The International Student Journey in the United States and The Netherlands: A Comparative Analysis

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Executive Summary

A rapidly globalizing world has facilitated greater cultural and educational exchange among the countries of the world. The number of students studying in higher education institutions outside of their home countries is escalating. This number has increased three-fold during the past decade, reaching a total of more than 3 million studying overseas. As governments begin to appreciate both the economic and cultural benefits and the challenges of increasing foreign student populations, recruitment and welcoming efforts, community enrichment programs, and retention initiatives are also growing.

The clients studied by our team are a part of the community of educators and implementers of international exchanges. The members of this team collaborated with and conducted extensive quantitative and qualitative research on two clients: the International Student House (ISH) based in Washington, D.C. and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) in The Hague, The Netherlands. These two clients served as case studies from which best practices in creating a sense of welcome for international visitors from the moment of arrival, promoting community integration and encouraging alumni retention, were derived. Personal interactions with international students/residents, administrators as well as government officials provided valuable perspectives on the successes and difficulties participants encountered when working with international students in these reputable international education institutions in Washington, D.C. and The Hague, The Netherlands.
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INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, the international student population in the United States has increased by 40%. In 2012/2013 alone, there were 819,644 international students in the United States, contributing a total of over 24 billion dollars to its economy. Globally, student mobility has also grown significantly as technology and globalization create more porous borders between nations. In The Netherlands, one of the countries studied for this research project, the international student population is at an all-time high of 87,100: about 11% of its national student population enrolled in a higher education institution.

Now, more than ever, international education institutions receiving these international visitors must ensure that quality support services and alumni retention initiatives are in place to fully reap the economic, social and cultural benefits of this unique population. The team of four research consultants was tasked with researching the International Student Journey: from the moment of arrival to the host institution/country and the perceived sense of welcome; to enrichment activities and resources contributing to community integration; and finally, to short and long term alumni retention efforts. The researchers conducted quantitative and qualitative research on two clients: the International Student House (ISH) based in Washington, D.C. and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) in The Hague, The Netherlands. The main goal of this research project is to identify best practices with enrichment and welcome programs for international students in the United States and The Netherlands and to discover what practices throughout the life cycle of the international student--from their recruitment, to their arrival, throughout the duration of their stay, and finally to their post-program experiences--serve to create a bond between the student and the host country/institution. Personal interactions with international students/residents, administrators as well as government officials provided valuable perspectives into the successes and difficulties participants face in these existing reputable exchange programs in Washington, D.C. and The Hague, The Netherlands.

The deliverables for The Hague University of Applied Sciences include a written report. The report will provide key findings, an extensive literature review, and short and long-term recommendations to improve student satisfaction in non-academic aspects of their study abroad experience, such as feeling welcome in the Dutch community. The researchers also include suggestions for how to enhance the structural bonding with the host institution, city and The Netherlands as a country. Finally, comparative recommendations are provided.

For the research team’s Washington, D.C. based client, the International Student House, the deliverables are two-fold: first, an oral presentation supplemented with print handouts was delivered to staff and 30 members of the International Student House Board of Directors; second, a full written report with key research findings, a literature review, and short and long term implementable recommendations and best practices for enhancing the quality of support services and alumni engagement and retention efforts will be provided.

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2 Ibid.
**CLIENT BACKGROUND**

**International Student House**

The first client serving as a case study in the research is International Student House in Washington, D.C., USA (ISH D.C.). It is part of International Houses Worldwide, a global network of 15 affiliated ‘I-Houses’ in five different countries and three continents, North America, Europe, and Australia, whose stated mission is to “provide students of different nationalities and diverse cultures with the opportunity to live and learn together in a community of mutual respect, understanding and international friendship.” The I-House movement originated over a century ago, in 1910, when a missionary in Philadelphia, Dr. Waldo Stevenson, founded the first International House after seeing that foreign students arriving in the United States to study at universities were facing difficulties finding adequate housing. The movement expanded over the next few decades, with International Houses established in New York (1924), Paris (1925), Berkeley (1930), and Chicago (1932).

ISH DC was founded in 1936 by a small group of Quakers who wanted to help promote peace and cross-cultural understanding during a tumultuous time period. By founding a house where people of all races and ethnicities were welcome, they also played a role combating the segregation that was rampant in Washington, DC. During that time, restaurants, hotels and boarding houses were closed to people of color. ISH DC moved to its current location in the Tudor-designed Demarest Lloyd family home on R Street in 1946. An adjacent second building, Van Slyck Hall, was built in 1967 to double the capacity of ISH to 60 residents, and a nearby third building was purchased in 1987, which brought the capacity to 100 residents.

ISH DC’s mission is to provide “an interactive and supportive living environment” for international students, interns, and scholars. The House “promotes inter-cultural dialogue, encourages life-long connections, and fosters global citizenship.” ISH DC achieves its mission through a unique mix of programming including social events, guest speakers, and lectures as well as the exceptional residential experience.

**The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

The second client serving as a case study for the research is The Hague University for Applied Sciences (THUAS) in The Hague, The Netherlands. Though its main campus is in the city of The Hague, since its inception in 1987, the university has expanded to include three additional campuses: Delft, Laan van Poot and Zoetermeer. THUAS has an enrollment of about 24,000 students, twelve percent of who are international (Making it in The Netherlands report). Given the international reputation of the city of The Hague and the international exchanges the

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6 Ibid.
university offers, THUAS has become known for its multicultural student population: around 146 nationalities are represented on campus. Over the past decade, internationalization has become a prominent characteristic of the institution.

The overall mission of the school is to provide high quality education and research. It consists of 14 different academies, offering 42 full-time undergraduate degrees, 21 part-time (nine taught in English) and 10 dual bachelors courses. Masters degrees are also offered, three of which are taught in the English language. There is also an option for international students to enroll in English Proficiency Training in its English Language Preparatory School on The Hague campus. Degrees are categorized into six main fields including: technology, innovation and society, public administration, law and security, management and organization, ICT and media, health and sport, economy and finance and welfare and education.

According to its website, “THUAS employs a workforce of over 1,932, of which 65% are employed as educators and 35% in supporting services.” Most academic programs have an Internship Coordinator responsible for employer relations and outreach, establishing job, internship opportunities, and research projects for students. The Internship Coordinators also work to match students’ skills and interests to employers’ needs. In the past, Internship Coordinators had full discretion about how to develop and maintain experiential education opportunities.

In the past year the University has decided to implement a strong internationalization policy that mandates the establishment of more standardized career services and resources for students by program. The university partners with public organizations, international institutions and local businesses as a means to link knowledge to practice. THUAS is considered by the Dutch to be an HBO, or an applied sciences school. This differs considerably from a WO, or a research university. While both offer an experiential education component, there is a misconception among students and employers in The Hague that HBO universities produce students who possess less desirable skills and preparation for the workforce after graduating.

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Public Diplomacy and International Students

On March 22, 2014, Michelle Obama “lauded study abroad as a key part of U.S. foreign policy” and encouraged students to embrace their role as citizen diplomats: “We believe that relationships between nations aren’t just about relationships between governments or leaders—they’re about relationships between people, particularly young people.” 12 Mrs. Obama acknowledged that students studying abroad serve as diplomats, indicating a connection between study abroad and public diplomacy.13 The definition of public diplomacy varies by country and scholar. Ambassador Edmund A. Gullion, credited with coining the term in the 1960s, defined it as the “the means by which governments, private groups, and individuals influence the attitudes and opinions of other peoples and governments in such a way as to exercise influence on their foreign policy decisions.”14 The Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy at Tufts University suggests that the today’s notion of public diplomacy has shifted beyond the exclusive domain of elected and appointed government officials to incorporate more key stakeholders.15

Acting Director of the Murrow Center, Crocker Snow, Jr., identified public diplomacy’s new stakeholders including, “the media, multinational corporations, NGOs and faith-based organizations as active participations in the field.”16 International students are important stakeholders, serving as unofficial diplomats from their home country and future ambassadors for their host countries. However, the extent nation-states recognize the importance of international students in public diplomacy varies and depends on the specific foreign policy climate.

Helena Finn’s article, “The Case for Cultural Diplomacy,” indicated the importance of international students in U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War era. Finn stated that, [U.S] “policymakers understood the link between engagement with foreign audiences and victory over ideological enemies and considered cultural diplomacy vital to U.S. national security.”17 Philip Altbach and Norman Uphoff’s 1973 book, The Student Internationals, described an era where the Soviet Union and the United States both valued international students as an important audience for public diplomacy outreach efforts. Exchanges helped international students gain training and experience to become “future diplomats or government officials.”18 In addition, international exchanges served to “influence future elites of various countries.”19 While Finn

13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
indicated that U.S. officials no longer placed the same value on international students in diplomacy and national security at the end of the Cold War, she advocated for their renewed role in fostering long-term, deeper understanding and favorable opinions of the United States. Yet the question remains as to when this resource for public diplomacy will be fully realized by the nation-state?

