer afford to sit idle in their recruitment and enrollment efforts (Goff & Snowden, 2015).

The Role of Diversity

As stated in Chapter Two, international students provide numerous financial benefits to U.S. postsecondary institutions. However, international students also provide other notable benefits such as internationalization efforts and the advancement of diversity (Douglas & Edelstein, 2009). These benefits often go unnoticed due to the emphasis on the financial incentives international students provide to postsecondary institutions. Findings from the study indicate that this might no longer be the case. Participants of this study argue that diversity is equally important and the impact it has on postsecondary institutions might be the most notable benefit that international students provide to postsecondary institutions.

Participants share that postsecondary institutions prosper and benefit by having international students on campus. The prosperity gained should not be confused with financial motives (McFarlane, 2016). Enrolling international students promotes a diversified campus and provides experiential learning opportunities, both academically and through employment (Wong, 2007).

Results from the data shows that having a diversified international student body promotes global awareness and cultural awareness (Gacel-Àvila, 2016). Participants shared how international students allowed domestic students to have a study abroad experience without leaving campus. For many domestic students, interacting with an international student on campus might be the only international experience they encounter. These interactions increase the mindset of both students and faculty. Most importantly, these encounters promote a global awareness that might not have previously existed.

Re-examining International Recruitment Methods

For postsecondary institutions to successfully recruit international students, a recruitment strategy must be in place (Harris & Smith, 2016). Today, recruitment plans vary from one institution to the next. Postsecondary schools are coming to the realization that there is no such thing as a One Plan Fits All concept. As a result, postsecondary institutions are formulating recruitment plans based on data driven decisions that center on different needs, visons, and goals

Many postsecondary institutions are still using the traditional international recruitment methods, such as overseas agents and recruitment fairs (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallet, 2012; Onk & Josehph, 2017; Ozturgut, 2013). Although the use of these methods has a positive recruitment impact, these methods are also rather costly (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Schools may find themselves unable to continue using such costly endeavors.

The data shows that postsecondary institutions are moving in a new direction. The use of social media is an inexpensive alternative to recruitment fairs and overseas agents. Schools are taking advantage of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Amirali & Bakken, 2015). Students are more connected than ever, and these platforms are an easy way for postsecondary institutions to showcase their institutions (Royo-Vella & Hünermund, 2016). postsecondary institutions are also going back to the basic tenants of recruitment. The data indicates postsecondary institutions are depending on the word of mouth, form current and past students, as a form of grass roots advertisement. Participants state that this one of the most efficient and effective forms of recruitment that can be utilized. Also, having a competitive scholarship program aids in the recruitment process. Without scholarships, postsecondary institutions cannot expect to be competitive with other institutions.

An interesting suggestion that came from the data focuses on postsecondary institutions that partner with overseas agents. Postsecondary institutions that do work with overseas agents, should strongly consider developing an action plan that clearly outlines the expectations and requirements of the institution (Huang, Raimo, & Humfrey, 2016). Training videos that focus on institutional facts, admission criteria, and program specific information were other possible suggestions suggested by a program participant that postsecondary institutions could implement to effectively work with overseas recruitment agents.

The Need for a Strategic Enrollment Plan

As postsecondary institutions understand the importance of recruiting and enrolling international students, a plan must be in place for postsecondary institutions to be successful in their international recruitment efforts. Ward (2005), describes these enrollment plans as road maps for postsecondary institutions to achieve institutional enrollment goals. Due to worldwide competition in recruiting international students, U.S. postsecondary institutions are incorporating enrollment management plans that promote international student enrollment (Goff & Snowden, 2015).

The findings of this study highlight several key components that should be considered when postsecondary institutions establish enrollment management plans. These components include effective communication, an effective application process, and an efficient admission workflow. The participants state that these components are critical in any postsecondary institution's international recruitment efforts.

Effective communication is critical in any enrollment management plan. Participants stress that communication is done in a timely manner and that communication is accurate. This needs to be stressed in all areas of enrollment management. Communication is extremely critical

in the recruitment and application process, especially regarding written correspondence between the institution and applicants. As several participants stated, timely communication can be the difference maker between converting an applicant into an enrolled student.

Once communication has been established, it is just as critical for postsecondary institutions to have an efficient application process. An application process that is simple and straightforward will encourage applicants to continue with the admission process. Not only is the application process critical, it is equally important that the institution's website is easy to navigate, and information is easily accessible. To send a more welcoming message, participants suggest that key parts of an institution's website be made available in multiple languages, especially areas that deal with international enrollment. These areas could center around program specific information, an application checklist, general university information, and arrival information.

