



# Unfamiliar Territory

## A Phenomenological Study of International Students Enrolled in a Large Urban Community College



### Abstract

The international community college student population faces challenges that their domestic student counterparts do not confront. Adjusting to college can be difficult for many students without the added stress of exposure to a new country and culture. These students contribute to the financial bottom line and ethnic, racial, and religious diversity to the community colleges they attend. Considering this an understanding of their experience is needed.

### Research Question

**Exploratory in nature, examining the shared experience of international students and identifying themes. Specifically investigating:**

- How does culture shock effect success?
- How do international community college students interpret their sense of connection and belonging to their college community?
- What obstacles are encountered, real or perceived, by this student population?
- What opportunities are available to better serve these students?



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### Study Significance

International student populations are growing at a faster rate than domestic students (Bohman, 2010). The trend of which community college leaders need to subscribe to is the globalization of education which “compels community colleges to internationalize their campus” (Ng, 2007, p. 83). International students enrolled with domestic students is positive for both groups in development as global citizens. Thereby a need to attract and retain international students exists.

### Findings

Literature Themes	This Study's Themes	Suggestions for Practice
Social/ Academic Integration	Exclusion Unconfident Unprepared	Faculty Validation Peer Mentor Tutor Program
Culture Shock	Homesickness Experience Prejudice	Connect Locally IS/ DS Culture Workshop
Barriers to Success	Language Resources Underprepared	Cultural Awareness & Mentor Program
Choosing CC	Financial Family or Friend Referral	Referral Program

### Design

**Qualitative:** The study of things in their natural setting, a study of an array of information (Mertens, 2010).

**Phenomenological research:** “Seeks the individual’s perceptions and meaning of a phenomenon or experience” (Mertens, 2010, p. 235).

### Methodology

#### Data Gathered:

#### Interviews

- 8 International Students
- 6 Faculty and Staff

#### Observations

- ESL Conversation Group



#### Analysis

The transcripts and observation notes were coded for themes and examined for similarities and/or disparities and compared/contrasted to relevant recent literature.

### Constructs

**Eligible participants in this study were enrolled/or worked in a large urban community college. ICCS must have met 1 or 2 definitions:**

- 1.) Attending college with an F-1 visa status, attending college on a full-time basis.
- 2.) Born and raised for all or part of their lives outside of the United States and now living in the U.S as a permanent resident.