City Diplomacy and International Students

While public diplomacy has historically been the exclusive domain of nation-states, authors such as Michele Acuto, Ana Rold, Richard Faber and Benjamin Barber track the emergence of the city as a key player in global affairs. In fact, Benjamin Barber argued that the twenty-first century is the century of city diplomacy. In If Mayors Ruled the World, Barber suggested that nation-states thwart democracy’s globalization, inhibiting solidarity, creativity and cross-border collaboration. Barber looked to cities (such as Washington, D.C. or The Hague) because successful cities are ones that are “open, international, really promote tolerance and intercultural dialogue. Through this, they also promote creativity, promote opportunities to increase their exports, and have better chances to understand the culture of customers.” Thus cities, which house more than 78% of the developing world, are conduits for rewriting the social contract towards greater collaboration and pragmatism.

Cities foster a strong, networked civil society with “bottom-up citizenship.” Cities can make decisions and take action when states cannot. While cities cannot challenge the direct sovereignty of their nation state, their informal power can flourish, inspiring “neighborly affection, cross-border communication, trade, mobility and immigration,” [which they rely on for] their vitality and survival.” As a result, Barber stated, “to say that mayors should rule the world is really to say that citizens should rule the world.” Cities operate as another level in the diplomacy and foreign policy, moving citizens across borders, and engaging one another in sharing best practices needed to solve global problems. Evan Ryan, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, concurred, stating that “international education promotes the relationship building and knowledge exchange between people and communities in the United States and around the world that are necessary to solve global challenges.”

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20 Finn, 18.
22 Ibid., 3, 4.
23 Ibid., 104.
24 Ibid., 5.
25 Ibid., 6.
26 Ibid., 166.
27 Ibid., 300.
Economic Importance of International Students

Not only are international students a crucial part of global political citizenship and citizen diplomacy, but their economic significance has raised their importance on an international level. In fact, many scholars including, Nittaya Campbell, Charles-Toussaint and Crowson, Elizabeth Gareis, Ramia, Marginson and Sawir, Philip Altbach and Jane Knight, Vera Sheridan, Phil Vickers and Bahram Bekhradnia referenced the financial contribution and growing economic impact of international students. Vickers and Bekhradnia noted that international students’ economic contributions substantially outweigh the benefits international students receive from the subsidy provided by the UK taxpayers when attending university. They suggested that international students inject a net 3.74 billion pounds into the UK economy (in 2004-2005), making it one of the top export industries in the country. This contribution is calculated from tuition fees and living expenditures, but would increase when including the rise in GDP stemming from the presence of EU students who stay on to work after graduation. In addition, Vickers and Bekhradnia believed that non-EU students who stay on to work after graduation contribute at least one billion pounds per year. As a result, they argued that “it is clear that it is well worth maximizing the number of both EU and non-EU international students.” They go as far to suggest that if the UK wants to increase the number of international students, “it would be in the national interest to subsidise international students.”

While Vickers and Bekhradnia told an impressive story of economic impact, their numbers represent only a portion of the total number of international students. “Overall, the British Council sees the total international demand for higher education reaching 2.86 million students by 2020.” Ruby also indicated, “demand for English language-based post-secondary education is likely to increase by 750,000.” Because Ruby forecasts potential market saturation in Australia, UK visa and price constraints, and Canadian targets set to sustain market share, the market would be left open for the United States and other English-language providing countries (such as The Netherlands) to meet unmet demand in the next 10 years. However, policies would need to be designed in order to fully capture this economic possibility.

The United States is the largest recipient of international students hosting 819,644 students during the 2012-2013 academic-year. In addition, 283,000 Americans last year took advantage

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31 Vickers and Bekhradnia, 11.
32 Ibid., 18.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 “Press Release: Open Doors 2013 Open Doors 2013: International Students in the United States and Study Abroad by American Students are at All-Time High.”
of study abroad opportunities. While, these numbers seem large, international students make up only 4% of total U.S. student enrollment (undergraduates and graduates combined), compared to 15%, 21% and 8% of the UK, Australia, and Canada respectively. Nevertheless, “International students’ spending in all 50 states contributed approximately $24 billion to the U.S. economy” with China, India, South Korea and Saudi Arabia as the top countries of origin. However, the United States has a great deal more capacity to both attract foreign talent and send domestic students abroad.

The Netherlands meanwhile attracts approximately 87,100 international students, largely from Germany and China. Munch and Hoch’s “The Financial Impact of Cross-border Student Mobility on the Economy of the Host Country,” painted a more complicated economic picture. International students in The Netherlands pay about 11,400 euros per student per year for living costs, while contributing about 8,000 euros each to the economy. However, The Netherlands also spends about 11,200 euros per student in state expenditures to support higher education. As a result, “over the longer term there is a clear increase in the macro-economic returns. The annual level of long-term returns depends entirely on the number of international students who, once they have graduated, choose to remain in a host country and pursue gainful employment.”

With a 30% retention rate of international students, it would take 6.5 years of working in order to pay off the government’s investment. As a result, the more international students that The Netherlands can keep for long-term employment after graduation, the better the return on investment. Munch and Hoch found that each international student in The Netherlands leads to the creation of 0.15 jobs. In addition, Munch and Hoch total the aggregate value added contributed by each graduate to around 74,000 euros.

Cultural Importance in a Global World

While the long-term economic benefit of international students can be enormous, economics represents only one part of the value added contribution of this population. Scholars such as Goodman, Brustein, Munch and Hoch and others demonstrated that the cultural value of the diversity added by international students should not be underestimated. The Open Doors 2013

41 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 “Key Figures: How Many International Students are there in Holland?” NUFFIC (4 October 2013), http://www.studyinholland.nl/education-system/key-figures
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 11.
50 Ibid., 8.
51 Ibid., 9.
Press Release indicated that “International students enrich classrooms, campuses and communities in ways that endure long after students return to their home countries.”

IIE President Dr. Allan Goodman stated that international students do a great deal to help domestic students “understand the cultural differences and historical experiences that divide us, as well as the common values and humanity that unite us.”

William Brustein described an internationalized classroom that breaks disciplinary boundaries, and promotes holistic learning with “new and specialized forums for discussions” in order to better address global “causes, consequences, and search for solutions.” Furthermore, Brustein observed the pressing need for greater foreign language learning. Munch and Hoch demonstrated the possibility of cross-border knowledge transfer, including the development of multicultural competencies crucial for the global workforce, and movement towards understanding and breaking down prejudices.

Brustein emphasized this cultural contribution demonstrating that the “inadequate cross-cultural training of employees in U.S. companies results annually in an estimated $2 billion in losses.”

With international student flows generally flowing only in one direction, either sending or receiving, international students bring “the global” to domestic students who either cannot afford to study abroad or have not yet recognized its value. The development of cross-border international networks promotes more collaboration, better understanding, and perhaps even future long-term “intensified economic relations among participating countries.”

While international students bring a wide range of social, cultural and economic benefits, Moorhead Kennedy, a hostage of the 1979 takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, reminds us of the consequences of inadequate international exchanges. In his account of the takeover, Kennedy’s captors, student revolutionaries, studied at Georgetown and UC Berkeley. He noted how international exchange had failed to elicit understanding and collaboration, only providing proximity. As a result, Kennedy stated,

We have in the foreign student community in this country something that could be a terrible time bomb or a tremendous source of international understanding—both in what they come to know about us and in what American students learn from them. We are training a generation not only of foreign leaders but of American leaders, and it is terribly important therefore that our foreign students not be isolated, that they mix, form a part of the community of universities where they are studying, for their sake, but even more for our own.

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52 Ibid., 11.
53 “Press Release: Open Doors 2013 Open Doors 2013: International Students in the United States and Study Abroad by American Students are at All-Time High.”
55 Munch and Hoch, 11.
57 Munch and Hoch, 11.
The International Student Journey

Recruitment

Recruitment may be one of the most-researched subjects related to international students because of the many countries and institutions attempting to maximize their benefit. A Google Scholar search for “recruitment of international students” yields more than 379,000 results. Emerging economies with less developed higher education sectors have more money to spend in order to send their students abroad. Oil rich economies such as Saudi Arabia seek to build a knowledge economy encouraging students to go abroad to diversify their skills. In addition, as the global skills race and the fight for foreign talent heats up, more countries seek students interested in science, technology, engineering and math. This race for foreign talent has been exacerbated by the global recession, which has encouraged higher education institutions to seek higher fee-paying foreign students. As a result, universities are ramping up their efforts to attract international students.

