Assessing the Influence of Career-Linked Experiential Opportunities on the F-1 Undergraduate Student Enrollment Decision-Making Process

Harrison Fuerst
SIT Graduate Institute

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ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF CAREER-LINKED EXPERIENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE F-1 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ENROLLMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

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PIM 75
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A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA

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Abstract

International mobility efforts in the United States have garnered increased attention and funding in recent years, with such government-led initiatives as Generation Study Abroad and 100,000 Strong driving up inbound and outbound student numbers. Recent inbound mobility reports from the Institute of International Education show double-digit percentage increases in international student enrollment. Other countries also experiencing an influx of international students continue to research these trends to shape their own education strategies. Research conducted by the International Education Association of Australia points specifically to hands-on professional experience and enhanced employability as key factors important to Australia’s international student population. As strategies take shape around the globe and U.S. institutions scramble to attract prospective international students, many questions arise: What do these students value in an institution? What are their perceptions of career-linked experiential education in the United States? How do career-linked experiential opportunities factor into the enrollment decision-making process of international students in the U.S. context? What are the implications for international student support strategies? Are elements of Australia’s national inbound mobility strategy worth importing? This study sets out to begin this conversation by focusing on the perspectives of current and former F-1 undergraduate students.

Keywords: internships, co-operative education, F-1 students, work-integrated learning, international student enrollment, practicum, school choice
Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the impact of globalization on academics and employment is perhaps nowhere refracted more intensely and more viscerally as it is through the international student experience. Even as national education systems continue to extol the virtues of global knowledge economy-compatible skills and intercultural competence, the actual act of enrollment in a college far removed from one’s own formative cultural context is as freighted with complexity as it is with difficulty. Who are these students? Where in the world do they go, and why do they choose to go there? What factors do they find most valuable in an institution of higher education, and how do they chart their course from academic training to professional employment? Questions abound, with scholarly answers and best practices struggling to keep up with the pace of ever increasing student mobility.

Consider the United States, for example. Now enrolling more than a million international students annually, this fact alone should be evidence enough of the need to understand the motivations and support requirements of a student population of that size (IIE Open Doors 2016 Data, 2016). And yet, the U.S. government appears vastly more concerned with campus diversification statistics and driving outbound mobility of American students more than it is with better accommodating this influx of international students to ensure they receive a quality education (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The implications for this apparent deprioritizing of international student experiences in the country’s overall international education strategy are only compounded by recent political and immigration policy developments in the United States. Already beginning to take their toll on international student enrollment decisions, it has become more critically necessary than ever for international education professionals to redouble efforts to support international students and ensure that they receive a quality education.
(“Prospective International Students Show New Reluctance,” 2017). Certainly, international educators have already been compelled to take into account the phasing out of Saudi and Brazilian government-supported mobility initiatives for students from Saudi Arabia (King Abdullah Scholarship Program) and Brazil (Brazil Scientific Mobility Program). Such trends reveal how continued inbound enrollment growth and sustained positive international student outcomes can neither be assumed nor taken for granted.

The education narratives of interculturally competent global citizenship and the cultivation of human capital have been interwoven throughout ongoing conversations in every corner of academia, however much their rationales and methodologies are seen as being at odds with one other. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that both trends have shaped, and indeed continue to shape, academic conversations on both college campuses and the in the activities of every workplace enmeshed within the global labor market. International students appear particularly attuned to these dynamics and the enrichment promises of internationalized education, protesting with their feet and tuition dollars when those promises seem to fall short. Recent research commissioned by NAFSA: Association of International Educators has revealed that lack of access to career-linked experiential opportunities is the leading factor in international student dissatisfaction with US institutions, more impactful even than commonly discussed issues like cost and affordability (Choudaha & Schulmann, 2014).

This confluence of data further underscores the critical importance of this study, and of the need to account for gaps in the available literature on U.S. enrollment and U.S. international students. Taking cues from the global academic conversation occurring around international student participation in career-linked experiential opportunities, this research project aims to bring elements of that conversation to US soil, imbue them with the contextual specificity of
international student and international education professional experiences based in the United States, and pose critical preliminary questions about F-1 undergraduate student enrollment decision-making and perceptions of career-linked experiential opportunity. As the locus of increased attention and resource allocation in the national study abroad mobility narrative and strategic policy framework, the undergraduate experience makes the most sense as an entry point for scholarly inquiry. Prospective F-1 international undergraduate sentiments, including the evolution of those sentiments over time throughout the undergraduate experience, have the potential to provide a wealth of useful and practicable insights.

In order to best achieve the above stated research aims, this research project was constructed specifically to gain insight into how prospective F-1 international undergraduate students value opportunities to gain practical, hands-on experience in deciding which college or university to attend. Institutional and professional international educator perspectives will also be considered in order to paint a larger US-centric picture of enrollment and career-linked experiential opportunities. Intended benefits of this research include obtaining a better understanding of the perceived value international F-1 undergraduates place on attaining practical career-linked experience in their field of study during the course of their undergraduate career.

**Literature Review**

As the first step in identifying exactly how preparatory career-linked experiences might be defined and what they are perceived to entail as part of the F-1 undergraduate enrollment decision-making process, I sought out and examined scholarly works on definitions and modes of practice. Reviewing germane policy and scholarly literature yielded a fascinating if dizzying array of terminology for, and institutional approaches to, embedding career-linked experiential
opportunities within the undergraduate experience. American “co-operative education” and Australian “work-integrated learning” are two examples of institutionalized concepts with the most currency at the levels of policy and embedment in university systems, but particularly in the United States there is a high degree of variability in how these experiences are defined. All of the above considered, there appeared to be a dearth of peer-reviewed scholarly data in two key research areas:

1) A more unified, succinct, and purposeful way of defining “career-linked experiential opportunities” within U.S. higher education and the broader policy context\(^1\); and

2) The perceptions of, motivations for, and extent to which international undergraduate students engage in such opportunities, particularly among F-1 students

I have designed the conceptual parameters of this research project, therefore, to begin filling in those gaps in the literature as they relate to enrollment; to incorporate inbound F-1 undergraduate experiences into mobility discussions dominated by domestic student outbound mobility narratives, to prove the necessity of developing a comprehensive universal terminology, and to a lesser extent examine student perceptions of engagement in Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

\(^1\) While the “internship” is at present the most common all-encompassing term used to describe these experiences, it is imprecise, not necessarily bound to any learning process, and is more a model component than a model itself. It does not correspond to comparatively specific and universal curricular integration in a way that a co-operative education program might. Notably in the case of F-1 students pursuing CPT or OPT, internships must be shown to directly correlate to major field of study. This academic linkage is not nearly as stringent for domestic students. Can the language and legal structure of internships be purposefully retooled and rebranded in the image of WIL? Should the co-operative education model already in use on a handful of U.S. campuses simply be adopted nationwide? American academic engagement with global models like WIL as part of this discussion has yet to fully emerge.
or Optional Practical Training (OPT) as part of undergraduate study. Indeed, the growing influx of and active recruiting for international students at tertiary institutions across the United States makes this shift all the more necessary.

