

**Thematic Report for Session # 13**  
“U of L International Experiences; Internationalization of our Campus ”  
February 23, 2023

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## **CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS**

### **Culture Shock**

- Food, language, different way of academics, education, grading- the university system could be different than what a student is used to. Adapting to a different way of doing everything.
- Not used to such positive affirmations and faculty being so supportive and care about mental, psychological well-being and get this much attention.
- International students come from completely different cultural backgrounds, students coming from Europe or Asia to other parts of the world, some may come from cultures where it's quite conservative and for example, LGBTQ+ community is treated differently in their countries and here it is different.

### **Practical Issues**

- Transportation – it's difficult for new international students to buy things or travel
- Cars; it's difficult for new international students to get one and getting to campus and getting groceries.
- Difficult to get things done like get their SSN, bank account and can only rent [an apartment] if they have both.

### **Fear of assimilating, microaggressions and racial/ethnic harassment**

- Chinese students have fear of joining Chinese student organizations, fearing the Chinese government could infiltrate, track their actions/comments.
- How can we help international students, especially those who are recognized as POC, navigate such situations without infantilizing them, frightening them, or removing their autonomy? One of the things that is a bit difficult to convey to our international members is how to deal with hostile incidents. Students get confused by messages from the outside public that say that they need to get back to their countries. If they personally don't express that they feel uncomfortable with certain statements/actions from others, then it's not US domestic students to say otherwise. They recognize the hostility and were unsure how to cope.
- Countries where students have been a majority with culture and language come here and become a minority and have to adjust to that. An example would be seeing the racial injustice that happens based on skin color and see all the trauma associated with it when Breonna Taylor got shot or with Trayvon Martin or similar such incidents throughout the country. We need help, counseling, and other support for these students, staff and faculty. How can we create an environment where one feels safe, become more culturally aware, inclusive, which also helps adapt to a new culture.

### **Work place climate in the International Center**

- 60% turnover in the International Center since August 2022?; atmosphere of bullying that hasn't been addressed, microaggressions and disparaging other's racial identities;
- Successful internationalization is not just student services. Its faculty support (for teaching and research abroad), international partnership building, and curriculum building (to name a few). UofL's structure of the IC under student affairs means that anything other than supporting current international students is overlooked, even though everything else filters down into student success.
- Similarly, faculty do not understand why the VPSA is the person who signs off on their travel appeals.

- Scholarship funding for students was swept in 2016. It's laughable when UofL puts increasing international and study abroad students on the strategic plan without reinstating this funding
- The Study Abroad office has had no full-time study abroad advisors since October 2022 (it's now the end of February 2023), and there has been no effort to replace these employees. It should be obvious that study abroad advisors are necessary for study abroad to happen and for students to feel supported as they plan their travel.
- The Student Affairs lens of internationalization at UofL also means that much of the international efforts on HSC go unsupported and unacknowledged.
- The International Center say they are interested in collaborating and inviting voices into the process, but as a faculty/staff with international experience, this has not often been the case as attempts by a few to be a part of the work are ignored or invalidated, which makes it difficult for people to be allies. One office cannot carry the load of internationalization, but the stewards must be willing to bring people into the fold to assist.

### **Student Expenses and Employment**

- Currently, not many opportunities for financial support or scholarships for international students. It's more expensive to come here and they pay out of state fees.
- Are international students allowed to work for UPS to gain the tuition incentive they provide? Usually the hours are 4-5 daily, Monday - Friday which is about 20-25 hours per week. This is related to the visa and what is allowed.
- Travel grants – international center is working on a process to apply and get a travel grant. There needs to be a step based on need.
- Have exchange programs with universities abroad and have exchange agreements, have a flow with both sides.
- With panama, money that is generated is used to help underwrite some expenses with study abroad.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Training and Education**

- Training and certification for international student allies. Educate them about the immigration rules and regulations.
- Have training/education for them [international students] to help them be open, mindful and assimilate into the campus culture. Include campus police in orientations.
- Training and resources for admins: Chairs, DUGs and DGSs in departments. This would improve the knowledge of international students' situations and international programs.
- We need to have these discussions [awareness and education] outside with a broader audience and not just with the people already a part of these organizations.
- Educate on micro aggressions; accents for example, how students from Europe vs students from Asia or Africa or south or Latin America are treated and lack of knowledge and awareness.
- We should use the curiosity that can lead to inappropriate comments at our advantage, creating safe and appropriate spaces for sharing stories, experiences and even answer questions, but under the guidance of a cultural mediator or someone with some intercultural competencies who can make the conversation not only informative, but educational. As someone said yesterday, the purpose of this institution is education and we shouldn't miss the chance to fulfill this purpose also internally.
- Have conversations with campus police and international students, students come from countries where there is mistrust with law enforcement. Maybe include campus police in orientation and have the conversations.

## Allies, Ambassadors and Advocacy

- International students need to have someone to help them organize things such as getting their SSN card, opening a bank account, etc. because those things are needed in order to rent an apartment.
- Recommend that the university create support groups that have mentors that help students, staff and faculty based on their region and cultures. Create Ambassadors – to help students get their foot on the ground, based on specific regions and cultures. Same goes for staff and faculty.
- Need real intentional connection between faculty who are international with students who are international. Faculty who have been abroad are included more in this than the international faculty themselves and are in advisory roles. Be intentional in training advisors, faculty, chairs about students who come in from other countries and include the international faculty, staff, students themselves so that they can identify.
- A sense of belonging and concerns regarding inclusion cannot be addressed solely by the Cultural and Equity Center. We have to adopt the philosophy that we are all in this together and have a responsibility for creating a positive climate for our students. It's got to be more than international center or cultural center, it has to be the whole campus.
- More investment in the infrastructure for international students.
- We need to recognize international students and provide more support and make U of L more competitive to get that well qualified student population.
- Service Learning programs fall under student affairs and study abroad is under a different part of university, the educational part of university. Maybe both should be under the provost, bring them together especially when educational or pedagogical issues are brought up.
- Students coming in internationally, are contributing to the whole economy not just the university. It's a win for whole community, maybe more support from the city, state. We ought to be doing more as we rank last against our benchmark institutions. We need intentionality, resource allocation for increasing international student population and sustaining it.
- Report incidents of aggression to the graduate school, or the cultural center; The more we communicate, the more the awareness and the need to address. Are there places to where the faculty and staff can turn to deal with international issues?
- In order to create a healthy culture of equity and fairness, the university needs to address toxic situations and advocate for policies that fill the gaps between healthy workplaces and things that are grievable. Hopeful that the voice of this Commission can address these concerns.
- Make the new president aware of the deep dysfunction in the International Center and the tolerance for such behavior in Student Affairs.

## Community Engagement

- Community networks that can support different groups; more exchanges - student and faculty - to build social networks, cultural understandings that will build on themselves. Working with countries, like our Panama, partnership is one good model for example. This would be a more back and forth flow as well as establish better networks!
- Louisville holds a Worldfest in the city. Perhaps the university could partner with the city and hold something similar for international students on campus.
- Louisville is an inclusive city especially with refugees, the university needs to be reflective of those values. Doing more of these, listen and learns for cultural awareness. Bring the international of Louisville community to campus to assist students with cultural adjustments. Collaborating with international communities in Louisville for students.