Scholars researching recruitment tend to look at topics including: “push and pull factors” influencing student choice, market orientation, institutional readiness, commercialization of education, consumer orientation of students, competitiveness of students, regional targets, pricing, most effective mechanisms, ethics and more (Vik Naidoo, Felix Maringe, Stephen Wilkins and others). For example, Felix Maringe’s “University and course choice: Implications for positioning, recruitment, and marketing,” found that university students are making employment and career prospects paramount, with program and price also weighing heavily into their decision.\(^{59}\)

In addition, Luis Fernando Angulo-Ruiz and Albena Pergelova found that institutional image and reputation will be a factor for recruitment and retention because “external prestige has the strongest impact on students’ supportive attitudes such as pride, belonging and trust towards the institution.”\(^{60}\) Thus, clear expectations will be critical to building the foundation for international student bonding with their new host institution.

Arrival and Beyond

While orientation and welcome stage technically begin with the initial point of contact and information sharing, how students are treated when they arrive to the host country plays an important role in making students feel welcome. Jinghua Deng Meyer’s “A Conceptual Framework for Comprehensive International Student Orientation Programs,” stated, “international student orientation is crucial to international students’ transition and is a significant part of a multi-faceted approach to their retention.”\(^{61}\) Meyer believed that orientation

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programs should be comprehensive. Meyers advocated for orientation programming that integrates institutional mission, students’ personal growth and adjustment challenges, cross-cultural education, and human development.\(^62\) Meyer noted seven common needs for international students: “cross-cultural adjustment, adjustment to host country’s educational system and achieving academic success, establishing language proficiency, establishing interpersonal relationships and social support networks, maintaining physical and psychological well being, managing finances, and knowing immigration regulations.”\(^63\) Lauren Boston, and Franklin Obeng-Ôdoom add access to affordable housing as an eighth need, which varies depending on specific host country context. Nevertheless, housing is a challenge experienced by those studying in Australia, and The Netherlands among others.\(^64\) While we will explore international challenges further in the next section, it is important that orientation address the wide range of needs. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs suggests that physiological needs and safety needs must be addressed before addressing needs such as belonging, esteem and self-actualization (although all should be given attention).\(^65\) As a result, orientation should not be a one-time event, but a process starting with “pre-departure orientation, arrival orientation, ongoing orientation, and returning orientation.”\(^66\)

Meyers categorized each stage of orientation: (1) pre-departure orientation works to reduce anxiety and possible culture shock providing information relevant to meeting basic needs including the kinds of documents to bring, how to get on campus, how to find a place to live, how to register, how to set up a bank account and so forth; (2) arrival orientation emphasizes how to get “physically situated and psychologically prepared” for education and life: introducing international students to community resource people, making them aware of culture adjustment, campus adjustment and a new education system; (3) Ongoing orientation addresses the U-curve adjustment, with initial optimism and excitement followed by frustration and at times negative feelings towards the host culture; ongoing orientation provides strategies and skills to handle long-term needs and new situations, including how to balance life in a new culture an immigration requirements; finally, (4) returning orientation focuses on strategies handling the shock of returning home (or transitioning to work if they are remaining in the host country), generating awareness of personal growth, and reconciling changes in thinking and behaviors with home expectations.\(^67\) Such a comprehensive orientation requires a “total campus commitment to process and results” with adequately trained staff and collaboration between departments, faculties, offices and community partners.\(^68\) Moreover, Meyers stated that evaluation should be a necessary component that proves that orientation is meeting its goals and international students’ needs.\(^69\)

\(^{62}\) Ibid.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., 57-60.
\(^{65}\) Meyer, 59-61.
\(^{66}\) Ibid., 66-69.
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 66-69.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 64.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., 65.
Impact of Housing

The impact of housing on international students has not garnered the same level of scholarly attention, unless it is in countries such as Australia and The Netherlands, who suffer from an affordable housing shortage. Lubell & Brannan, Phibbs & Young, and Obeng-Odoom have drawn a critical link between housing and obtaining a quality education.\textsuperscript{70} Foubert, Tepper & Morrison argued that, “the quality of the physical environment and the social relationships developed in student houses have a significant impact on how satisfied students are with their university education.”\textsuperscript{71} Paltridge, Mayson & Schapper suggested that housing contributes to one’s sense of security, as well as the aforementioned development of social networks.\textsuperscript{72} As a result, Franklin Obeng-Odoom argued that unless Australia can immediately address the shortage of affordable housing, it will “undermine the quality of higher education” and internationalization efforts.\textsuperscript{73} In addition, The Netherlands is in a very similar situation with both NUFFIC and the Class of 2020 calling for joint partnerships and action on improving student housing.\textsuperscript{74} In fact, NUFFIC identified housing as a key issue for both local and international students, identifying a possible shortage of 33,000 units by 2020.\textsuperscript{75}

Currently, the University of Sydney is comprised of 20% international students from 134 different countries. The University has “six types of accommodations such as rental accommodations (including shared houses, flats, units or apartments, boarding houses, or hostels); on-campus accommodation colleges [including an International Student House], off campus purpose-built accommodation, home stay, backpackers’ residences; and rooming accommodation in family houses.”\textsuperscript{76} In addition, the University of Sydney compiles all housing information into the University of Sydney Accommodation Information Service Database advertising vacancies in both university and private off-campus housing.\textsuperscript{77} While the University does have an international student officer who can advise students about housing, only 7% of students found housing through the university accommodation service.\textsuperscript{78} Instead students opted for information from friends, other international students, newspapers and both formal and informal advertisements.\textsuperscript{79}

Obeng-Odoom and Lauren Boston indicated common housing challenges faced by international students including: affordability and availability of housing, wrongful eviction, wrongful charges for repairs, unexpected rent increases, onerous tenancy agreements, failure to provide receipts of payments or contracts, internet scams, complicated paperwork and payments, language barriers, 

\textsuperscript{70} Obeng-Odoom, 201.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Obeng-Odoom, 203.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 205.
and failures to return deposits. Thus, it is not surprising that 84% of Australian international students are dissatisfied with their housing experience; in fact, 38% of Australian international students cite the house hunt as the “most unsatisfying experience at university.” Moreover, The Netherlands has some additional challenges with a very regulated private housing market. So what can be done?

Obeng-Odoom advocated for a holistic approach placing the housing problem “as a symptom and a cause of economic disadvantage.” The housing issue requires more than building additional affordable, quality housing, but also involves policy changes revising visa restrictions for work, raising student stipends, regarding international students as local students for fee purposes, and providing space on campus for international students during their first year. For countries like The Netherlands with no historical tradition of on-campus accommodations, they tend work with third party partners such as DUWO, and The Student Hotel. Perhaps, they will look to implement international best practices to find the best fit for international student challenges. In particular, “Making it in The Netherlands” suggested experimentation with various types of mixed housing to improve the interaction between Dutch and international students. In addition, the Class of 2020 indicates that American housing counterparts, that blend learning and residential opportunities, may be of interest to Dutch providers.

Challenges Faced by International Students

Another well-researched topic of the field is the challenges faced by international students studying abroad. Hayes and Heng-Rue, Day & Hajj, Heikinheimo & Shute, Meloni, Pedersen, Andrade & Evans, Brown and Holloway, Pritchard and Skinner, Ramia, Marginson and Sawir, Boston, Sheridan, Obeng-Odoom, Verbik and Lasanowsi, Mamiseishvili, Lacina and many others tackle the array of problems faced by international students. Common problems include: academic, personal and social problems, loss of shared identity, need for new support systems, communication problems, language proficiency, discrimination, isolation, financial concerns, challenges forming friendships, physical and psychosocial health concerns, access to affordable housing, access to work, gaps in institutional support and more.

Richard Hayes, and Lin Heng-Rue highlighted that although many campuses and higher education institutions intend to provide a supportive and welcoming environment, the “actual cultural context” frequently generates “stress, depression, fear and pessimism. [As a result.] In the growing number of studies on bicultural adjustments, social concern has been identified as one of the biggest problems for international students.” Jan Guidry Lacina concurred, stating that when students move to a new country, they experience loss of native social networks that

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81 Ibid., 211.
82 Ibid.
84 Obeng-Odoom, 213.
85 Ibid., 214.
supported them socially and academically; often they feel lonely and have challenges communicating in a new host culture.\textsuperscript{88} Proficiency in the host culture’s language is identified as the primary factor in social adjustment and interaction.\textsuperscript{89} However, Hayes and Heng-Rue have identified additional inhibitors and stimulators that affect international students involvement with host society including: (1) inhibitors: “cultural aspects, personal characteristics, academic concerns and perceived discrimination;” (2) stimulators: “willingness to learn about another culture, opportunities to learn English, and common interests.”\textsuperscript{90} Moreover, (3) individual personal traits such as “shyness, loneliness, low self-esteem, pessimistic, cynical attitudes, racial background, and negative stereotypes” also play a role in successful cross-cultural interactions.\textsuperscript{91}

Social networks are also important for academic support and integration.\textsuperscript{92} However, Bochner, Hutnick & Furnham, and Furnham & Alibhai suggested that contact between international students and domestic students are limited.\textsuperscript{93} While international students compensate with strong bonds with other international students and “in-group oriented ethnic communities,” the in-group communities may work to further isolate international students.\textsuperscript{94} Hayes and Heng-Rue noted that relationships with host nationals are important and desired by international students. However, they found that generally host students do not make themselves available enough to create meaningful friendships, and can oftentimes be culturally insensitive to the needs of international students.\textsuperscript{95} Thus, more needs to be done to activate domestic and international student bonding and integration.