A final recommendation is that postsecondary institutions evaluate their current international admission workflow. The admission workflow should be a seamless process that works toward the end goal of admitting a potential student. Although accuracy is important, an emphasis on speed is also important. It is imperative that an application is processed in a timely manner and applications status updates are provided to the applicant. To achieve this, emphasis is placed effective communication, both internally and externally. Establishing a working relationship with graduate coordinators, department chairs, and academic advisors will help ensure the admission workflow is efficient and seamless. Internal and external factors such as these will aid in the development of an effective enrollment management plan (Sinclair, 2010).

Future Research

This study draws attention to several areas that require further research. With so much emphasis being placed on enrollment management in postsecondary institutions, areas of international recruitment and retention warrant further study. There are multiple components that need additional exploration.

The varying reasons for recruiting and retaining international students at U.S. postsecondary institutions needs continuous analysis. As this study highlights, the changing financial influence international students have on postsecondary institutions requires further investigation. Interconnected are questions related to recruitment strategies and the impact they have on the international recruitment efforts of postsecondary institutions. Additionally, discussions pertaining to institutional agreements are in need of and the role they have on international recruitment efforts. Finally, a probe into the impact that scholarships, discounts, and tuition waivers have on international recruitment and retention efforts is needed.

Changing Financial Influences

Expanded research is needed on the importance of recruiting and retaining international students. Although this study identified the various reasons for recruiting and retaining international students in a qualitative study that included five different participants, additional research is needed. To have a better understanding of the varying importance, research among additional postsecondary institutions is necessary. Even though the findings of this study can be applied to postsecondary institutions in general, this study needs to be applied to more than five participants from multiple regions in the United States.

Further research is needed to determine if the same financial influences outlined by the participants of this study correspond to responses from other higher educational administrators.

An expansion of this study is needed to determine the overall financial impact international students have on postsecondary institutions and if, as this study suggests, the financial impact is lessening. A continuation of this study, using mixed methods, could be applied to gather additional data. Rather than the use of in-depth interviews, a combination of surveys and interviews could be used to gather data from a more diversified group of participants.

Recruitment Strategies

Although studies have been conducted on the various international recruitment practices and strategies (McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, & Mallet, 2012; Onk & Josehph, 2017; Ozturgut, 2013), little research has been done on the impact these practices have had on U.S. postsecondary institutions. Research on the impact that recruitment practices and strategies have on postsecondary institutions would provide invaluable insight to institutions on best practices to international recruitment. Personal in-depth interviews could discourage participants in revealing recruitment secrets due to the competitiveness between postsecondary institutions. However, future studies that incorporate the use of surveys might provide postsecondary institution administrators with detailed information on current recruitment strategies, such as cost-effectiveness, student return ratio, and possible obstacles.

Institutional Agreements

Past and current studies show that by establishing partnership relationships with overseas universities, U.S. postsecondary institutions can increase international enrollment (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Di Maria, 2018).   Additional research on the use of overseas institutional agreements is needed. Even though the literature discusses the importance of overseas institutional agreements, data from this study made little reference to these agreements and the role they play in international enrollment management plans. Future studies need to be

conducted that explore how overseas institutional agreements are established, the role they play in recruiting international students, and if these agreements increase international student enrollments.

Scholarships and Discounts

Findings from this study reveal that the financial impact international students have on U.S. postsecondary institutions is slowly diminishing. In fact, participants share that some type of aid, whether it is in the form of a scholarship, a tuition discount, or tuition waiver, must be given to actively recruit international students. Due to the extreme competitiveness between postsecondary institutions, more and more institutions are having to offer some type of aid package to international students to remain competitive. This is having a financial impact on postsecondary institutions due to international tuition revenue being offset by scholarship and tuition discount packages. Additional studies are needed to explore the impact that scholarships and tuition discounts are having on postsecondary budgets, especially those that are experiencing reductions in state and federal funding.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

As this study demonstrates, there is little doubt as to the numerous benefits international students provide to postsecondary institutions in the United States. Literature shows that international students have a major financial impact on postsecondary institutions and the U.S. economy in terms of the billions of dollars that they contribute (Hegarty, 2014; NAFSA, n.d.; Stephens, 2013). In addition to the financial contributions, international students provide an array of other benefits that includes, cultural benefits, enriched learning environments, diversification, and internationalization efforts (Altback & Knight, 2007; Gacel-Àvila, 2016; Jibeen & Khan, 2015).