As was mentioned briefly above, available literature reveals that one country in particular has taken very seriously the question of international student participation in career-linked undergraduate experiences: Australia. This is not entirely surprising given the fact that international students currently make up fully one quarter of all students enrolled in Australian higher education; a fivefold difference compared to the 5% enrolled in the U.S. higher education system overall (Universities Australia 2017 Data Snapshot, 2017; Brains without borders, 2016). The ubiquitous and comprehensively institutionalized concept of work-integrated learning (WIL) is not merely part of Australia’s tertiary education system; it is a critical component of the Australian government’s overarching educational policy, and deals head-on with the challenges of attracting students from outside Australia, as well as how best to prepare them for—and later, integrate them into—domestic and foreign workforces after graduation. It is this comparatively well orchestrated, well defined, and widely shared approach held largely in common by government, business, and education sectors alike that is mostly absent from the U.S. context.² Intriguingly, it has been noted that WIL itself has become something of an Australian brand or paradigm gaining currency even beyond its borders, although “co-op programs” in North America and “work-based learning” in Europe already

² It should be acknowledged that Australia’s implementation of WIL is not without its own set of problems. International student experiences with WIL have highlighted a number of issues and challenges still to overcome (see Jackson 2017 for more information on this topic). WIL partnerships also suffer from the same challenges as U.S. internship partners that struggle to muster resources for proper oversight. Even so, the common language of WIL seems at the very least to better enable scholars to address these challenges compared to contexts like the United States where finding common language and shared practical definitions bogs down the academic capacity for more in-depth analyses. Some semantic confusion encountered throughout this very research project is one such example of this.
enjoy some degree of currency and are practically quite similar (Bajan, 2016; Tran & Soejatminah, 2017; Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010).

**International Student School Selection**

Analysis of available mobility literature additionally reveals a relative paucity of research focusing exclusively on prospective F-1 international student decision-making factors during the school selection phase of application and enrollment. While there are two notable exceptions to this trend in the works of Bohman (2009) and Mazzarol & Soutar (2002), the scope of those studies and theories is considerably larger; so large, in fact, that the specific and narrow school decision-making information feels somewhat lost in a grand multitude of factors being analyzed. Bohman speaks of this process as a fourth and final phase of a four-phase international student decision-making model specifically for community colleges, while the “push-pull” international education flow model put forth by Mazzarol & Soutar is applied broadly to investigate a range of decisions including country choice and choosing to pursue studies overseas in general. Beyond this, mobility literature with an emphasis on international student decision-making tends to focus on themes such as ‘push-pull’ analysis of student flows between two specific countries, the ‘images’ of geographic regions and institutions, or specific program enrollment trends for disciplines like Nursing or Hospitality Management (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Cubillo, Sánches, & Cerviño, 2006, Chen & Zimitat 2006). Without even a substantial amount of academic literature dealing primarily with the international student school selection process, this study’s focused analysis of how career-linked experiential opportunity impacts that prospective student enrollment process becomes more of a challenge. Even so, this research endeavor may be able to provide a reference point for future studies on both career-linked experiential opportunity sentiments and school selection processes more broadly.
Outbound Overshadows Inbound

The extent to which official US Department of Education international strategy documents speak to international student support or career-linked opportunities like internships is cursory, and that in the cases where it even exists at all. The U.S. Department of Education 2012-2016 International Education Strategic Plan mentioned in the previous section pays lip service to job access and labor competitiveness, but practicable details are sparse. From the government’s strategic perspective, inbound-focused international student factors are not worth carefully considering. Instead, outbound mobility, the globalized training of American students, and the importation of diversity for the sociocultural enhancement of the country are the areas marked as important. Seeming to follow this cue from the upper echelons of government, international mobility researchers have seized on topics like what destination country a (usually domestic) student chooses for their study abroad experience (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009; Smith & Pitts, 2010; Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010).

Teasing Out Relevant Data from the Robust Body of WIL Literature

Studies of career-linked experiential opportunities are dominated by WIL in terms of sheer volume and richness, with other studies here and there of internship programs or co-operative education programs in the United States. As has been noted already in U.S. career development scholarship, there is much more research to be done on the topic of international student career concerns, needs, and overall participation in career-linked opportunities (Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). Since this study does not necessarily focus on career development as much as it focuses on this one facet of global student mobility, it will also be instructive to draw on the large body of WIL scholarship despite obvious geographic, sociopolitical, and systemic contextual differences. For example, one Australian study on international student engagement in
WIL found that international students utilized WIL at a lower rate than Australian students, and that universities were under-resourced in their attempts to break down barriers for international student participation in WIL (Jackson, 2016). Several of the barriers mentioned are not so far removed from the U.S. international student experience, from employer concerns of cultural difference and communication ability, to the many additional logistical hurdles international students must contend with that domestic students need not consider.

These rich WIL studies in conjunction with other forms of international student enrollment scholarship have helped to define the scope of this research, crystallize its purpose, and provide it with a constellation of terms and concepts to employ in shaping its methods and analyzing its data. The specifics for this are detailed in the following section.

Method

Research for this paper was conducted using a mixed methodological design to collect data from various primary and secondary sources. The results of this research were then compared and contrasted within each data sample subset of students and administrators, across those subsets, and with respect to academic literature germane to the research topic. The research was conducted in three phases over four months in 2017, from January to the end of April.

Phase I: Literature review of sources pertaining to career-linked experience models, international student participation experiences in those models, and international undergraduate student enrollment decision-making processes

Phase II: Online survey of three sample groups: International student advisors, International admissions and enrollment management administrators, and current or former F-1 undergraduate
students. In total, 51 responses were received from a range of respondents affiliated with various institutional types, from public to private, large and small, liberal arts colleges and research universities.

**Phase III:** Semi-structured interviews of current and former F-1 undergraduate international students. In total, 3 interviews were held with 2 former undergraduates and 1 current undergraduate.

**Research Site**

While this study was not conducted at a designated research site per se (Ex: specific institution or local geographic region), an acknowledgement on this topic should be made. This study was conceived and implemented as a study of national scope, particularly for the Phase II survey portion of the research. Even so, many of the interviews that were conducted were very much the product of site-based convenience. Two of the three student interviewees were attending the off-campus program I worked for in New York City at the time, and thus constituted a convenience sample that skews representationally toward students enrolled in that program.

**Participants**

In lieu of a designated research site and institution-specific community of students and professionals from which to draw research data, a concerted outreach effort was conducted to recruit volunteer research participants. Three participant groups were targeted for outreach and inclusion in the study. Target groups included current and former F-1 undergraduate international students, as well as a narrow segment of college administrators likely to be familiar
with that student population. International student advisors and international enrollment or admissions administrators comprised the latter group.

In accordance with guaranteed participant confidentiality, aspects of participants’ identities like names of persons or institutions have been omitted or otherwise obscured. Interviewees have been assigned the coded identifiers of R1, R2, and R3.

**Procedures**

Research procedures were mixed-method in nature and designed such that the Phase II survey portion was created and made available to volunteer respondents to collect responses throughout Phase III and until the end of all data collection. Three separate surveys were created, each one corresponding to and accounting for contextual differences among the three sample groups. All surveys were created and made available online through the SurveyMonkey online survey platform, and each contained a preliminary consent page with a detailed description of the study and participant privacy rights information (see Appendix D for consent pages and survey questions). All surveys employed a mixture of open-ended and 5 Point Likert-Type Scale response options to elicit respondent opinions and sentiments.

Student surveys incorporated questions covering current vs. former F-1 student status, nationality, academic major, type of institution attended, top factors in school selection, ranking of school choice factors, and availability/usefulness/sentiment evolution concerning career-linked experiential opportunities involving CPT or OPT. International admissions and enrollment administrator surveys incorporated questions covering institution type, practical experience programming, importance of practical experience offerings in recruitment materials and department discussions, and thoughts on F-1 enrollment decision-making and institutional draw factors. International student advisor surveys incorporated questions covering institution type,
thoughts on F-1 enrollment decisions and institutional draw factors, practical experience opportunities, and F-1 student utilization of those opportunities at their institution. Allowing for some degree of open-ended response and respondent interpretation of the study’s terminology allowed for thought-provoking answers from respondents and some insight into the variability in how career-linked experiential opportunity is even conceptually defined, let alone embedded within an institutional structure and put into practice.