International students adapt to social and cultural integration in different ways. Jean Russell, Doreen Rosenthal and Garry Thomson identified three different patterns of adaptation in Australian universities: “positive and connected (58.8% of students), unconnected and stressed (34.4%), and distressed and risk-taking (6.7%).”\textsuperscript{96} Most of their students revealed constructive and positive coping with their new environment. Russell et al felt others should not be a surprised because many international students are “among the brightest and best,” with the skills and strategies to be successful.\textsuperscript{97} Those who fell within the “unconnected and stressed” and ‘distressed and risk-taking’ tended to internalize negative feelings and distress (1/3 of respondents) or directed their distress outwards in negative ways (6.7%).”\textsuperscript{98}

Lorraine Brown and Immy Holloway categorized the adjustment journey of students at an English university as a “dynamic and multifaceted process, fluctuating throughout the sojourn as

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{88} Jan Guidry Lacina, “Preparing International Students for a Successful Social Experience in Higher Education,” \textit{New Directions for Higher Education} 117 (Spring 2002): 21, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Richard Hayes and Lin Heng-Rue, “Coming to America,” 7.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
a result of a host of individual, cultural and external factors.”99 They identified three stages of the journey including:

(1) “minimizing stress, and choosing segregation” in order to handle the distress of culture shock; (2) “confronting stress, choosing a multiculturalism path,” which is aided by stronger communication skills, daily competence, new self-understanding, and identity shifting; and finally (3) “belonging nowhere, being marginalized,” which generally occurs at re-entry, adjusting to home expectations, and minimizing difference associated with cultural learning and shifts in identity.100

Thus, depending on where international students are in the adjustment journey, they will need different types of interventions; which raises the question of how best to help a population that typically tends to underutilize counseling support?101

**Retention**

Now that the reader has explored the variety of challenges international students face, it is important to understand why it matters. Why does it matter if an international student does not feel welcome, has a hard time making friends, feels discrimination or dislikes their housing situation? Ramia, Marginson and Sawir suggested that institutions have an ethical responsibility to serve international students’ well being over concerns about global market share.102 “In both staff and student data, a key theme lies in the conceptual differences between pastoral care, consumer protection for market maintenance and welfare, and the notion that students may be deserving of protections that are either not inherent or not currently enforceable.”103 Thus, the international student journey is filled with interventions that institutions need to properly implement in order to mitigate challenges that influence the overall outcome of the abroad experience.

Dissatisfied international students affect the host country’s global market share. Students who are unhappy do not stay, removing their financial contribution to the institution and the country. Verbik, Line and Lasanowski suggested that the “savvy customer seeks out knowledge from the current generation of overseas students, through ‘word of mouth’ and Internet forums.”104 As a result, negative experiences migrate through family and friend networks reducing future interest in studying at the host institution or the destination country. Furthermore, Gary Shapiro indicated that “immigrants are responsible for creating more than 40 percent of the current Fortune 500 companies,” including AT&T, eBay, Google, SanDisk, Sun, Qualcomm and Yahoo.105 Thus, a

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100 Ibid., 245.
102 Ramia, Marginson, and Sawir, 96.
103 Ibid., 91.
former dissatisfied international student who becomes head of his or her own alternative energy company, will have diminished interest in collaborating with a country that provided such an unwelcoming, negative experience. As a result, the dissatisfied international student could translate into both a short-term and long-term losses for the host economy. Furthermore, in extreme cases, as mentioned by Moorhead Kennedy, there are examples of international students spearheading acts of violence or joining in extremist behavior that rejects the institution or country that treated them poorly. However, little research has been done that fully captures the long-term impact of a failed international exchange.

Nevertheless, there is research that suggests best practices for encouraging retention. Andrade and Evans demonstrated that retention is “a complicated, confusing, and context dependent issue.” Practices to mitigate the challenges of cultural, social and academic adaptation are an important piece to the puzzle. However, Ketevan Mamiseishvili noted that as of 2009 “only two studies focused on international student persistence and identified factors that influence their decision to persist or depart from the institution (e.g., Andrade 2006-2007, 2008; Kwai 2009).” Kwai’s 2009 Dissertation, “Model of International Student Persistence: Factors Influencing Retention of International Undergraduate Students at Two Public Statewide Four-Year University Systems,” indicated “only academic achievement was consistently shown to have a statistically significant and positive effect on persistence into the second year of international students in this study.” Other variables were “either unclear or inconsistent;” however, Kwai stated that “spring semester GPA, credit hours attempted, and on-campus employment all have a positive effect on retention into the second year of international undergraduates.”

Nevertheless, Andrade and Evans found additional factors that support retention: (1) “family and peers are important to academic achievement or failure;” (2) “having a vision, a clear goal, or lack thereof can be a powerful influence towards academic success or failure;” (3) “support provided by spiritual moorings,” and (4) “knowledge of how to structure responsibility.” In addition, there are two specific practices that are interesting to retention that can also be to help facilitate structural bonding to the city and country: volunteerism and employment.

Engaging Alumni

The final piece of the puzzle in the international student journey is engaging international students as alumni. How can institutions and countries tap into the students that they invested in and trained to cross cultures, integrate into society and build personal and professional networks? How can alumni continue to serve as ambassadors for their institutions and the country as a whole? What best practices will encourage long-term structural bonding with both institutions and communities that will increase the international student’s desire to stay?

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109 Ibid.
110 Andrade and Evans, 66.
NUFFIC clearly stated, “the best time to start building a relationship with your alumni is when they are still students.”\textsuperscript{111} Thus, all stages of the international student journey lead up to the moment when they become alumni, with the potential to give time and resources back to the host country and higher education institutions. However, Heike Alberts and Helen Hazen found differences in international students’ migration intentions and “stay rates.”\textsuperscript{112} They found that stay rates are influenced by both discipline and nationality. Science and engineering disciplines were more conducive to longer-term retention, with economics and social sciences the lowest.\textsuperscript{113} However, such preferences may reflect the country’s structural frameworks for employment visas and market demand. In addition, Chinese students and Indian students were found to be the populations most likely to stay in the United States, with stay rates of 96\% and 85\% respectively.\textsuperscript{114} Nevertheless, “irrespective of nationality, it appears that professional factors typically form the strongest arguments to stay in the United States, while personal and societal factors speak strongly in favour of returning to the home country.”\textsuperscript{115}

Personal factors include: “the desire to be near family, the desire to have a fulfilling career, the need for friends with whom they feel they have something in common, and the existence of a large group of people with similar cultural background and language that can support them?” Societal factors include: “family values, home culture, physical distance from the home country, economic circumstances of the home country, perceived degree of freedom, political stability and more.” Thus, Alberts and Hazen suggested that the discussion of international student migration must include the “macrolevel constraints imposed by the political and economic characteristics of both countries.”\textsuperscript{116} Such a holistic approach could be more conducive to tapping into the international student population in the United States and The Netherlands with high interest in remaining permanently after graduation (70\%).\textsuperscript{117}

