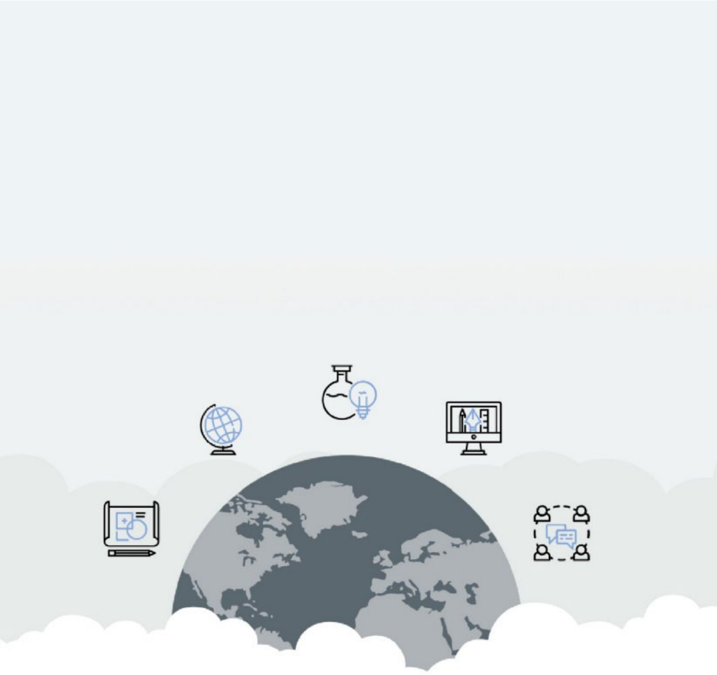
SENSE OF BELONGING
Mapping out the Lived Cross-Cultural Experiences of International Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jianfen Chen
PhD Candidate
English Department, Purdue University
chen3421@purdue.edu

Yao Yang
PhD
Gifted Education Research and Resource, Purdue University
yang1707@purdue.edu



2023 HubICL

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

This project aims to map out the lived cross-cultural experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic at a Midwest university. It employs a mixed-method approach by administering surveys and interviews to understand the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, their coping strategies, and their reflections. The results show that international students had a generally positive experience during the pandemic, and they were satisfied with the protective measures the university administered. Despite all the disruptions, they showed resilience, adaptation, and growth in the new normal by developing their own ways of living and studying during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the pandemic experience for international students was also individualized, and everyone experienced the pandemic very differently because of their cultural, ethnic, and identity backgrounds. Such nuances deserve university administration and assistance units' attention to the specific needs and challenges international students experience during the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

International students studying and living during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 and 2021) in the US may have faced all the same challenges as American students, but problems specific to their situations and concerns may add to these challenges and complicate their lived experiences during the pandemic. To understand their lived experiences through their cross-cultural voices during the pandemic, this study is designed to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of international students at a Midwest US university, their coping strategies to the challenges caused by the pandemic, and their reflections on such experiences.

EXIGENCY

Globally, scholars have noticed that international students studying overseas in COVID-stricken countries have become one of the hardest-hit groups (Xu & Zhao, 2022). Challenges and uncertainties international students have faced include visa and travel restrictions, concerns over the health of their family members back at home, the potential for the U.S. government policies that threatened their continuing education, and concerns over getting infected but not getting treated, isolation, discrimination, and Sinophobia (Honegger & Honegger, 2020; Gao et al., 2022; Nam et al., 2021; Wang, 2021; Thorson et al., 2021). Scholars have also explored the sense of agency that international students have possessed and displayed that allows them to remain resilient and shape their diversified and individual experiences during uncertain times (Xu & Zhao, 2022; Yu, 2021; Siczek, 2020).