Survey outreach was undertaken on a national scale with the intent to generate results that were representative of a wide range of institutional types, locations, enrollment priorities, and career experience support capacities. Students and professionals were invited to participate in interviews and online surveys via direct email, open postings for research volunteers, or through known professional contacts in some cases. In order to engage the appropriate student and professional populations closely aligned with the topic of this research, online sites and listservs used by international education professionals and higher education administrators were used to distribute outreach calls for research volunteers. These resources included SECUSS-L, INTER-L, Facebook, NAFSA’s professional discussion forums, and 15 direct outreach emails to international education office administrators on campuses across the United States. Institutions were selected for that outreach with consideration for maximal inclusivity and institutional range based on factors including reputation, location, size, and association with one or another form of career-linked experiential programming.

Recipients of this call for research volunteers were asked to self-identify and self-select the appropriate survey that corresponds to their academic or professional role. International educators were additionally asked to share study details and survey access information with F-1 undergraduates at their respective institutions. At the conclusion of the project’s data gathering
EXPERIENTIAL OPPORTUNITY AND F1 DECISION-MAKING

phase, the final tally of survey respondents was as follows: 12 Current or Former F-1 International Undergraduates, 15 International Admissions or Enrollment Administrators, and 24 International Student Advisors.

Student interviewee recruitment was primarily included as part of the same outreach messages that were distributed for collecting survey responses. Interview questions were designed to resemble most of the questions appearing on the survey, but to allow for more meaningful and in-depth thick descriptions in respondent answers. As well, question overlap enables cross-referencing and more inclusive analysis of data generated from both surveys and interviews. Three interviews in total were conducted, with each interviewee assigned a confidential identifier of R1, R2, and R3. Two of the interviews were conducted in person at interviewees’ private residences (R2 and R3), and one was conducted via Skype video conference call (R1). All interview audio was recorded using the primary researcher’s own personal laptop computer using basic recording software after obtaining verbal consent from the interviewee. A semi-structured interview technique was adopted such that a given set of nine predetermined open questions were posed to each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, with the option to digress beyond the prepared questions to pursue relevant lines of questioning for related or more specific information (Biber Leavy 2011, pp. 102-3). As noted by other academics researching the international student experience, this interview method is well suited to drawing out contextually rich insights from diverse viewpoints and life experiences (Ruhanen, Robinson, & Breakey, 2013 p. 2). Interview questions focused on the following topics: Reasons for applying to institutions and most important factors throughout that process, current thoughts about the importance of undergraduate practical work or internship experience, sentiment evolution on that topic before and after enrollment, thoughts on practical work or
internships as a degree requirement, thoughts about whether such experiences are more or less important for international students than for domestic students, awareness of and participation in such experiences, and thoughts on the necessity to integrate such experiences into the academic curriculum.

Analysis

Interview transcripts were generated manually using computer transcription software and then manually coded with careful attention paid to recurring or starkly divergent conceptual themes and interviewee sentiments. These codes were then cross-referenced with survey data relevant scholarly literature, and finally woven together into a set of overarching research narratives. Student and administrator survey responses were collected and arranged using SurveyMonkey’s own interface, and then downloaded for analysis and cross-tabulation. Downloaded survey data was then used to generate respondent snapshot tables and data charts. This data was also cross-referenced with interview transcripts using their coded themes to tease out any additional insights.

Results

Online Surveys

Student perspectives.

Student respondents tended to skew heavily toward current F-1 status (66%), a social science disciplinary focus (50%), and enrollment in private liberal arts colleges (83%). There was, however, considerable diversity in respondent nationality (see Table 1 for student survey respondent characteristics).
Student respondents showed majority agreement in several areas on the topic of access to, and perceived value of, hands-on experience in their field of study. Most importantly considering the questions central to this research, 66% of respondents indicated sentiment evolution on whether or not practical hands-on experience in their field was important to obtain before graduating (see Figure 1). In succinct terms, it was not a crucial factor in their initial enrollment decision-making process, but became a crucial factor for them as their undergraduate careers progressed.

### Snapshot of student survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F1 Undergrad Status</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Business/Management</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former</td>
<td>Hong Kong SAR</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Large Public University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Small Private University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former</td>
<td>Canada/Ukraine</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>Physical/Life Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Fine/Applied Arts</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Fine/Applied Arts</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using a weighted average score to evaluate students’ choice of rank order among institutional enrollment decision-making ‘pull’ factors, students appeared to value a school’s character or ‘fit’ most of all, followed by school size and cost factors (see Figure 2).

**Figure 1.** Student responses to survey question #9.

**Figure 2.** Student responses to survey question #6.
Also, 75% of respondents indicated that they would rather pursue opportunities that were off-campus (see Figure 3). Respondents who disagreed with this statement were almost exclusively former F-1 students (three former students and one current student), and comprised nearly all of the survey’s former F-1 respondents (75%). All negative respondents were also current or former liberal arts college students, whose nationalities included Austria, Canada, Japan, and Canada/Ukraine.

Interestingly, 63% of respondents indicated that access to opportunities for practical hands-on experience through programs like co-ops or internships was important to them during their college search (see Figure 4). The ‘pull’ rankings in Figure 2, however, suggest that this apparent importance was ultimately overshadowed by other factors like fit and cost.
Fully 100% of respondents claimed that their undergraduate institutions provided them career-linked experiential opportunities. However, examples cited to support those claims varied greatly from clear instances of program-based curricular internship integration to simply attending a speaking event featuring visiting alumni (see Appendix C1). There was significant variance in respondent interpretation of what career-linked experiential opportunities in a given field can resemble, even with the inclusion of commonly entrenched practices like co-op and internship programs included in the question.

F-1 students also tended to acknowledge with 57% agreement that faculty and alumni connections were valuable as pathways to engaging in career-linked experiential opportunities (see Figure 5).
On the question of whether undergraduate practical training opportunities in the form of CPT/OPT are perceived as being beneficial, 66% of respondents strongly agreed (see Figure 6). All respondents who disagreed likewise indicated that access to such opportunities did not factor into their enrollment decision-making process. Interestingly, the negative respondent group for this question seemed mostly to coincide with negative respondents from Question 8 above. Negative respondent nationalities included Canada, Canada-Ukraine, and Austria. In light of this potential pattern, it may be worth noting that these predominantly Anglo or culturally European nationalities seem to contrast with positive respondents nationalities like China, Mexico, Pakistan, and Hong Kong.
Figure 6. Student responses to survey question #10.

Institution perspectives.