Finally, what is it that alumni want? What kinds of activities do they find particularly engaging? The Holland Alumni Barometer is a part of a study about the “needs and wishes of Holland alumni,” utilizing 3,296 responses from alumni in 21 countries.\textsuperscript{118} The report importantly identified that the degree of connectedness, and desired alumni activities varies by country.\textsuperscript{119} Such findings indicate the importance of customizing one’s alumni approach by country and life phase, with a special focus on recipients of scholarships.\textsuperscript{120} The Holland Alumni Barometer demonstrated a need for greater awareness about alumni activities and the networks themselves, whether online or in-person.\textsuperscript{121} Alumni’s preferred means of communication was monthly email,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{111} "Welcoming Future Alumni," NUFFIC (October 2013).
  \bibitem{112} Heikie Alberts and Helen Hazen, “There are always two voices: International Students Intentions to Stay in the United States or to Return to their Home Countries.” \textit{International Migration} 43.3 (2005): 133.
  \bibitem{113} Alberts and Hazen, 133.
  \bibitem{114} Ibid.
  \bibitem{115} Ibid., 149.
  \bibitem{116} Ibid., 150.
  \bibitem{117} Nunes and Arthur; NUFFIC
  \bibitem{119} Ibid., 4, 24.
  \bibitem{120} Ibid., 24.
  \bibitem{121} Ibid., 4.
\end{thebibliography}
with additional preference for an electronic newsletter, and some social media.\textsuperscript{122} Printed newsletters and magazines were also of interest (quarterly), with a desire for annual events and site visits.\textsuperscript{123} Holland alumni indicated the highest level of interest in career related services, with lesser interest in general institutional or specific department connections.\textsuperscript{124} Alumni were also willing to connect with faculty or staff visiting their home countries, attend guest lectures, promote their institutions to prospective students and offer internships to current students.\textsuperscript{125} They noted willingness to write for alumni magazines or take the lead in organizing home country alumni activities.\textsuperscript{126} However, the willingness to donate, while present, was not pervasive outside the aforementioned scholarship groups.\textsuperscript{127} Thus, with the appropriate inside knowledge of alumni needs and wants, international alumni are ready and willing to take on customized, roles which are mutually beneficial to both their futures and the host institutions and countries that helped train them.\textsuperscript{128}

**Best Practices**

**Orientation**

Best practices highlighted for orientations include: mixed approaches with lecture, discussion, tour, film, and handouts; networking with current, experienced domestic and international students, and networking with local community.\textsuperscript{129} Meyers suggested “networking can make new students feel welcomed by the host country and help them to learn the new culture, social customs, behavior norms, and experience as well as practice cross-cultural interaction.”\textsuperscript{130} Furthermore, “experience has shown that when American hosts assist international students during the early, uncertain weeks of their stay in the United States, friendships become more enduring.”\textsuperscript{131} As a result, Meyers suggested institutions pair domestic and international students together even before new international students arrive with appropriate guidance and support of the relationship.

**Community Integration**

Lisa Moores and Natalee Popadiuk brought an interesting approach to adaptation by applying a positive psychology lens to cultural transition in order to understand how international students negotiate challenges successfully.\textsuperscript{132} Moores and Popadiuk identified eight categories of helpful factors that allowed students to turn challenges into critical incidents of change: “change and/or growth, social supporting/building relationships, learning to navigate the host culture, enjoyable

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 69, 71.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
activities outside of schoolwork, previous experiences and preparation, supportive faculty and staff, persevering through hard times, and a sense of belonging.”

Additional best practices highlighted by Moores and Popadiuk, Nancy Arthur, Volet and Ang, Janette Ryan, Meyer, and Nittaya Campbell in support of social and cultural adjustment include:

1. “Having support in place where they resided including roommates or peers in residence was reported as a significant asset and first social connection;”
2. The importance of peer support to help as a guide in cultural learning and academic differences;
3. “The importance of having a life outside of the student role” including leisure activities, hobbies, volunteer work, taking a part-time job in order to improve one’s English, learn about other cultures, make friends and enhance one’s quality of life;
4. Having a dedicated contact person providing institutional support for overwhelming and complex logistics and practical support of studying abroad. One designated person becomes like a surrogate parent, establishing trust and rapport with the international student.
5. Encourage students to stay connected to their roots with encouraging friends and family as support, connecting back with one’s cultural subgroup, which helps students balance their identity with new learning.
6. Provide opportunities for international students to educate others about one’s homeland and culture, igniting two-way cultural knowledge transfer.
7. For international students uncomfortable with counseling or advising services, provide opportunities for a safer group approach.
8. Provide integrated learning environments, with integrated group collaboration that avoids “ghettoization in cultural groupings;”
9. Need to train faculty with a new approach that “positions international students not as ‘problems’ to be solved, but as ‘assets’ to internationalization and the generation of new knowledge and new ways of working in the academy.”
10. Provide more events that allow for more domestic and international student integration including cultural coffee hours, international speakers, and academic and social workshops.

134 Ibid., 296-297.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., 298.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
11. Institute a buddy program between domestic students learning about cross-cultural competencies and international students allowing for more intentional contact and exchange, as well as promoting theoretical and practical application of knowledge.  
12. Provide ongoing psychological support as needed, including recognizing the importance of pre-departure support (as mentioned above).

**Housing**

As mentioned above, The International Student House (ISH) in Washington, D.C. has been providing an intentional international student housing experience since 1936, bringing international students (with a small portion of American students) to live together offering an “in-depth experiment in international living.” After serving, more than 10,000 young adults from over 130 countries, studying or interning in D.C., ISH has had more than 75 years to hone its experience. Catering to graduate students, interns and visiting scholars, the House promotes inter-cultural dialogue and exchange through pairing international roommates (intentionally from different countries and languages), bringing residents together for meals (including special Sunday family dinners and holidays), dialogue, educational programs, and activities that build community. Residents are encouraged to work with the Program Manager in order to “organize and lead activities that are fun, develop friendships and foster understanding, and a sense of community.” Residents are encouraged to share their culture with one another through this programming. English is the common language of the house and residents are given a maximum period of stay of two years for graduate students and one year for interns. Public spaces, such as common television areas, lounges, recreation room, lobby and the garden help create a family atmosphere. Residents tell stories of impact, including resident marriages. A Haitian alumnum from 1948-1948 who visited 48 years later stated, “I knew there was a part of me in this house, but when I walked in the door, I was now sure whether I would still find it. Now I know: it is still here. You may not see it, but part of my heart is still here.”

**Alumni Retention: Volunteerism/Community Engagement**

While the link between community engagement and international students has not been well researched, there is research that connects community engagement with retention of at-risk, minority students and others. Community engagement targets a core aspect of Tinto’s integration model, and Astin’s concept of involvement, which is the power of relationships. Andrade and Evans highlighted volunteerism or community service as “key to students’ success.”

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143 Meyer, 73, 74.  
145 Brown and Holloway, 246.  
148 Ibid.  
149 Ibid.  
150 Ibid.  
151 Feys, 34.  
152 Ibid.  
153 Ibid., 61.
and Evans stated, “Through [volunteering] they were exposed to other walks of life, gained discipline and confidence, improved their English skills, and formed higher expectations of themselves and what they could accomplish in life prior to this experience.” Macalester College in Minnesota utilizes community engagement in order to help teach students “how to be part of the community.”154 As part of orientation activities, Macalester College students participate in a half-day program called, “Into the Streets,” which sends twenty small groups to work on community projects, and listen to community speakers tell them about community assets, challenges and history.155

NAFSA’s “A Summary of Best Practices” compiled retention practices from 11 American campuses. Three campuses reference community engagement. Michigan State University highlights community engagement as part of their campus and community integration practices: “Work with partners and collaborators both on campus and in the community to help students become global citizens during their experience in the United States. Intentional programming and community outreach efforts help connect international students and scholars to resources on campus and in the community […]”156 In addition, Washington State University uses community engagement as a way to help international students learn more about American culture and network with peers that could help them in the academic sphere.157 Finally, the University of Portland provides a campus connector program, which matches international students to both the campus and community. Thus, volunteering and community engagement has a great deal of potential for improving community networks, building relationships, and bonding students to the community in a way that it makes them feel more at home.

Alumni Retention: Employment

Even for scholars like Kwai, who found only a small set of statistically significant retention practices, employment remains a key component to success. In addition, employment is a practice that works to provide long-term bonds with the city and host country. Its benefits should persuade host countries to rethink visa and work policies for international students.