Nonetheless, the lived experiences of international students during the pandemic are a complex research topic and deserve further efforts to explore the multifaceted issues from a post-pandemic perspective to not only document their experiences but also gain insights from their reflections. Additionally, given the significant role that international students play to enhance the revenue of American universities, contribute to academic disciplines, innovation, and research (Hegarty, 2014), and promote cross-cultural communication, diversity, equity, inclusiveness, and social justice in American universities, universities with a large enrollment of international students should invest in research about their experiences during the public health crisis so as to get prepared for the unforeseen next uncertain time. As researchers at a large Mid-west university with an enrollment of international students of over 9,000 from 128 countries (ISS, 2022), we aim to conduct this research to seek answers to the following questions:

RQ1: How do international students evaluate the degree of their adaptation to the online emergency teaching, satisfaction with the student support services, health and wellbeing, and belonging and engagement during COVID-19 at the university?

RQ2: How do students' perceptions of their school experiences during COVID-19 vary by gender, race, socioeconomic status, grades, program focus (STEM/non-STEM) and Academic achievement?

RQ3: What were their lived cross-cultural experiences at the university during the pandemic?

METHOD

In this study, we utilized a design of partially mixed concurrent equal status (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), which considered the level of data mixing, time orientation, and emphasis of approaches. The approach involved collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data separately before integrating the results for comparison and inference drawing. Both data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously with equal importance given to addressing research questions, as the aim was to use triangulation.

PARTICIPANTS

Setting

During the study, all individuals who took part were enrolled in a graduate program at a highly-ranked public research university located in the Midwestern region of the United States. As of fall 2021, the university had approximately 46,000 students, out of which 11,613 were enrolled in graduate schools. This university was one of the top destinations in the US for international students to pursue their degrees. Its 10-year international students' enrollment showed a steady increase of 10% from 8562 (2012) to 9452 (2022), with the sharp rise (45%)

attributed to graduates and professional students' enrollment from 3588 (2012) to 5203 (2022) (ISS, 2022). The top 6 countries and regions where students come from were India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Columbia, and Nigeria (ISS, 2022).

Respondents Information

Table 1 presented the participants' demographic information. 73.53% of participants were Asian. 82.86% were graduate students. 80% of them were high-achieving students, which meant their GPA was more than 3.5 on a scale of 4.0.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Category	Sub-category	N (%)	Sub-category	N (%)
Gender	Male	54 (52.43%)	Female	49 (47.57%)
Race	Asian	75 (73.53%)	Non-Asian	27 (26.47%)
SES (social economic status)	Low-SES	27 (29.03%)	Others	66 (70.97%)
Grade Level	Undergraduate	18 (17.14%)	Graduate	87 (82.86%)
GPA	High achieving	84 (80%)	Others	21 (20%)

DATA COLLECTION

To identify the significant and diverse aspects of the lived experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, a maximum variation sampling technique was used to recruit participants (Suri, 2011). To be eligible for participation, individuals needed to meet the following criteria: (a) be 18 years or older and an international student, (b) have enrolled at the

University before the summer semester of 2021, and (c) be pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree. After obtaining approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB-2022-989), potential participants received a recruitment email containing the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The email also invited them to complete a 15-20 minute Qualtrics survey that collected demographic information and their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. To encourage participation, respondents were given a chance to win one of twenty Amazon e-gift cards worth $15 upon survey completion. We ended up with 105 valid surveys. Participants who expressed their willingness to participate in follow-up semi-structured interviews were invited to two one-on-one interviews, each lasting 30 minutes and scheduled one week apart, based on their availability. 21 participants completed the interviews with 20 graduate international students and 1 undergraduate student. During the interviews conducted via Zoom, participants were asked 8 pre-written questions about their experiences with remote teaching and learning, mental health, finances, housing, immigration, visa or security problems, academic and life assistance, depression, xenophobia, harassment, or discrimination during COVID-19. In addition to the pre-written questions, they were asked a few impromptu follow-up questions based on their answers to the prior questions either for clarification or for gaining a better understanding of their experiences. These interviews were recorded and transcribed with pseudonyms assigned to each participant. Participants were not coerced into sharing any information that made them feel uncomfortable. All the names used in this report were pseudonyms. Although some risks associated with discussing sensitive topics exist, the study's organizers anticipated that any distress caused would be minimal and unlikely to occur. As a token of appreciation, each interviewee received a $15 Amazon e-gift card.