Of all the contributions that international students provide to U.S. postsecondary institutions, the financial contributions seem to outweigh the others. postsecondary institutions have become accustomed to the tuition revenue that international students provide. With budget cuts and decreases in educational funding, the financial benefit is magnified even more. As a result, postsecondary institutions have benefitted immensely in having an international student population. So much so, that universities have built operating budgets around the tuition revenue generated by international students.

This study set out to see if recruiting and retaining international students, especially from a financial perspective, is still of strategic importance to U.S. postsecondary institutions. The study also set out to gauge the importance of developing an international enrollment management plan. This was done to provide information to administrators of postsecondary institutions on how other institutions view the importance of enrolling international students. Through a phenomenological approach and using the framework of epistemology, data from emergent themes materialized that provided answers to the study's research questions.

The study showed that international students are of extreme importance to postsecondary institutions regarding the financial benefits they provide and the role they play in the diversification efforts of postsecondary institutions. Data gathered from this study revealed some very interesting details regarding these two important roles international students play. Although the study revealed that the financial benefits international students provide to postsecondary institutions is still significant, the impact is not the same as it once was due to international student tuition rates being reduced by scholarship packages and tuition discounts. Nonetheless, international tuition is still needed, even at a reduced rate, as an alternative revenue source to help compensate for decreases in overall enrollment and reductions in educational funding at the

state and federal levels. The study also revealed that one of the biggest roles international

students play at postsecondary institutions is the role of diversity and that its impact is more

reaching than the financial impact international students provide. The mere presence of

international students at postsecondary institutions helps foster a global awareness among

students and faculty that might not have previously existed. In addition, the presence of

international students at postsecondary institutions allows for meaningful interactions with

domestic students that prepares both groups for an ever-changing global landscape.

Another interesting detail that emerged from the data revealed that international

recruitment methods are changing. Due to the cost involved in recruiting international students,

postsecondary institutions are changing their recruitment methods. Participants in the study

revealed that social media is having a huge impact on international student recruitment due to the

information age we are living in. Although the traditional recruitment methods of using overseas

recruitment agents and attending overseas student fairs is still being implemented, the strategies

are rather costly. Participants also shared that an age-old recruitment strategy is still alive and

well, grass roots advertising. In fact, the study revealed that this might be one of the most

effective recruitment strategies being used today.

The recommendations mentioned in the implications section of this chapter derived from

a small participant sample size. However, these recommendations could easily be reiterated by

other postsecondary administrators and be applied to postsecondary institutions across the United

States. The recommendations of this study suggest that change is needed for postsecondary

institutions to remain competitive in their international recruitment and enrollment efforts.

Recommendations and suggested changes in tuition pricing, scholarship packages, enrollment

management packages were some of the recommendations presented by the findings of this study.

It is apparent that more research is needed on the importance of recruiting, enrolling, and retaining international students. However, this study provides a solid base in further discussing this topic. Institutions of higher education should come to the realization that the international student recruitment and enrollment picture is changing and competitiveness among postsecondary institutions is at an all-time high. This study's findings and recommendations should provide higher education administrators with valuable insight and examples on how to adapt to these changes and remain competitive in their international recruitment, enrollment, and retention efforts.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

A series of interviews will be conducted with postsecondary institution administrators at regional competitor universities. Before any interview taking place, a demographic questionnaire will be distributed to each participant as a Google document. A protocol of five questions will be asked of each participant to obtain pertinent information for this qualitative study.

List of Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been in Higher Education?

2. How long you have been associated with international services (i.e. international recruitment, international student and scholar services, and international admissions)?

3. How long you been with your current institution?

4. How long have you been in your current administrative role?

5. What is the highest education level you have completed?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interviews will be conducted with participants from five postsecondary institutions classified as regional competitors. Prior to interviews being conducted, a consent form and a demographic questionnaire and an institutional survey. Interviews will be conducted face to face or via Skype.

Participants will be composed of postsecondary institution administrators tasked with international enrollment, international recruitment, and international admissions. Selected participants shall have an in-depth understanding of the international enrollment and retention strategy of their respected institutions. An interview script will be read prior to a protocol of eight interview questions being asked.

Interview Questions

1. What type of impact do international students have at your institution?

2. How do international students impact the financial health of your institution?

3. What type of services are needed for international students at your institution?

4. What factors are important for international students when deciding on an institution to enroll in?

5. What types of strategies could be incorporated when recruiting international students?

6. How do scholarships and tuition waivers effect an international student's decision on enrolling at an institution?

7. What do you deem to be the most effective strategy in recruiting international students?

8. What areas are financed by the tuition revenue generated from international students?