It is interesting to note that the United States and The Netherlands approach international students’ employment from very different angles. The Netherlands appears to be years ahead in recognizing the importance and value of retaining international students, while the United States is conflicted about welcoming international students into employment. Darren Mayberry described how, particularly after September 11, 2001, the United States instituted very restrictive visa policies, including a policy requiring “non-immigrants to prove that they are not planning to stay within the United States.”158 Thus, the United States sends a mixed message to international students who are welcome to study, but not to remain for work, which is problematic in the fight for global talent.159 The main exception to this requirement is the STEM fields using the H-1B

155 Ibid.
157 Ibid.
159 Ibid.,338.
visa, which was capped with a 65,000 quota, which is nowhere near enough to meet demand.\textsuperscript{160} In fact, in 2008, this particular quota was filled in one day.\textsuperscript{161} Two stopgap measures were provided to fix the problem, including the Optional Practical Training (OPT), which provides 12 months for F-1 visa holders to remain after graduation, or the Global Competitiveness Act of 2008, which was intended to raise the H-1B visa quota to 115,000 until 2011.\textsuperscript{162}

Nevertheless, the current American system is plagued by long waiting periods, lack of transparency, and limited numbers of visas. Mayberry’s major suggestion was that “the United States should allow foreign graduates of U.S. universities and institutions exemption from the 65,000 H-1B worker quota […] which is not merely inequitable to foreign graduates and U.S. employers, but ultimately disadvantageous for the United States as a nation.” Heike Alberts and Helen Hazen concurred suggesting that international students should be given a preference because they already have experience in the host country, established personal and professional networks, and are trained by the American education system.\textsuperscript{163} With 70% of international students interested in remaining in the country permanently after graduation, that would be quite a contribution to the job market.\textsuperscript{164}

Obviously the United States has a great deal to learn from The Netherlands, with a policy [and similar interest level] that actively encourages international students to remain in The Netherlands for employment.\textsuperscript{165} Esmee Mos described how, after many complaints about complicated immigration procedures, The Netherlands passed the Modern Migration Policy Act on June 1, 2013 in order to attract more highly skilled migrants.\textsuperscript{166} New rules have been introduced such as allowing companies to become authorized sponsors who can file a single application for entry and residence through third parties while the employee is still abroad.\textsuperscript{167} The highly skilled applicant would then be able to start work right away, with a faster processing procedure after the Dutch immigration authorities receive the paperwork.\textsuperscript{168} However, the employers/sponsors accept greater responsibilities and risk under the new the rules, with a new access fee of 5,000 euros.\textsuperscript{169} Thus, despite streamlining the process, the new fee structure has caused a reduction in hiring foreign employees.\textsuperscript{170} In addition, for the highly skilled migrants scheme, salary criteria is also a factor requiring a minimum monthly gross salary of “2,968 euros if you are under 30 years old or 4,049 euros if you are 30 years of age or older.”\textsuperscript{171} As a result, despite the Dutch government trying to be responsive to streamlining procedures, more bureaucratic challenges still remain.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.,339.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 339, 340.
\textsuperscript{163} Heike Alberts and Helen Hazen, “There are always two voices: International Students Intentions to Stay in the United States or to Return to their Home Countries,” \textit{International Migration} 43.3 (2005): 149.
\textsuperscript{164} Sarah Nunes and Nancy Arthur, “International Students’ Experiences of Integrating into the Workforce,” \textit{American Counseling Association} 50 (March 2013): 34.
\textsuperscript{165} “Make It In The Netherlands,” 2.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} “Highly Skilled Migrant Scheme,” \textit{Holland Alumni Network} (4 March 2014).
https://www.hollandalumni.nl/career/practicalities/residence-permits/highly-skilled-migrants-scheme
Students in The Netherlands from the European Union are not required to have a work permit in order to obtain paid employment during their studies, which greatly increases their access to the job market.\textsuperscript{172} However, non-EU students are restricted to working no more than ten hours a week during their study (although they may work without limits during the summer.)\textsuperscript{173} Internships are also permitted.\textsuperscript{174} However, the students’ intended employer must apply for work permits.\textsuperscript{175} The major scheme designed to help integrate international students into the workforce is “The Orientation Year for Graduates Seeking Employment.”\textsuperscript{176} This program allows international students to remain in The Netherlands for up to one year after applying for a special residence permit; the special permit allows international students to search for employment and have access to the labor market without a work permit.\textsuperscript{177} After their orientation year, international students would then be eligible to reapply for work under the highly skilled migrant work scheme.\textsuperscript{178}

Interestingly, the Holland Alumni Barometer suggested that many students were not fully aware of the Orientation year, with low numbers utilizing the scheme.\textsuperscript{179} As a result, the Holland Alumni Network recommended that institutions do more to provide information about staying in The Netherlands. While most respondents in the survey were “satisfied with the visa procedures prior to arriving in The Netherlands,” the Holland Barometer found that only “one in five respondents worked alongside their study, mostly as part of an internship.”\textsuperscript{180} Interestingly, “the Holland alumni who worked in The Netherlands during their studies were more likely to remain or at a later stage return to The Netherlands for work.”\textsuperscript{181} Thus, there have been calls for the development of more centralized employment portals, such as the “Careers in Holland” website, which gives information about jobs related to IT, engineering, and science for individuals with bachelors, masters and PhD degrees.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} “Career Paths of Holland Alumni: Holland Alumni Barometer Part II,” \textit{Holland Alumni Network}: 3
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
The researchers decided that a mixed methods approach was the best option for this project. The quantitative portion of the research consisted of a survey, and the qualitative portion consisted of focus groups and individual interviews. The survey was created with input from both clients. Focus groups and interviews were conducted to supplement specific questions from the survey and as a means of gathering more information from residents, students, alumni, and administrators.

Quantitative Research

Due to the comparative nature and international aspect of the practicum, the student survey was created using a Google Form for students. The survey consisted of 52 identical questions for both clients. The types of questions included were multiple choice, yes/no, and short answer. They were created to be as broad as possible and comparative in nature, with deliverables in mind, in order to fulfill the needs of both the ISH and THUAS. The administrators of both institutions distributed student interviews online through their databases of international students. The survey was also printed and completed by students in focus groups on site. The responses to the student survey were manually entered onto Google Forms by the researchers.

Qualitative Research

Fourteen structured personal interviews with students, residents, board members, administrators, and alumni were conducted in order to supplement the surveys. The interview questions were focused on areas where clients had expressed specific interests; for example, in depth questions about alumni relations made up an important part of the ISH interviews. Students and alumni were interviewed both in focus groups and individually. The research team interviewed the board members and administrators individually at ISH and THUAS.

Conducting the Research

Several methods and means of communication were used for both clients. The researchers held six meetings, once every two weeks, with the director, resident directors, and a liaison to the Board of Directors at ISH. Most of the interviews, as well as the alumni focus group, were conducted on site at ISH with some board member interviews conducted at the member’s preferred location.

Skype meetings and e-mails were used with representatives from The Hague University of Applied Sciences prior to in-country research. The researchers were able to spend one week in The Hague, The Netherlands conducting interviews with students, administrators and government and non-profit representatives. The survey was distributed to students at The Hague University of Applied Sciences prior to the researchers arrival in order to hold one student focus group while in country. The survey was distributed prior to arrival in order to get a sense of
which questions would be applicable to be used in the focus group. Individual interviews were also conducted with different administrators who worked closely with international students.

**International Student House**

The house administrators at ISH distributed the surveys to current residents and recent alumni via e-mail. An introduction to the practicum was provided in the email so that the respondents understood the reasons for the survey. American U.S. students felt that the survey was not applicable to them. Respondents also perceived some questions as being too broad. There was a degree of confusion around the wording of certain questions that mentioned “your host institution,” which some residents took to mean their hosting university or internship institution, rather than ISH. The research team determined administrator surveys were not necessary for this client because the research team held extensive meetings and interviews with those who work closely with the students.

Interviews with the board members of the house were used as a way to compare the residents’ desires and needs and the kinds of programs the board members think are important, relevant and feasible for the house to implement. The ISH’s goals were focused primarily around alumni relations and resident programming; therefore, interview questions were crafted in light of those deliverables.

**The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

Similar to ISH, student surveys were also distributed to current students of THUAS by the administrators on behalf of the research team. The researchers arranged for a focus group session at the university during their time in The Hague. Participants were asked about their opinions on feeling welcome in The Netherlands, The Hague, and the University, inclusion, employment, and alumni relations. Several interviews with administrators at the university were also conducted. These included interviews with administrators from the communications department and international student offices.

Aside from THAUS, the researchers also met with representatives from the Public Diplomacy Office Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NUFFIC, a non-profit that focuses on linking students and employers together in The Netherlands, the International Student Hotel, and World Class, an initiative of the mayor of The Hague to help international students feel welcome in The Hague. These meetings were informative in nature and provided context for the relationships that the national government, city government, and non-profit sector have with international students and their opinions on international student exchanges.

**Challenges and Limitations**

A main challenge faced for this research team was the time restraint. As the in-country research commenced in The Netherlands, the researchers also found that the predominant American conception of international student exchanges and their place in public diplomacy did not correlate with the idea of these student exchanges held in The Netherlands. During the interview process in The Hague, the researchers discovered other administrators and groups that needed to
be interviewed in order to provide a fuller contextual picture, but lacked the time in country to schedule these interviews. The distribution of student surveys was also another challenge that may have had an impact on data collection: the research team received fewer than their goal of a minimum of 100 respondents per survey. A total of 88 responses were received with 54 coming from ISH and 34 from THUAS, respectively.
Contextual Findings

As mentioned in the literature review, student exchange programs have played a crucial role in American public diplomacy efforts since the inception of the Cold War, with the aim of “fostering long-term” favorable opinions of the United States among students who would hopefully return to their home countries and become future elites. During interviews conducted with officials at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it became apparent that the view of international students as a necessary target audience of a country’s public diplomacy was in fact a result of the team’s unquestioned assumption that the American definition of public diplomacy is widely accepted. In fact, this is not always the case. As explained by Marisa Witte, foreign policy officer for public diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dutch public diplomacy as it is understood in the 21st century is highly targeted, pragmatic, and focused on strategic communications in order to promote the Dutch reputation in certain “key topics” such as “water management, energy and climate, human rights and international law, and peace, security, and stability.” International student exchanges are not seen as directly contributing to the promotion of these strategic areas. Therefore they are not a priority as an audience for public diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs handles minimal student exchange programs (instead, international student exchanges are under the purview of NUFFIC and the Ministry of Education).