DATA ANALYSES

Quantitative Analysis

The statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected in this study was conducted using SPSS Statistics 28. Initially, we carried out descriptive statistics on the survey data. Following that, we utilized a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to assess the impact of four variables, namely program focus (i.e., STEM and non-STEM), academic year (i.e., undergraduate and graduate), race/ethnicity (i.e., Asian and non-Asian), and family background (i.e., first-generation college students and continuing generation college student), on the experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our focus was primarily on their sense of belongingness and academic support. As the four dependent variables derived from the survey exhibit moderate intercorrelation, the MANOVA technique was considered appropriate for the analysis. The quantitative analysis was performed to answer RQ1 and RQ2.

Qualitative Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, along with an inductive approach (Patton, 2015), was employed to investigate the essential experiences regarding the academic, psychological, and social needs and support of international students during COVID-19. The process included (1) familiarizing us with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining themes, and (6) reporting the findings. The identified themes were derived from the explicit meaning of the data that highlighted the patterns of experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance of a theme was not determined by the number of times it was mentioned by participants; however, the adequacy of the references made to it was considered an important factor in determining the final themes. The qualitative analysis was carried out to answer RQ3.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Positionality

Milner's (2007) framework was used by both authors to address potential biases, including those that may not be immediately apparent. The framework involves four components, which are: (1) self-reflection, (2) self-reflection in relation to others, (3) reflective engagement and representation, and (4) transitioning from the self to the broader system. The authors are international students from East Asia who have experienced educational challenges and psychological difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, which are common experiences among international students, including the experience of microaggressions and racism. Being female international students at a predominantly white institution (PWI), they are aware of the potential for their own intersectional school experiences to influence their perspectives and potentially overlook multiple viewpoints on the same issue.

Addressing Coding Bias

Prior to analyzing the data, both authors reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and created analytical memos that outlined their initial personal thoughts on how they connected with the study participants and the phenomena being studied. Other techniques were also utilized in the analysis process, including keeping records of the data analysis procedure, documenting the reasoning behind decisions and choices made when selecting codes, writing reflexive journals, maintaining a clear audit trail, and seeking feedback from participants to verify findings (member checking).

RESULTS

FINDINGS FROM SURVEY

RQ1: How do international students evaluate the degree of their adaptation to the online emergency teaching, satisfaction with the student support services, health and wellbeing, and belonging and engagement during COVID-19 at the university?

Table 2 displayed the statistical data of how students perceived their educational experience in school during the COVID-19 pandemic, categorized by demographic groups. Notably, international students demonstrated a higher level of satisfaction in terms of interest and enjoyment. In general, international students at the University had a positive experience both academically and emotionally during the pandemic. Despite facing various difficulties, they were able to adapt to the online learning format, which was implemented by the university in response to the pandemic. Additionally, the students expressed contentment with the university's overall response to COVID-19. They managed to maintain a healthy and safe living environment, both physically and mentally, despite the challenges they faced. Furthermore, they felt a strong sense of belonging to the university and believed that they were valued and supported by the university.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Student Perceptions of School Experiences during COVID-19

Category	Adaptation	Satisfaction	Wellness	Belonging
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
All Students	2.65(.08)	2.9(.063)	2 (.02)	4.2(.11)
Gender				
Male	2.65(.83)	2.91(.65)	2.01(.24)	4.28(1.3)