*International admissions and enrollment administrators.*

Admissions and enrollment administrator respondents tended to be based at institutions designated as ‘Other’ (33%), likely corresponding to community colleges and special focus institutions (see Appendix B). Other respondents indicated equal representation of liberal arts colleges (20%) and small public universities with an enrolled student body of under 10,000 (20%). In a situation reminiscent of student answers to student survey Question 7 above, 86% of admissions and enrollment administrators indicated that their institutions offered internship and co-op style career-linked experiential opportunities for F-1 students (see Appendix C2). Again however, despite explicit reference to co-operative education and internship programs in the construction of the question, respondent interpretation of field-specific practical opportunities varied widely. The responses given by survey participants #1 and #4 are particularly interesting. Participant #1 suggests that the school’s ability and willingness to issue CPT authorization to
students is on par with integrated co-op and internship programs. In the case of respondent #4, the participant responded in the affirmative, seeming to equate internship or co-operative education programs with career office dissemination of potential opportunities. Notably, however, the respondent did also mention the fact that “nothing is institutionalized.” Even though other responses do not state this as explicitly, it appears likely that the ‘information is disseminated but nothing is institutionalized’ campus situation also applies to other respondent institutional contexts as well.

When asked to provide their opinion about leading factors drawing international students to their particular institution, top factors in descending order of response frequency include: Academics (33%), Cost (20%), Rank (20%), and Location (20%) (see Appendix C3). To provide an alternative institutional view of how students seem to value the importance of career-linked experiential opportunities in their school selection process, respondents were asked about how reliably they received inquires on this topic from prospective students. A clear majority (79%) of respondents agreed that they received such inquiries from international students each year (see Figure 7).
These administrators were also questioned about how practical career-linked programs factored into their outreach and marketing efforts in the recruitment of international students. Responses indicate that a soft majority of institutions (59%) emphasize career-linked experiential opportunities in their messaging to prospective F-1 students.
Even if many institutions indicated that they did not explicitly include integrated career training opportunities in their messaging to prospective international student, more than 70% of respondents agreed that their offices hold discussions at least once a year about international student awareness and access to career-linked experiential opportunities.
In acknowledgment of possible variance in student sentiment between international and domestic students, respondents were asked if they believed that F-1 international students placed higher value in career-linked experiential opportunities than their U.S. citizen counterparts. The responses were split between neutral sentiment (46%) and strong agreement (40%) (see Figure 10). Respondents who strongly agreed tended to be based at small public universities with less than 10,000 enrolled students.
International student advisor respondents tended to be based out of Large Public Universities with enrollment greater than 10,000 students (29%) and ‘Other’ institutions (37%), most likely community colleges or special focus institutions. The vast majority (79%) of respondents claimed to be based in institutions without a career-linked experiential opportunity degree requirement for students. The majority of respondents (33%) also felt that cost and finances were the leading drivers of F1 student enrollment at their institutions. Only 8% of respondents mentioned factors related to career experience or future outcomes.

While it may be true in the case of smaller departments that the scope of international student advisors’ institutional role includes pre-enrollment engagement with prospective international undergraduates, the survey focused primarily on drawing data from their ongoing advising and support of F-1 students who are already enrolled. As such, their responses give some insight into how administrators perceive international student participation in field-specific practical training opportunities, especially through authorized CPT/OPT experiences. When asked about perceived student enthusiasm for seeking out and engaging in CPT/OPT opportunities, 74% of advisors agreed that this was the case with students at their institution (see Figure 11).
However, only 32% of respondents felt confident in agreeing that nearly all of their students pursued those opportunities, whereas 54% disagreed (see Figure 12).
In cases where students had already sought out CPT/OPT opportunities, an overwhelming majority of advisors (91%) said that their students would rather pursue opportunities that were off-campus.

![Survey Question 7](image)

**Figure 13.** International student advisor responses to survey question #7.

Finally, and perhaps most notably, advisors generally felt that their institutions weren’t doing enough to connect their F-1 students to these experiences. When asked if their institutions were doing an outstanding job in this regard, only 33% agreed whereas 41% of respondents disagreed.
Interviews

A series of nine interview questions were used to interview three volunteer research participants with current or past experience as an F-1 undergraduate international student. These questions generally mirrored most of the questions in the online student survey with the intent to add a richer and more deeply qualitative dimension to question responses (see Appendix B for the complete list of interview questions). Interviewees were mostly former F-1 undergraduates, did not participate in CPT/OPT opportunities, were enrolled in small private universities, and engaged in interviews that were conducted in person with the primary researcher (see Table 2).
Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F-1 Undergrad Status</strong></td>
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<td>Current</td>
<td>Former</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality</strong></td>
<td>Canada/Ukraine</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Small Private University</td>
<td>Small Private University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergrad Major</strong></td>
<td>International Studies</td>
<td>Studio Art/Painting</td>
<td>Hospitality/Business</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interview Method</strong></td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>In-Person</td>
<td>In-Person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following each topic as it was consistently laid out in each interview, noteworthy interviewee responses to each of the interview questions are outlined below.

**Q1: How would you describe your reasoning for choosing to apply to the institutions you did?**

Interviewees described their reasoning for choosing to apply to certain institutions in a number of ways. For R2 and R3, online school and program rankings published through Princeton Review and US News were used to focus their searches. These two interviewees also heeded the advice and recommendations of agency professionals hired to help them through pursue studies abroad. R1 described their process in very different terms, explaining their search specifically for institutions with tight-knit and mission-driven academic communities.

**Q2: What factors or qualities were most important to you throughout that process, and what ultimately led you to enroll at the institution you attend(ed)?**

When asked about the impact of specific institutional factors and qualities on their decision-making process, interviewee gave a range of answers from cost to international student presence.
R1 found a high percentage of international students as part of the overall student body to be desirable, whereas R3 specifically pointed out that schools with large populations of fellow Chinese students were less desirable. Interviewees R2 and R3 both mentioned school cost and scholarship offerings as a factor, and both described placing value in school and program rankings that were shared by international study agents. Only R3 specifically mentioned a factor that was career-related, namely investigating regional employment statistics.

Q3: Do you feel that practical work or internship experience is important to attain before graduation? Did you feel the same way before enrolling in your college or university as you did approaching graduation?

All three interviewees expressed agreement that practical work or internship experience is important for undergraduates to attain prior to graduating. Being generally ignorant of the details surrounding this aspect of their undergraduate education at the time of their enrollment decision-making was also a universally held experience. This was borne of a general lack of knowledge about U.S. society, higher education, professional pathways, and immigration regulations. As a result, these concerns did not—and seemingly could not—play a central role in their enrollment decision-making. However, all interviewees noted that this topic became much more important to them as they progressed through their undergraduate experience.

Q4: Should practical work or internship experience be a degree requirement for everyone? Why or why not?

In response to the question of whether or not practical work or internship experience should be academically integrated as a degree requirement, interviewees held differing views. R1 disagreed with the idea of such a universal requirement, R2 expressed ambivalence, and R3 agreed with the idea. R1 and R2 both pointed out that the idea made more sense and was only clearly beneficial
for students in certain academic majors. R2 felt that such a requirement did not seem suitable for students in purely research-oriented disciplines like the theoretical sciences. In addition to the fact that a work or internship requirement was ill suited to certain academic majors, R1 felt that affordability concerns and the geographical limitations of a campus were also reasons to argue against such a requirement. In support of the requirement idea, R3 felt that such a requirement would benefit students by developing and focusing their future professional interests early on in ways that conventional studies could not.

Q5: Would you say that practical training and experience are more, less, or equally as important for international students as domestic students? Why?

R2 responded quickly and confidently to this question, stating that although both international and domestic students would benefit, international students stand to benefit more. R2 pointed to the benefits of acquiring culturally specific job skills and adjustment to sociocultural norms as rewards of practical training that domestic students would have long grown accustomed to. R1 and R3 were more measured in their answers, and explained that the benefits of participating in such opportunities varied enough among international students that they were about equally as important for them as for domestic students. To wit, both R1 and R3 offered the fact that some international students return to work in their home countries after graduating as a reason for why it might actually be less important at times. Professional training in the United States appeared to be seen as too specific to translate well enough to other contexts to make participating worthwhile.