A proper understanding of the extent to which international students are target audiences for public diplomacy efforts of The Netherlands and the United States provides essential context for the project and its comparative findings. Understanding this context helps explain the ways in which international students are viewed and treated by their host countries, cities, and institutions.

The United States’ view of student exchange as an activity that is of long-term strategic interest for the peace and security of the world leads to a situation where retaining international students after their graduation is less of a priority than them returning to their home countries with expertise and lasting good impressions. It is assumed that these ties with the United States, in the aggregate, will improve relations with and/or help develop sending countries in the future. This goal for international students is reflected in the statements of board members and administrators at the U.S. client organization, the International Student House. For example, Tom O’Coin, executive director of ISH, talks about the “double edged sword” of international students’ desire to stay and work in the United States. In his view, the possibility of brain drain in the sending countries is troubling, especially because these international students, having received “excellent educations” in the United States, are “the ones who can really help develop those countries.” 182 Long-term board member Bill Crocker echoed this view in more idealistic terms: the goal of the ISH is promoting “world peace and understanding,” and its international students should be

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182 Tom O’Coin, interview by Monika Young, April 1, 2014.
considered ambassadors who return home and spread their “good feelings” about the United States.\(^{183}\)

Following this logic, the fact that The Netherlands does not view student exchange as a major part of its strategic public diplomacy efforts means that the position of international students and the ultimate goals for these students are different than in the United States. Practically, this seems to lead to a much greater focus on retaining international students as part of the workforce in The Netherlands. The idea of international students as “ambassadors” taking place in exchanges that promote values such as global understanding and peace is less prevalent.

Although official literature from NUFFIC such as “Making it in The Netherlands” does mention international students as “potential ambassadors for The Netherlands,” it puts much more emphasis on the role they can play in “improving the labor market in the top sectors” and contributions they can make to the economy if they stay to work in The Netherlands. It would be interesting to explore in further research the role that European integration and the formation of European identity, partly through European exchange programs such as Erasmus, plays in this conception of international students. Because many of the international students studying in The Netherlands come from EU Member states, they face few technical barriers to working in The Netherlands, and, therefore, pragmatically can be viewed as potential labor-market participants rather than ambassadors who return to their home countries after having absorbed Dutch values and expertise.

Major Comparative Findings

There were 88 respondents (n=88), with 34 of those respondents from THUAS in The Hague, The Netherlands, and 54 of them from International Student House (ISH). Two-thirds of the respondents reported that they had previously experienced living or studying abroad before their current abroad experience. The average age of respondents from THUAS was younger than that of ISH respondents, who are all either in graduate school or interning after completing their undergraduate degree: 81% of THUAS respondents were below the age of 23, compared to only 19% of ISH respondents. However, respondents from THUAS had spent on average more time in the host country than ISH respondents. At ISH, 59% of respondents had been in the host country for less than 12 months, while at THUAS, only 32% of respondents had spent less than a year in the host country. These differences in demographics can be explained by the differing natures of the institutions and their international populations, with international students at THUAS generally spending three to four years studying at the University, while the ISH attracts a more transient set of international residents, often only in the host country for a semester or year.

The survey was designed to follow every stage of the International Student Journey: from orientation to housing, to programming and bonding with host communities, to the respondents’ experiences finding employment, and finally to the ways in which they remain in contact with host institutions and host countries after graduating or ending their stay. The term ‘respondents’ here is used to encompass all the international students and, in the case of the International Student House, other international residents, including interns, visiting researchers and

\(^{183}\) Bill Crocker, interview by Gretchen Mielke and Julie Trinh, March 24, 2014.
academics who responded to the survey. The survey data indicates that, on the whole, respondents from both THUAS and ISH viewed their time abroad positively. 68% and 89% of respondents from THUAS and ISH, respectively, reported that they would like to remain in contact with their host institutions. In addition, 56% and 60% of THUAS and ISH respondents, respectively, “strongly agree” that they would recommend studying abroad in their host countries.

The only section of “the student journey” in which the results are less positive and more inconclusive is the section on employment. In this section, however, the questions are not normative; that is, they do not ask about respondents’ satisfaction with the effectiveness of the institution in dealing with career development. Instead, they ask about experiences finding employment, challenges and barriers faced by international students/residents searching for employment, and the information that the host institution provided, if any. More than half of students from both THUAS and ISH believed that their institution did not provide enough information on employment opportunities. This may not be a negative finding because many respondents may not consider it the role of these institutions to provide career development or information about employment, especially at the ISH. More nuanced exploration about the way respondents see the role of these institutions in their own career development were included in the interviews and focus groups questions in order to better understand this finding. These qualitative findings generally supported the idea that the institutions have a role to play in career development for their international students/residents (through networking or skills-building workshops, for example).

Although the quantitative findings (with the exception of the question of employment) show overall respondent satisfaction with most aspects of their time abroad, the qualitative data, provided by the open-ended survey questions, as well as focus group and individual interview data from international students and alumni, provide a more nuanced picture. This total picture shows differences both between the two cases, but also within each case, with respondents’ responses falling on a continuum from satisfaction to dissatisfaction. In some cases, respondents are enthusiastic about one aspect of a program (such as orientation) while desiring change in another facet of the same program. Examining these nuances is helpful for highlighting programs that are working well and identifying areas for improvement. It also reveals patterns that exist among international students/residents in both The Hague and Washington, DC.

One of the major patterns the researchers found is that respondents in both cities consider one-on-one interaction and personal connections most important across all of the stages of the student journey. Although it was not mentioned in any of the survey, interview, or focus group questions, several respondents suggested that they would have appreciated a buddy program at their institution. When asking about the way in which the respondents acquired the most important information upon arrival in the host country, a distinct plurality preferred word of mouth communication over written, online, and official sources of information (although in many cases, respondents clarified that they relied on word of mouth communication for information due to a perception of lack of access to more official sources). Several of the respondents in both cities also mentioned that they would like to have more interaction with local students, and would appreciate it if their institutions provided more events that facilitated such contact.
Another major finding is that 70% of respondents are not currently experiencing “home hospitality.” Home hospitality is defined in the survey as an event which “pairs international students with [local] host families or individuals who seek to welcome, befriend, and know international students for occasional interactions,” providing the opportunity to observe and experience local family life. More than 75% of respondents in both countries said that this experience would likely enhance their time abroad. On the subject of feeling connected with the host community, respondents from both institutions suggested that their institutions facilitate more opportunities to volunteer in the local community.

Although many of the findings are parallel between the respondents in The Hague and in Washington DC, there are distinct differences in a few key areas. Chief among these is the effect of housing on the international student/resident experience. Because the sample drew from the populations of two distinct types of institutions (a university versus an international residence), the difference was to be expected. Yet the results still illustrate rather dramatically the way in which housing plays a key part in the way international students experience the host country.

In both cases, respondents found housing to be critically important to their experience: 74% of THUAS and 87% of ISH respondents said that their housing situation “influenced their experience in the host country”. Among respondents from the ISH, 0% stated they were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their overall housing experience, while 27% of THUAS respondents listed themselves as “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their housing experience. The difference becomes even more marked when considering the responses to the open-ended question, “how did housing influence your experience in the host country”? For ISH respondents, the responses are uniformly positive, while in the responses from THUAS, about half list at least one negative element in their response, with a few respondents even linking their negative experience with housing to an overall negative feeling towards the institution.

On employment, a large majority of respondents expressed a desire to stay in their host countries and find employment: 71% of THUAS respondents, and 70% of ISH respondents. However, the barriers listed to employment differed between respondents in The Hague and in Washington DC. Respondents studying or working in the United States overwhelmingly listed issues with visas and work permits as the primary challenges they faced in finding more long-term employment after their stay, while respondents in The Netherlands, many of whom are citizens of the European Union authorized to work without special visas in any other Member State of the EU, listed language barriers (not speaking Dutch) as the main challenge for them finding employment. Approximately three-fourths of respondents in an open-ended question about the greatest challenges faced by international students listed language as a challenge.