Female	2.65(.95)	2.88(.7)	2(.26)	3.99(.97)
Race				
Asian	2.64(.85)	2.95(.61)	1.97(.22)	4.23(1.06)
Non-Asian	2.7(.953)	2.74(.61)	2.04(.31)	4.04(1.13)
SES				
High-SES	2.67(.78)	2.89(.64)	2.04(.3)	3.96(1.08)
Others	2.62(.89)	2.88(.713)	1.99(.23)	4.22(1.25)
Program Focus				
STEM	2.59(.91)	2.95(.63)	2.02(.24)	4.15(1.22)
Non-STEM	2.77(.75)	2.68(.78)	1.92(.25)	4.2(.97)
Grade Level				
	2.39(.92)	3(.594)	1.93(.15)	4.19(1.34)
Graduate	2.7(.86)	2.89(.69)	2.01(.26)	4.15(1.13)
GPA				
High GPA	2.81 (.8)	2.89(.7)	1.99(.25)	4.2(1.12)
Others	2 (.89)	2.95(.59)	2.02(.25)	4. (1.33)

Note. The rating of Adaptation ranges from 1 to 4, 1-4 for Satisfaction, 1-3 for Wellness, 1-6 for Belonging. *N*=102.

RQ2: How do students' perceptions of their school experiences during COVID-19 vary by gender, race, socioeconomic status, grades, program focus (STEM/non-STEM) and Academic achievement?

We utilized the one-way MANOVA technique to examine how gender (male, female), race (Asian, non-Asian), socio-economic status (low SES, others), academic program (STEM, non-STEM), academic achievement (high-achieving, non-high-achieving) influenced students' perceptions of their adaptation to online emergency teaching, satisfaction with student support services, health and wellbeing, as well as their sense of belonging and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in students' perceptions based on gender ($F(4, 98) = .273, p = .974$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .978$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$), race ($F(4, 97) = .94, p = .444$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .963$, partial $\eta^2 = .037$), socio-economic status ($F(4, 88) = .601, p = .663$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .973$, partial $\eta^2 = .027$), academic program ($F(4, 98) = 1.7, p = .156$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .935$, partial $\eta^2 = .065$), and academic level (undergraduate, graduate) ($F(4, 100) = 1.558, p = .191$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .941$, partial $\eta^2 = .059$). However, a significant difference was found among high-achieving and non-high-achieving students in their perceptions of their school experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic ($F(4, 100) = 4.48, p = .002$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .848$, partial $\eta^2 = .152$).

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

RQ3: What were their lived cross-cultural experiences at the university during the pandemic?

Echoing findings in Thorson et al.'s research (2021), results generated from the interviews indicated both positive and negative lived cross-cultural experiences of international students during the pandemic. We classified their experiences into seven themes based on the data analysis and illustrated each of them with both positive and negative narratives extracted from the interviews.

Remote Learning and Teaching Experiences

In general, participants had positive experiences with remote learning as they believed that their instructors did well in terms of moving the class online, making accommodations to their learning needs, checking in with them more frequently for questions, and recording the class for better accessibility. For example, Jane said she liked online classes since her professors really explained everything well online, were available for questions, and replied to emails promptly. Nevertheless, participants also shared undesirable remote learning experiences such as a lack of interaction with classmates, less communication with professors, too much screen time, and vulnerable to distraction.

If participants held graduate teaching assistantships and taught classes during the pandemic, their learning experiences could be still good, but their teaching experiences could be the opposite depending on how their department and the university prepared them for hybrid teaching. For example, Alice from China was a graduate teaching assistant and said that she felt pretty good as a student during the pandemic because the university did a lot of work to take care of its students. However, as a graduate instructor, she felt her workload increased dramatically, and she was stressed out. For example, as her class was a hybrid one which meant students could take the class either online or in person, she had to take care of all students at the same time. It was extremely difficult at the beginning of the pandemic since she was not trained to do so and had to figure out numerous new tasks in a very short time. She mentioned that she had to manage software like Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams for different teaching purposes, attending to students both online and in-person, and lecturing and recording the class at the same time. Since her classes were labs, in addition to the risks she had to take to teach in classrooms wearing masks and face shields, she also expressed her concerns over students who couldn't have hands-on experience and thus didn't gain as much as they should have done.