Q6: Do you feel that your college or university provides/provided you with many options for gaining hands-on experience related to your Major? If not, why not? If so, what options are/were available?
Answers to this question varied from ‘no’ (R1), to ‘somewhat’ (R2), to ‘yes’ (R3). All interviewees mentioned opportunities characterized by academic major-linked and thematic opportunities in large metros. Examples of those opportunities included a creative internship program in New York City, political programs in Washington D.C., and a program in London through which students could pursue a variety of internships.

Q7: If you have not done any hands-on training, how do you think you will utilize CPT/OPT? If you have already done this type of training, can you explain what you did?

R2 was the only interviewee who pursued practical training authorized through CPT/OPT, engaging in an internship-focused but academically integrated arts program in New York City. R3 did make an attempt to work in a hotel using CPT in connection with their studies in hospitality management, but the server and bartender jobs available could not be authorized.

Q8: Do you think that practical experience should be done on its own, or linked to your studies in some way?

All interviewees felt that practical experience should be purposefully integrated with academics in some way, though R1 did add the caveat that integration would need to be properly implemented in order to be truly beneficial for student learning.

Q9: Do you have any other thoughts on the value of practical field experience for international undergraduates?

Open-ended discussion with R1 resulted in a lengthy conversation about stigma and the challenges that international students face both on campus in academic settings and off campus in professional settings. English language ability, both perceived and real, was one of the prime examples of that stigma. R1 made the point that, if real or perceived functional limitations in
English language ability exist in a professional internship setting, international students are much less likely even to have access to beneficial training experiences otherwise afforded by the internship. Striking a similar but somewhat different tone, R2 took this open-ended opportunity to express their opinion that the benefits of an internship experience would actually serve to boost the confidence of international students. R2 felt that the opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of what a student’s skills enable them to do, learn which areas need improvement, and practice making those improvements in a professional setting better enable international students to draw benefits from the experience perhaps despite any functions of stigmatization. R2 and R3 both highlighted the international student race against the immigration clock, and how practical opportunities can help international students decide more quickly how best to direct their energies and better position themselves for graduate study or other professional path.

**Discussion**

Taken as a whole, the above research findings begin to paint a picture of international student pre- and post-enrollment sentiments, general opinions about and impressions of practical training opportunities, and areas of convergence or divergence in student and administrator views. Several patterns and narratives that emerge from those findings are worth discussing one by one.

**Delayed Value Realization of Career-linked Experiential Opportunity**

In an address to the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) International Employability Symposium, Australia’s Assistant Minister of Education and Training Simon Birmingham confidently claimed that it was “clear that [international] students understand the importance of getting real world experience early in their study so they have the
skills and local networks that will help them get a job when they graduate” (Birmingham Address, 2015). If in Australia that is indeed the case, the findings of this study appear to tell a different story in the United States. With few exceptions, international students tended not to consider career-linked experiential opportunities through the enrollment decision-making process, and the vast majority of interviewees and student survey respondents indicated placing value in that experience only later in their college or post-graduate career (see Figures 1 and 4).

All interview responses on this topic corroborated those survey findings, as each interviewee described similar sentiment evolution from unimportance or ignorance to high importance. R3 lamented their not having been able to utilize CPT as an undergraduate: “I didn’t use it, which is a shame. I should have used it though.” R1 also noted the stark change in their mindset as an enrollee and then later after graduating: “I do feel that having practical experience is very important towards getting educational experience that's beneficial to you. I wasn’t thinking about that when I enrolled.”

As the only interviewee with CPT experience—an experience they were in fact engaged in at the time of the interview—R2 also described the evolution of their understanding of the value in engaging in that experience: “I didn’t even know there was such an opportunity for me. And after I had this experience I think it’s really important for me to picture this whole art world in my head.” More specifically, R3 couched the perceived value of career training opportunities in terms of how they maximize the limited time granted to F-1 students by immigration regulations to plan for their future after graduation, saying:

we only have 1 year after we graduate. But for domestic students there’s no limit for them. After they graduate they can just use a garage to work on their works, and maybe help a family business at the same time. Maybe they think “I’m done with this” or maybe
they want to go work in a museum or something. They have all these different kinds of options and they don’t have a time limit to choose from these options. But for international students, we have a time limit. So it’s more important for us to know about what we want to do and what we can reach [emphasis added].

**Student and Administrator Perceptions**

Intriguingly, the perceptions of surveyed admissions and enrollment administrators illustrated in Figures 7 and 10 appear to conflict with the consistent student responses downplaying the impact of career-linked experiential opportunities on their enrollment decision-making. It is also worth noting that while students seemed to strongly agree that such opportunities were important to them in their college search, this factor consistently appeared near the bottom of a list of six decision-making factors that students were asked to rank in importance (see Figures 2 and 4).

In considering the actual sentiments of students regarding the nature of participation in career-linked experiential opportunities, advisor and student sentiments appeared to tell the same story: students want to pursue opportunities that are off-campus (see Figures 3 and 13). These findings suggest that the process that most F-1 undergraduates undergo in perceiving those opportunities, therefore, evolves through three phases: initial pre-enrollment ignorance or undervaluation, increasing importance post-enrollment approaching graduation, and pursuit of what are ideally off-campus opportunities.

**Interview Implications**

Interviewees seemed about as divided as administrators on the subject of whether or not practical field experience opportunities are more important to international students than for domestic students. R1 and R3 described the common scenario of international students not
wishing to remain in the US after graduation as one reason why the felt that career-linked experiences are about equally as important to both international and domestic students. In their R2 on the other hand felt very strongly that international students stand to benefit more, giving their quickest and most free-flowing response compared to all other questions.

Referring back to Figure 14 above, nearly half of international student advisors (41%) did not believe their institutions were doing enough to connect international students to career-linked experiential opportunities. This percentage dipped even further (33%) when considering only respondents from liberal arts colleges. Considered in combination with reviewed literature, these findings uncover broad implications for the current state of institutional support capacity for international student career training. Survey findings seem to corroborate the aforementioned NAFSA retention report that revealed the serious level of international student discontent on this issue. Certainly when considered alongside the near uniformly positive association that international student respondents had for accessing such experiences, there exists mounting evidence suggesting that US college administrations ought to reexamine their curricula and international student career support capacities to both attract, retain, and generally better serve international students.

**Resonance With International Research in WIL**

The findings of this study touch upon many of the same points that have been drawn out through WIL scholarship, and suggest a common set of experiences and challenges encountered by international students in both American and Australian higher education systems and professional environments. Just as interviewees all agreed in Question 8 that career-linked experiences should ideally be part of an integrated academic curriculum, so too did all international student interviewees in one study all feel that “university run programs such
as internships or work experience programs are a means of circumventing [issues like hiring discrimination and legal difficulties]” (Ruhanen, Robinson, & Breakey, 2013, p.3). Not only does academic integration of career-linked experiences center student learning and the endeavor of student enrichment over the endeavor of shareholder enrichment, it yields the legitimacy and power of academic institutions in ways that better ensure access to opportunities that a lone international student would be unlikely to match.

