



Evaluating the Impact of Student Support Services on International Graduate Students' Success.

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Literature Review

The literature emphasizes evaluating the significant impact student support services have on international graduate students' success and the struggles international students encounter when adjusting to an unfamiliar educational setting. According to Julal (2013), "students are more likely to stay in an educational institution with various support services available" (p. 9). Again, the study indicated a strong connection between service utilization and student success (Johnson et al., 2022). Some issues international graduate students face include social challenges, teacher-led interactions with students, and language barriers in academic and non-academic environments where English is not just the international students' second language, but also that of the host communities (Pawar & Dasgupta, 2024). This study shows how academic departments have a major effect on international students' sense of belonging, academic accomplishment, and connection to peers and professors on campus. (Rodriguez et al., 2019).

Methods

Interviews were conducted to guide this study. Using an interview is more appropriate because it gave me an in-depth understanding about the effectiveness of these support services. The study used a qualitative research method for its design. The participants in the study came from a regional comprehensive university in the southeastern United States. I conducted interviews with 3 directors in the support services from the Writing And Learning Commons, the Office of Global Engagement, and Intercultural Affairs here on the WCU campus. The interviews were audio-recorded, with an average of 30 minutes in length.

Research Questions

- What do you think are the main barriers that prevent international graduate students from accessing support services?
- What programs or services are in place to help international graduate students feel a sense of belonging and community on campus?
- What challenges does your department face in providing adequate support to international graduate students?
- How does your department collaborate with other campus support services to assist international graduate students?
- What improvement would you recommend to better support international graduate students?
- How does your department collaborate with other campus support services to support international graduate students?

Introduction

This project seeks to examine how support services, like Global Office, Writing And Learning Commons, and Intercultural Affairs, affect the success of international graduate students. Many students face peculiar challenges, such as adjusting to a new culture and managing their studies in a different language. By assessing these support services, we can better understand their effectiveness and identify ways to improve them. The goal of this research is to aid international students in thriving academically and personally during their time at university.

Analysis

The study employed priori coding to determine themes. The initial codes were support, challenges, integration, mental health, and recommendations. These codes were based on the literature and research questions of Pawar, S. K., & Dasgupta, H. (2024) and Rodríguez et al. (2019). Five major themes were found because of the analysis: sense of belonging, barriers to accessing support, social and academic support, campus partnerships, and recommendations to improve support services.

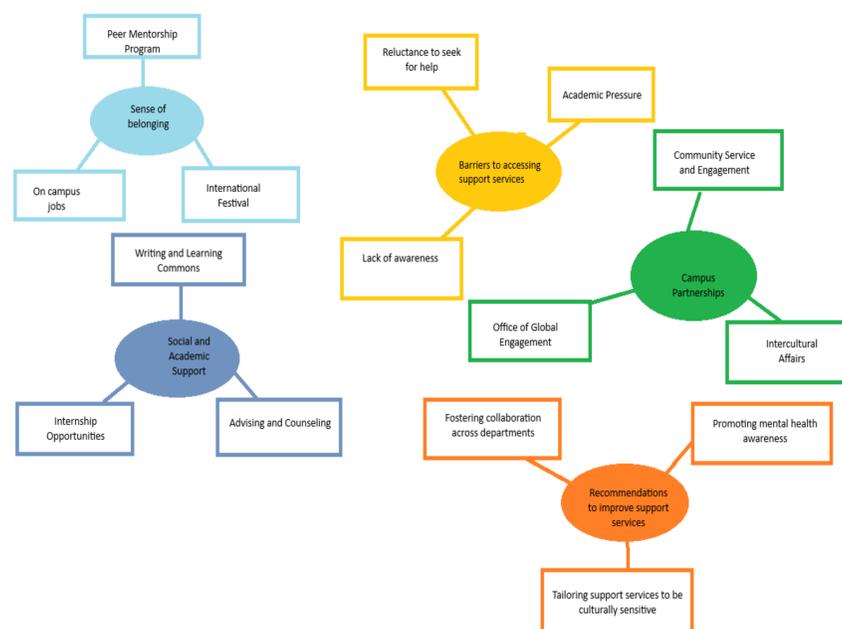


Figure 1 shows themes and subthemes.

Findings

- Lack of awareness of the various support services remains the major challenge that prevents international graduate students from accessing these resources.
- International graduate students who tend to use the writing and learning commons experience tremendous improvement in their academic work.
- Mental health was the least patronized service by international graduate students.
- Academic departments provide opportunities for international graduate students to build connections and integrate into the campus community.

Discussion

Findings highlight the significant impact that student support services have on international graduate students' success. Notwithstanding the enormous contribution that these support services have on international graduate students' success, there is a notable gap in services particularly tailored to tackle the unique challenges that international graduate students experience. These findings confirm previous research of Harrybam, Guilfoyle, and Knight (2012), who reported a "gap between service provision and utilization" (p. 3). These observations emphasize the relevance of increasing the awareness of the available services and access to existing resources.

Implications

A support service system that prioritizes the needs and expectations of students rather than focusing solely on what the university can offer is essential for enhancing the academic journey and success of international graduate students. The implication is that there should be increased collaboration and communication between the Graduate School, the Office of Global Engagement, and other support services to develop programs that are designed to meet the unique needs of international graduate students.

References

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