Mental Health Experiences

Most participants experienced some mental issues such as depression, loneliness, isolation, and anxiety to varying extents. These mental issues were caused by a wide range of reasons, including concerns over the risks of getting infected and the disrupted study and research plan, concerns over running out of food and face masks, uncertainty about the timeline for graduation, and anxiety over internship and housing issues and a shrinking circle of friends.

Students who already had some mental issues were hit even harder by the pandemic. In our interview, there was an extreme case provided by a participant who experienced domestic violence because the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to stay at home and face a violent husband. According to her, she had nowhere to go but to stay home and bore all the anger her husband poured upon her. Another example went to a graduate student who had a knee injury and experienced depression as she found it very hard to book an appointment to get treatment. In addition, she was very upset that she was able to go home and see her family due to visa expiration. According to her, “Starting September or something, my productivity and research dropped even more, and I remember I was just reading a research paper and out of nowhere I would get these anxiety attacks where I would start crying out of nowhere.”

Financial, Housing, Immigration, Visa, and Security Experiences

Participants shared both pleasant and unpleasant financial, housing, immigration, visa, and security experiences during the pandemic although unpleasant experiences overtook pleasant experiences. Pleasant experiences included spending less than before the pandemic because of quarantine and isolated living conditions. For example, Jane shared that she and her partner saved a lot of money because they didn’t go out anywhere.

Unpleasant experiences varied from person to person. For Katty from Costa Rica, housing and financial stresses were big problems. She had to move out of a shared apartment due to concerns over infection risks as one of her previous roommates was working in a hospital. Finding a new place during the pandemic and paying a much higher rent put a lot of pressure on her. For Betty from India, getting a visa appointment at the end of 2020 and going back home to visit her family was a nightmare experience. According to her,

> I was desperate to go to India because I wanted to meet my family really bad. So I was looking for visa appointments every day, every day I would open the website and try to look for appointments, but of course, there were no appointments available at that time in India. And somehow, I got a date in December of 2020, and I was like, okay, now. And I think by that time, flights were open already or a few flights were open. So I was really looking forward to going to India in December 2020. And then after one week or so of my appointment, I got an email that my visa appointment has been canceled. Oh, wow. With no notification. They just canceled it. And then I was not able to find any other appointments after that. So then I had to finally cancel my flights as well for India, and I was stuck here.

Security concerns were more common among Asian students, especially Chinese students. For example, Liz, as a Chinese student became more concerned about her own safety after hearing about some incidents regarding attacking Asians from her newspapers or her friend. She said, “Some students tell me that they are getting afraid if ever they want out for grocery or there are some accidents that we also can read from the newsletter and the newspaper and the other information source that Asian students, especially Chinese students, are under attack.”

Biggest Worry Or Concern

The health and well-being of their family members back home became the biggest worry and concern for most participants when they were in the pandemic and unable to go back home. Things were uncertain about the future in their home country in terms of the availability of facemasks and vaccination timelines. For example, Jane from Nicaragua said she was very worried about her mother in December 2020 when her mother got sick because she was not able to go back home due to travel restrictions. Additionally, some participants also worried about getting infected and stuck in the US forever. For example, Opsy from Nigeria said,

> My biggest worry would be dying in America. Dying far away from my parents… I just wanted to be with my family. I was just like, yeah, whatever is really going to happen. I don't want to experience it far away. Thousands of miles away from my loved ones.

Still, some participants worried about their academic plans being disrupted by the pandemic. Katty from Costa Rica had to postpone her graduation for two years because the pandemic halted her abroad field trip to collect her dissertation data.

Experiences with Seeking Academic and Life Assistance

The campus assistance participants sought included counseling and psychological services, student health service, international students and scholars' services, and writing center services. They were all happy about the writing center services since the online tutoring was convenient and helpful to improve their academic writing. As Liz from China said, "I use the writing lab a lot. They provide nice support. I've cultivated my habit that after my writing is done, I send it to the writing lab for people to review and give me advice and suggestions."