In R2’s explanation of the unique benefits that career-linked experiential opportunities provide international students that domestic students take for granted, there is further overlap with findings from WIL scholarship. Just as R2 detailed the combined experience of learning industry skills that are also specific to the U.S. professional and sociocultural context, so did students in one WIL study cite the “opportunity to grow […] skills in a new and unfamiliar environment” an essential component of their curriculum (Ruhanen, Robinson, & Breakey, 2013, p.1). The issue of confidence is yet another common factor that has surfaced in both WIL literature and in the interviews concocted with R1 and R2. One WIL study explains how confidence can be affected by professional inexperience and communicating in a non-native language, and how it “was an issue for many students who believed they were inadequately equipped to contribute effectively in the workplace” (Jackson, 2017, p. 10). R1 rightly noted the toll that this confidence dynamic can take for international students, potentially leading to being overlooked for tasks, various forms of stigma, and poorer outcomes overall. R2 seemed to depart from R1 and the WIL literature, however, instead describing his gradual boost in confidence through acquiring new industry knowledge, insider techniques, and gaining a clearer understanding of their overall professional development trajectory.

Inconsistent Terminology.
Off-campus study programs in the United States (including those that incorporate some type of work experience) are often defined using opaque terms and characterized by variable modes of practice. Offices of ‘Student Opportunity’ and ‘Global Experience’ advertise and package programs as study away, service learning, work away, field work, study abroad, cross-border study, and any number of other iterations. One can imagine that, from the perspective of any student, these offerings are just as likely to foster a fair amount of uncertainty and confusion as much as they foster curiosity and exploration. Career-linked experiential opportunity appears to be no different. Even the term itself that has been used extensively in this research endeavor—“career-linked experiential opportunity,” an admittedly unwieldy stand-in for a comparatively tidy term like work-integrated learning—does not correspond in clear and universal terms to a set of institutionalized practices. Although co-operative education is perhaps the clearest example of a student-centered and educationally integrated model for this, it does not enjoy the level of cross-industry ubiquity and familiarity as the idea of internships, socially stigmatized though they are in the United States today.

The difficulties in finding a common understanding of terms and modes of practice revealed by conducting these surveys and interviews only further highlights the potential pitfalls of miscommunication, and potential advantages of constructing common understanding across departments, institutions, and with undergraduates themselves. Higher education professionals should perhaps move forward a dialogue in finding an easily understood umbrella term and set of practical criteria for career-linked experiential opportunities for undergraduates. Once this is achieved, a model that is both constructed and more automatically recognized as primarily educational in nature can be devised, perhaps along the lines of WIL.
Nascent efforts along these lines appear to be ongoing through such international organizations as the University of Massachusetts-based WACE, the “only international professional organization dedicated to developing, expanding, branding and advocating for cooperative & work-integrated education programs within industry and educational institutions” (About WACE & CWIE, n.d.). WACE has promoted the use of Cooperative & Work-Integrated Education (CWIE) as an all-encompassing umbrella term, though it is not in itself a fully fleshed out program model. CWIE was created to “embrace all forms of experiential learning utilized by industry and educational institutions to prepare the next generation of global professionals,” and is an catch-all term for “cooperative education, internships, semester in industry, international co-op exchanges, study abroad, research, clinical rotations, service learning and community service” (About WACE & CWIE, n.d.). Perhaps there is potential in popularizing this concept of Work-Integrated Education (WIE) and incorporating it as a more narrowly defined and practicable model in U.S. national education strategy akin to Australia’s approach to WIL.

**Limitations**

This study was not immune to the effects of certain limiting factors. Higher response rates from international education professionals compared to current and former F-1 students suggest inherent limitations in comparing and contrasting survey data sets of variable richness. The survey portion of this study also yielded a relatively low number of responses, resulting in a rather small convenience sample size. This made digging deeper into data through cross-tabulation to generate more nuanced insights somewhat difficult and of limited statistical relevance. In light of these particular limitations, analysis focused primarily on teasing out implications of research responses that appeared to show consensus or notably divergent
sentiments. The interplay between survey data and data generated from the semi-structured interviews was also examined.

Despite active recruitment of research volunteers through various channels, from professional communities to internet-based communication, student participation rates could also likely have been boosted (though perhaps at the cost of respondent diversity) to tap into a site-specific, built-in institutional convenience sample at a college or university. This study should therefore be considered a sort of pilot, or an initial data-gathering foray into this topic laying the preliminary investigative foundation onto which larger and longer-term studies at the institutional, or even regional level can be undertaken. Such future studies would likely benefit from the built-in student populations of an institution-bound study, or a study strategically begun at the start of the academic year instead of at the end, promoting a greater likelihood of student engagement.

**Conclusions and Future Study**

Distilled into five main points, the results of this research point to the following conclusions:

1. Career-linked experiential opportunities tend not to impact the international F-1 undergraduate enrollment decision-making process relative to other ‘pull’ factors
2. Low impact is due to conditions including general ignorance concerning immigration and work regulations, uncertainty about disciplinary interests and career trajectory, and other more pressing enrollment considerations
3. International F-1 undergraduates tended to experience a shift in sentiment, increasingly valuing these opportunities later in their undergraduate career
4. Many advisors feel that their institutions are not doing enough to connect international students to opportunities the students view as increasingly valuable.

5. There exists no clear consensus among students or administrators about how these opportunities are defined and what they look like in practice.

Scholarship that truly acknowledges the importance of analyzing undergraduate international student access to and perceptions of career-linked experiential opportunities has only just begun to proliferate (Felton & Harrison, 2016). As was previously mentioned, however, these studies are rarely if ever undertaken by researchers based in the United States, addressing the unique complexities and realities of the US higher educational context in terms of international undergraduate student sentiment and support while participating in these opportunities.

**Institution-Level Changes To Consider**

Research findings suggest that institutions could use data showing sentiment evolution and increased interest in practical opportunity attainment to better serve their international students by adopting a number of strategies. Considering how reliably former F-1 students developed positive associations with attaining practical off-campus experience, one possibility may be to shift focus from pre-enrollment marketing and promotion to generating post-enrollment career preparation information. International student orientation is one possible venue for this. International student upperclassmen who have already participated in practical training opportunities might also be effective and convincing mentors for newly enrolled students.

Increased and intentional integration of career services and international education offices (and international student services where it operates apart from that office) should also be
EXPERIENTIAL OPPORTUNITY AND F1 DECISION-MAKING

supported. Through the addition of International Student Career Development Specialists, some institutions like Rutgers University have taken laudable steps to improve their capacity to provide career-linked opportunities to international students (Rutgers University, n.d.). This study’s findings, however, suggest that undergraduate curriculum-embedded career development efforts are widely seen as being insufficient. It will be necessary for institutions going forward to forge crucial interdepartmental ties that better facilitate access to career-linked experiential opportunities as part of a curriculum well before graduation.

Are Study Abroad-Style Program Providers The Answer?

Survey findings have already demonstrated that students and advisors alike are aware of international student preference for engaging in career-linked experiential opportunities off campus. In mirroring the strategy adopted by international education offices facing capacity and resource limitations of leaning on program providers to bolster outbound mobility offerings for their students, one solution to providing more international students with academically reputable field-specific career experiences might be to form partnerships with third party program providers. High resource research universities like Stanford and Duke have already created professional pathway training programs based in New York City for students in certain majors, but open enrollment programs may be a more practical solution to providing access to the broader international student community independent of geographic region and institutional affiliation (Earle, 2015; Sobania and Braskamp 2009). Programs focusing on field-specific career training appear to be quite rare, based only in a handful of metro centers like New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Even so, this line of inquiry should be pursued as part of the ongoing off-campus study conversation, particularly considering the near uniform international student preference for participating in off-campus opportunities unveiled by this research project.
References


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10.1108/09513540210418403


Appendix A

Current/Former F1 Undergraduate Student Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Current & Former F1 Students

1) How would you describe your reasoning for choosing to apply to the institutions that you did?

2) What factors or qualities were most important to you throughout that process, and what ultimately led you to enroll at the institution you attend(ed)?

3) Do you feel that practical work or internship experience is important to attain before graduation? Did you feel the same way before enrolling in your college or university as you did approaching graduation?

4) Should practical work or internship experience be a degree requirement for everyone? Why or why not?

5) Would you say that practical training and experience is more, less, or equally as important for international students as domestic students? Why?

6) Do you feel that your college or university provides/provided you with many options for gaining hands-on experience related to your Major? If not, why not? If so, what options are/were available?

7) If you have not done any hands-on training, how do you think you will utilize CPT/OPT? If you have already done this type of training, can you explain what you did?

8) Do you think that practical experience should be done on its own, or linked to your studies in some way? For example: writing papers about your experience in the field, or doing work that is linked to a class you are taking.

9) Do you have any other thoughts on the value of practical field experience for international undergraduates?
Appendix B

Survey Respondent Data Snapshot

Table B

Snapshot of admissions and enrollment survey respondents

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<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Practical Experience in Field Offered?</th>
<th>Required for Degree?</th>
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<td>Small Public University</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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*Some respondents provided examples that call into question answer validity
Appendix C

Open-Ended Survey Question Responses

Appendix C1

Student Responses to Survey Question #7

Q7 Does your current or former institution offer opportunities for students to gain practical experience in their major field of study (co-op programs, internship programs, etc)? If yes, what are they?

Answered: 11  Skipped: 1

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<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, it does. The Career Service Office in my school invited alumni to talk about their career experiences in art field.</td>
<td>4/16/2017 11:46 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>At Bennington College we are required to do an internship every academic year, which is a great opportunity to get in field experience.</td>
<td>4/10/2017 9:12 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>yearly internship requirement</td>
<td>4/10/2017 2:18 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Field work term is a term providing students with an opportunity to get an off-campus internship in any academic field they are interested in</td>
<td>4/10/2017 2:08 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes. We have a 7 week term called field work term where everyone is required to be out on the field working.</td>
<td>4/10/2017 1:46 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes, as mentioned about, Field Work Term is a great way to complete 4 guaranteed internships by graduation.</td>
<td>4/10/2017 1:35 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes. There is an online database of current internship opportunities, as well as grants for any expenses students might expect.</td>
<td>4/10/2017 1:31 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>It offers co-op programs, research opportunities, internships, and some work-study placements that can be relevant to their field of study.</td>
<td>4/4/2017 8:15 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>yes, practical in my major; practicum and living in a very small community teach good soft skills;</td>
<td>4/1/2017 2:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>We are required to enroll into 6-credit of internship as our major requirement. There are plenty of Research Assistant positions that I could take advantage of as well. My school also organizes Study Away program (internship in some larger cities within the US) that a lot of my classmates back in the days took part in.</td>
<td>3/28/2017 5:57 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes, internship</td>
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Appendix C2

International Admissions & Enrollment Administrator Responses to Survey Question #2

Q2 Does your institution offer opportunities for F1 students to gain practical experience in their field (through co-op programs, internship programs, etc)? If yes, what are they?

Answered: 15  Skipped: 0

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<td>yes, CPT authorization is supported</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Internship programs (CPT and OPT)</td>
<td>3/30/2017 7:36 PM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Yes - Internships</td>
<td>3/30/2017 9:04 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, internships</td>
<td>3/29/2017 2:19 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>yes, but nothing institutionalized just opportunities shared through our career center</td>
<td>3/29/2017 2:19 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes. A judicial observation program for LL.M. students.</td>
<td>3/29/2017 12:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes. Internships.</td>
<td>3/29/2017 12:26 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, all the above and mentoring 1 on 1</td>
<td>3/29/2017 11:33 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>In some cases. A few programs require an internship, other departments do not require internships but have strong connections with industry; unfortunately employers are not necessarily interested in pursuing the H1-B process and are therefore less interested in taking on an international student for an internship or 1-year OPT experience.</td>
<td>3/29/2017 11:10 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, we offer internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, and service learning.</td>
<td>3/29/2017 10:00 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Internships, CPT</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:24 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes; co-op, practicum, internship, research, clinicals, etc.</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:09 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>internships, co-ops, service learning, volunteering</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:04 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yes - Internship or job related assignment</td>
<td>3/29/2017 7:45 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>We do not currently offer F1 visas but are in the process of doing so. Once we do, we may offer work-study relevant to their field.</td>
<td>3/28/2017 1:10 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C3
International Admissions & Enrollment Administrator Responses to Survey Question #4

Q4 What would you say is the leading factor drawing most F1 students to enroll at your institution?

Answered: 15  Skipped: 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>cost, academics</td>
<td>4/4/2017 2:15 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ability to create their own pathway to a bachelor's degree (we do not require students to go down a formal major track)</td>
<td>3/30/2017 7:36 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>3/30/2017 9:04 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>location</td>
<td>3/29/2017 2:19 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>rankings</td>
<td>3/29/2017 2:19 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Top 25 law school in US, Judicial Observation course, good location with many companies for OPT after degree completion.</td>
<td>3/28/2017 12:38 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Combination of academics and location</td>
<td>3/29/2017 12:26 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Small size, individual attention and mentoring, quality of theory and practice, good teaching/faculty</td>
<td>3/29/2017 11:33 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>rankings, relationships with sponsors,</td>
<td>3/29/2017 11:10 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cost and program mix</td>
<td>3/29/2017 10:00 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>tuition</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:24 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>strength of academic programs combined with individual attention to students</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:09 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>a large university with a small feel</td>
<td>3/29/2017 9:04 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>3/29/2017 7:45 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>We do not currently accept F1 students. We do accept students who have the right to study under different visas. The largest draw is uniqueness of the curriculum.</td>
<td>3/28/2017 1:10 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
SurveyMonkey Online Surveys

International Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential Opportunity and Enrollment Decision-Making Survey for Current and Former F1 Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to the Survey!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you for participating in this study on the importance of experiential opportunity and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>international student decision-making!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a Master’s candidate in International Education at the SIT Graduate Institute. Between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 6, 2017 and April 16, 2017 I am conducting a research project--“Assessing the Influence of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-Linked Experiential Opportunities on the F1 Student Enrollment Decision-Making Process”--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as part of my final capstone thesis and presentation. My research is performed under the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guidance of my academic advisor, Dr. Raymond Young.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below you will find an outline of the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>required, and your rights as a participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this study is:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· to gain insight into how prospective F-1 international students value opportunities to gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practical, hands-on experience in deciding which college or university to attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of this research will be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· to better understand the institutional qualities that are most important to F-1 international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students, and gauge the perceived value of gaining practical field experience before graduating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Researcher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison Fuerst, Master’s Candidate at the SIT Graduate Institute: <a href="mailto:harrison.fuerst@mail.sit.edu">harrison.fuerst@mail.sit.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(You may also contact the SIT Graduate IRB Office with further inquiries: <a href="mailto:irb@sit.edu">irb@sit.edu</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will be asked to complete an online survey that will ask you about career training and other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>major factors that you have, are, or will soon consider about enrolling in a US higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institution. The survey should take no longer than 5-10 minutes to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk &amp; Confidentiality:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given the degree of anonymity involved in your taking this survey, there is little to no risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved in participating in this study. Additionally, the information you do provide will be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strictly confidential, and neither your name nor any other personal identifying information will be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
associated with survey data. Insights gathered by you and other participants will be used in writing a qualitative research thesis, which will be read by my professor and presented to attendees of the 2017 SIT Graduate Institute Capstone Seminar. Some data may also appear later at the 2017 NAFSA Annual Conference. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous. Once you complete the online survey, just click on the “Submit” button and the results will be securely delivered to my academic e-mail without any additional identifying information, including the sender’s e-mail address.