However, participants had mixed experiences with counseling and psychological services, student health services, and services regarding international students and scholars. Alice experienced depression during the pandemic and sought help from counseling and psychological services. She found it either hard to make an appointment with the service provider or the service was not sufficient to help them get out of the depression. For example, Alice acknowledged she received professional and helpful psychological counseling services; at the same time, she felt that the help was limited, and it seemed to her that "you feel the push, you feel they treat you tough. They do feel they are in hurry trying to solve your problem instead of slowing down and doing everything in the normal." Betty had a knee injury. She first found it hard to make an appointment with the student health service, and second, she didn't get an examination like an X-ray or MRI to accurately diagnose the symptoms. Because of that, she had to seek medical help from somewhere else. Opsy felt that the international students services could have done a better job of truly understanding the stress and needs of international students and showing more empathy to them based on their nationalities and specific needs.

In addition to the campus assistance facilities, one participant experiencing domestic violence reported her experience with off-campus assistance facilities. Since the on-campus psychological counseling service was too limited to help her out, she was referred to local community service. She said,

> They prepared me to face the emergency situation. They give certain stuff in a package and send it to my friend's home or somewhere that I can get easily reach out. And also by that time, I have to move out because of several very extreme situations. And they actually also helped me to seek off-campus or on-campus emergency housing. They also have a legal advocate that can support those living if they want to go for applying for a protection order or other things like pursuing divorce, something like that.

Experiences with Xenophobia, Harassment, or Discrimination

Experiences with xenophobia mostly happened to Chinese participants. No students reported harassment though one participant shared the experience of discrimination. For example, Alex, from Taiwan, shared a story about his Chinese friend, which terrified him. According to Alex, late at a night during the pandemic, when his friend was fueling the car at the gas station, he was suddenly attacked by two guys who choked his neck and hit him very hard.

Katty reported that she was excluded by another teaching assistant who took the leading role in their instructions. Because of that, she found,

> So students didn't see me as a person to trust. So they will not talk to me. They will ignore me; she (the other instructor)[1] will interrupt me when I was teaching. And so students perceive that and then they start commenting on my appearance or who I was or whatever.

Katty believed that the evaluation she received from students was unfair as they commented on her appearance and accent instead of the teaching effectiveness.

Additionally, over 10 participants mentioned the uncertainty and anxiety they experienced in July 2020 when the Trump administration issued the directive on July 6 that would ban international students from legally staying in the United States if they took all their classes online in the fall and spring semesters of 2020-2021 (American Council on Education, 2020). Though the directive was dropped on July 14th, it still caused fear, confusion, and apprehension among international students. For example, Opsy was concerned that she might be kicked out of the United States due to the directive, and all the efforts she put in years to pursue her advanced degree in her dream university would be in vain.

Resilience and Reflections

Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic to their life, study plans, health, and many more, international students at the university showed resilience, courage, and resolution through adaptation and self-reflection, which aligned with the findings by Xu and Zhao (2022). Most participants shared that overcame a lot of challenges they never experienced before. For example, Sam, from India, was allergic to certain things and needed allergy medicine regularly.

---

[1] The content in the parenthesis is supplemented by the authors based on the context of Katty's narration.

Because of the pandemic, she learned how to shift all of the in-person pick-ups to online deliveries and telemedicine, which she never experienced before. Alex, from Taiwan, who enrolled in the university in January 2021, never forgot the first few months of his American life when he had no car, and the pandemic made it very challenging to get help from people. He had to wait for buses on those freezing days to apply for his social security number, run errands, and go to in-person classes.