Voluntary Participation and Statement About Compensation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any time during the online survey. While I cannot compensate you for your time, your contributions will be invaluable to the higher education community as we seek a deeper understanding of international enrollment on college campuses, and the institutional factors that are least and most important to F1 students as they consider enrollment options.

Your Consent to Participate:
"I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in this study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older. Continuing on with this survey by clicking the ‘Continue’ button is an indicator of my consent to participate.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you a Current or Former F-1 student?</td>
<td>Current, Former</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please type your Nationality:</td>
<td>Type your nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Please select the category that most accurately reflects your Academic Major:</td>
<td>Business/Management, Education, Engineering, Fine/Applied Arts, Health Professions, Humanities, Math/Computer Science, Physical/Life Sciences, Social Sciences, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Please select the type of institution that best represents your current or former college/university:</td>
<td>Large Public University (More than 10,000 students), Large Private University (More than 10,000 students), Small Public University (Less than 10,000 students), Private Liberal Arts College, Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. What was the most important factor in finally deciding to attend your college or university? Did access to hands-on experiential opportunities (co-op programs, internship programs, etc) factor into your decision-making process?

6. Rank the following qualities in order from MOST important to LEAST important to you in your college decision-making process:

   - Cost/Financial Aid, Reputation
   - Size
   - Location
   - Character or ‘Fit’
   - Opportunities to Gain Hands-on Experience in My Field of Study
   - Employment Rate of Graduates

7. Does your current or former institution offer opportunities for students to gain practical experience in their major field of study (co-op programs, internship programs, etc)? If yes, what are they?

8. The opportunity to gain practical hands-on experience (through co-op programs, internship programs, etc.) related to my Major was important to me during my college search.

   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
9. Practical hands-on experience in my field of study was not so important to me at first, but became more important closer to graduation.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. I have benefitted greatly from CPT/OPT training experiences in my field, or I expect to before graduating.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

11. Professor and alumni connections in my field of study have been very helpful to gain real-world experience related to my Major.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. I would rather gain practical experience in my field through opportunities that are off-campus.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
International Admissions & Enrollment Administrator Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Survey for International Admissions &amp; Enrollment Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thank you for participating in this study on the importance of experiential opportunity in international student decision-making!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of this study is:</td>
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<tr>
<td>· to gain insight into how prospective F-1 international students value opportunities to gain practical, hands-on experience in deciding which college or university to attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The benefits of this research will be:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Researcher: Harrison Fuerst, Master’s Candidate at the SIT Graduate Institute: <a href="mailto:harrison.fuerst@mail.sit.edu">harrison.fuerst@mail.sit.edu</a> (You may also contact the SIT Graduate Institute IRB Office with further inquiries: <a href="mailto:irb@sit.edu">irb@sit.edu</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures: You will be asked to complete an online survey that will ask you about career training and other major factors that you have, are, or will soon consider about enrolling in a US higher education institution. This anonymous 8-question survey should take no longer than 5-10 minutes to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk &amp; Confidentiality: Given the degree of anonymity involved in your taking this survey, there is little to no risk involved in participating in this study. Additionally, the information you do provide will be strictly confidential, and neither your name nor any other personal identifying information will be associated with survey data. Insights gleaned from your and other participants’ input will be used in writing a qualitative research thesis, which will be read by my professor and presented to attendees of the 2017 SIT Graduate Institute Capstone Seminar. Some data may also appear later at</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the 2017 NAFSA Annual Conference. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous. Once you complete the online survey, just click on the “Done” button and the results will be securely delivered to my academic e-mail without any additional identifying information, including the sender’s e-mail address.

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Your Consent to Participate:
"I have read the above information and I understand my rights and the nature of my involvement as a participant in this study. I understand that clicking the 'Continue' button below serves as my electronic consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older and am capable of granting this consent."
1. Please select the category that best represents your institution:
   - Large Public University (More than 10,000 students)
   - Large Private University (More than 10,000 students)
   - Small Public University (Less than 10,000 students)
   - Private Liberal Arts College
   - Other

2. Does your institution offer opportunities for F1 students to gain practical experience in their field (through co-op programs, internship programs, etc)? If yes, what are they?

3. Does your institution require students to obtain practical experience related to their Major before graduating? If yes, what is the nature of that requirement?

4. What would you say is the leading factor drawing most F1 students to enroll at your institution?

5. Each year, our institution receives prospective F-1 student inquiries about career-linked programs or other practical training opportunities offered by our institution.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
6. I would say that the practical, hands-on experiences (internship programs, co-op programs, etc) offered by my institution feature prominently in our marketing materials and messaging to prospective F-1 students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. Availability and awareness of career-linked experiential opportunities for F-1 students is a topic that our office discusses at some point each year.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. In my opinion, F1 students tend to place higher value in career-linked experiential opportunities than domestic students.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
A Survey for International Student Advisors

Thank you for participating in this study on the importance of experiential opportunity in international student decision-making!

I am a Master’s candidate in International Education at the SIT Graduate Institute. Between March 6, 2017 and April 16, 2017 I am conducting a research project--“Assessing the Influence of Career-Linked Experiential Opportunities on the F1 Student Enrollment Decision-Making Process”--as part of my final capstone thesis and presentation. My research is performed under the guidance of my academic advisor, Dr. Raymond Young.

Below you will find an outline of the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required, and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is:

- to gain insight into how prospective F-1 international undergraduate students value opportunities to gain practical, hands-on experience in deciding which college or university to attend

The benefits of this research will be:

- to better understand the institutional qualities that are most important to F-1 international students, and gauge the perceived value of gaining practical field experience before graduating

Principal Researcher:
Harrison Fuerst, Master’s Candidate at the SIT Graduate Institute: harrison.fuerst@mail.sit.edu
(You may also contact the SIT Graduate Institute IRB Office with further inquiries: irb@sit.edu)

Procedures:
You will be asked to complete an online survey that will ask you about career training and other major factors that you have, are, or will soon consider about enrolling in a US higher education institution. This anonymous 8-question survey should take no longer than 5-10 minutes to complete.

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   - Large Public University (More than 10,000 students)
   - Large Private University (More than 10,000 students)
   - Small Public University (Less than 10,000 students)
   - Private Liberal Arts College
   - Other

2. What would you say is the most important or deciding factor for F1 undergrads who choose to attend your institution?

3. Does your institution require students to obtain practical hands-on experience related to their Major before graduating?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Unsure

4. I’ve found that students need a bit of nudging to pursue work or internship opportunities through CPT/OPT.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

5. I’ve found that students are always extremely eager to use CPT/OPT to gain practical experience.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree Nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
6. I would say nearly all F1 students at my institution utilize CPT/OPT to gain practical experience.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree

7. Our F1 students tend to prefer making use of CPT/OPT to work somewhere off-campus rather than working on-campus.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree

8. I believe that our institution does an outstanding job connecting F1 students to CPT/OPT opportunities related to their Major.

- [ ] Strongly Agree
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Strongly Disagree