Many participants developed their own ways to live and study during the pandemic. For Betty, it was a regular workout and more communication and time spent with her partner. For Kir from India, it was more time to concentrate on himself, go to parks, and practice and improve his cooking skills. For Sam, it was jogging and running, drawing and sketching both on paper and digitally, and reading both textbooks and novels. For Eduardo, from Columbia, it was creating podcasts with their friends to share their life as international students and to go hiking in state parks as well.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

To conclude, international students had a generally positive experience during the pandemic, and they were satisfied with the protective measures the university administered. Despite all the disruptions, they showed resilience, adaptation, and growth in the new normal by developing their own ways of living and studying during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the pandemic experience for international students was also individualized, and everyone experienced the pandemic very differently because of their cultural, ethnic, and identity backgrounds. Such nuances deserve university administration and assistance units’ attention to the specific needs and challenges international students experience during the pandemic.

The results from both surveys and interviews provide the following implications for the university to consider supporting international students for a better sense of belonging and inclusiveness during crisis times. during uncertain times.

- Enhance support to graduate students with financial problems, especially those coming with their significant others and kids;
- Provide emergency housing and transitional housing for students who experience housing and financial problems;
- Make emergency funding and support resources more visible and accessible to international students;
- Offer recorded videos or workshops to help international students navigate, learn about, and utilize services like student health, psychological counseling, insurance, OPT, CPT etc;
- Given the increasing incidents of mental health issues, find ways to enlarge and improve the service of psychological counseling, like collaborating with local community service centers;
- Provide training to professors about the cultural and financial obstacles that are particular to international students.

REFERENCES

American Council on Education. (July 20, 2020). *The Trump administration said it will rescind its new rule barring international students from staying in the country if they take an entirely online course load this fall because of the pandemic*. https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/Trump-Administration-Withdraws-Directive-Banning-International-Students.aspx

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Gao, N., Eissenstat, S. J., Wacha-Montes, A., & Wang, Y. (2022). The experiences and impact on wellness among international students in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of American College Health*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2052077

Hegarty, N. (2014). Where we are now – the presence and importance of international students to universities in the United States. *Journal of International Students 4*(3), 223-235.

Honegger, M. & Honegger R. (2020). The lived experiences of international Students in Higher education during COVID-19. *Research Issues in Contemporary Education, 5*(3), 72-93.

Ma, H., & Miller, C. (2021). Trapped in a double bind: Chinese overseas student anxiety during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Health Communication, 36*(13), 1598–1605.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher, 36*(7), 388–400. https://doi. org/10.3102/0013189X07309471

Nam, B. H., Marshall, R. C., Tian, X., & Jiang, X. (2021). "Why universities need to actively combat Sinophobia": Racially-traumatic experiences of Chinese international students in the United States during COVID-19. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 1–15.

Office of International Students and Scholars. (2022). *International Students and Scholars Enrollment & Statistical Report*.

https://www.purdue.edu/IPPU/ISS/_documents/EnrollmentReport/iss_statisticalreportfall22.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Siczek, M. (2020). International student agency in the face of a global health crisis. *Journal of International Students, 10*(4), vii–ix. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i4.2424

Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal, 11*(2), 63–75. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ1102063

Thorson, A. R., Doohan, E.-A. M., & Clatterbuck, L. Z. (2021). Living abroad during Covid-19: International students' personal relationships, uncertainty, and management of health and legal concerns during a global pandemic. *Journal of International Students, 12*(3). https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12i3.3613

Wang, B. (2022). Time, temporality, and (im)mobility: Unpacking the temporal experiences among Chinese international students during the COVID-19. *Population, Space and Place, 28*(5). https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2545

Wang, Y. (2021). Stay in the United States or return to China. In K. Bista, R. M. Allen, & R. Y. Chan, *Impacts of COVID-19 on International Students and the Future of Student Mobility* (1st ed., pp. 14–27). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003138402-2

Xu, J., & Zhao, X. (2022). Coping with the 'double bind' through vlogging: Pandemic digital citizenship of Chinese international students. *Continuum, 36*(2), 260–273.

Yu, J. (2021). Caught in the middle? Chinese international students' self-formation amid politics and pandemic. *International Journal of Chinese Education, 10*(3), 221258682110589. https://doi.org/10.1177/22125868211058911