The following sections will explore in greater detail the qualitative and quantitative findings on five main parts of the student journey: information and orientation, programming, connection to the host city/country/institution, employment, and alumni relations.
International Student House

Orientation, Information and Housing

As previously noted in the methodology section, a weakness in the survey (not defining “host institution” as specifically the ISH and not the host university, fellowship, or internship program that residents were involved in) caused the respondents to answer many of the initial questions, especially on information and orientation, not relating to the ISH, but to other institutions they were involved with in the United States. Interviews with seven individual ISH residents were crucial in filling some of these possible gaps in information.

Most residents, in response to the question about how they found information about studying/working abroad in the United States and their home institution, described finding out about programs mostly through home universities, government programs (such as Fulbright), or through word of mouth from their networks (of friends, mentors, and/or professors). However, by asking the same question specifically about the ISH to the resident interviewees, it became clear that some of them found out about ISH while researching international places to stay in DC after being accepted to their respective study and internship programs, while the rest were told about it through the international office of the institutions they were accepted to (including George Washington University and Georgetown University). Finally, one resident learned about the ISH from his uncle, who had stayed there in the 1970s.

The question “what information were you provided before arrival by the host institution?” was a particularly difficult one to parse between respondents who were speaking about the ISH and those who were referencing their other host institutions. However, with the context of the student interviews, the team determined that the most common experience of receiving information from ISH before arrival is to receive “check in and location information” (this was mentioned twice in the survey), as well as the ISH resident handbook (mentioned once in the survey and by six of the seven interviewees). Respondents put “housing” and “information about academic program” at a tie for “most valuable information…received before…arrival to the host country”, with 38% each. “Housing” and “job opportunities” ranked highest, at 25% and 33%, respectively, for the additional information residents most wished they had been provided before their arrival.

Asked in an open-ended question what information was most useful to them “upon arrival in the host country,” the largest number of respondents mentioned information that helped them get to know the city of Washington DC better (with 12 responses referencing this kind of information), whether that was being given a map of DC at the desk of ISH, being shown how to get around on the metro and take public transportation, or being told by other students in the house what places to visit in the city. The next most useful information, cited nine times by respondents, was how to find housing, but one can assume that this was the information (from other host institutions or online sources) that led respondents to stay at ISH, not information disseminated by ISH. When discussing their main sources of basic logistical information (such as how to open a bank account, sign up for a cell phone contract, deal with taxes and health insurance, etc…) upon arrival, five respondents listed ISH as their main source, but many more found this information either through a University’s international student office or official online/physical informational materials given out by schools and other programs (16 respondents listed these types of sources).
One of the key findings that alerted the researchers to the possibility that ISH respondents were answering parts of the survey as they related to other host institutions than ISH was the fact that 83% of all respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “orientation was a valuable experience”, despite the fact that it had been confirmed with interview subjects—residents, administrators and staff, and board members—that the ISH does not currently offer any formal orientation. Because of this, the best way to focus on the crucial piece of the student journey that is orientation is to disregard the quantitative findings of the survey on orientation and instead focus on the rich suggestions on orientation discussed in the seven student interviews. These, as well as some answers and suggestions to the open-ended survey question “how could orientation be improved?” should be helpful in future planning of an orientation day by the ISH. As far as the suggestions go, they ranged from the specific to the broad (from “letting know…if it is a very cold city or very hot” to “more information and friendly people”). A plurality of respondents expressed their desire not just to receive logistical information during an orientation, but also to be introduced in some way to the culture of the country and the city: with talks for example on history, lifestyle, food and communication styles. On the other hand, three respondents called for more logistical information, especially about the DC public transit system, so clearly a balance would have to be considered between these competing interests. There was also a call by two respondents for more use of oral rather than written communication of rules such as those provided in the ISH resident handbook. This was echoed in one of the interview responses that will be detailed next.

The seven resident interviews provided some of the richest suggestions for orientation. Many of these included simple additions, modifications to, or formalization of services and programs that ISH is already carrying out. Some of the suggestions include:

1) A buddy system or a mentor system, where a more experienced ISH resident would be assigned to a new resident for the resident’s first few weeks at ISH. The interviewee put it this way: “that could…be useful, because…your buddy could tell you, ‘hey, here’s the supermarket, here’s CVS.’” Not that they don’t already do it, but just to have someone permanently assigned to you…for the first two weeks you could talk to.”

2) The same resident presented the possibility that a formal orientation day provide an occasion for a more “forceful” oral reminder of the rules and regulations in the resident handbook: “Personally, I know a lot of people don’t read that handbook. It would be a load off the jobs (of the resident managers) if…they just presented it to (residents) in a forceful way, in a way where you can’t say you didn’t know! You were there, at orientation!”

3) Another resident believes that “basics” and logistics such as how to open a bank account and how to get a cell phone and a contract should be information that the ISH gives to its residents “twice a year or once a semester.” She suggested that volunteers from the house could work on these days to provide new residents with this information when they arrive. The idea of having volunteers help new residents with logistical information (rather than, say, having an information table set up in the entrance hall with fliers containing information) fits in with the overall finding that international students prefer interpersonal communication and word of mouth even when disseminating logistical information.

Some other information that interviewees would like to see during more formal orientation day(s): “information about getting around DC, places to go out to eat, places to go out and
socialize that are safe,” visa information for international students, and “more technical things” such as insurance.

Unlike orientation, there was no ambiguity in the survey findings on the influence of ISH residents’ housing experiences on their overall time abroad. With no respondents reporting themselves to be dissatisfied with their housing situation, the rating of overall satisfaction with housing was 52% of respondents “satisfied” and 48% “very satisfied.” Like their counterparts in The Hague, the ISH respondents strongly believe that their housing situation had influenced their stay in the host country, with 87% responding that it had. 83% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their housing situation had “enhanced my connection with” Washington, and 76% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that living in the ISH supported their academic achievement. Meanwhile, unlike in The Hague, a majority of students (69%) said that living in the house had “offered opportunities to get better connected with local students.”

Asked to elaborate on how housing has influenced their stay and respondents wrote eloquently about their overwhelmingly positive experience living at ISH. The most appreciated aspect of life in the house was the way in which it fostered cross-cultural exchange and learning, as well as the ability to share diverse experiences and see things from a new global perspective. As one resident wrote enthusiastically, “amazing intercultural exchange! Building bridges and getting to know people we may have only heard about...it also made me rethink the way I look into my own country and culture by being more critical and more appreciative for bad and good, respectively.” Other benefits of the house cited by many respondents were the “community,” “warm,” and “family” feeling of the ISH, the many new friends it allows you to make, and lasting benefits such as improving English skills and becoming connected to a global network of talented people.

**Programming**

Respondents were asked to check all the types of events they had been offered at ISH. The most frequent type of event ISH respondents reported being offered were ‘social events’ (listed 48 times, 32% of the total responses), and the least frequent were ‘Programs that pair international and domestic students’ (listed 13 times, 9% of the total). After social events were ‘guest speakers’ (mentioned 38 times), and ‘professional workshops’ and ‘city immersion activities,’ both mentioned 23 times. Respondents at ISH were very satisfied by the enhancement programming offered by the house. 89% of the respondents found that these programs were helpful. When asked to elaborate on why they were helpful, the most common responses were that they helped to meet people and form community (an example response: “attending events and programs, I became more confident and I felt I was part of the community”), they provided professional development and chances to network, they helped with city immersion and bonding to the city (“helped me to fully enjoy the Washington environment, and to better interact with important scholars and diplomats”, “city immersion activities helped me a lot to understand the community”), and they offered chances for personal growth, learning, and enrichment.

When asked what types of programs they would like to see offered in the future from ISH, the most popular responses were more professional workshops and events dealing with things such as cultural difference in communications (one respondent mentioned wanting to see “a leadership
workshop for women”), more city immersion activities, and more outings, field trips, and programs outside of DC. Only one respondent said they wanted more social events organized by the house, and another respondent opined, “I prefer more official events such as professional workshops...to casual events such as happy hours, movie nights, and parties. Because students cannot organize those official events easily on their own.” Several responses supported the finding that residents are eager to make personal connections: “there should be programs that pair international and domestic students,” “more connections/networking with other like-minded or unique organizations on a regular basis,” “program that pairs new and old people who live in the house,” and “activities with other houses.” Not all respondents wanted more or different events: six respondents stated that they were happy with the programs ISH provided them and didn’t think they needed to be improved or increased.

Sense of Welcome and Connection to Host Country, City, and Institution

ISH respondents also expressed a desire to interact more with local residents, American students, and people outside the house. Four respondents mentioned that opportunities and events designed to meet local people would be something they would like the ISH to do more of. Many respondents are happy with the way that ISH is currently helping them to integrate into the community: 13 said that they wouldn’t see any changes at all, and that current situation is optimal. Two recommended home hospitality as a way that ISH could help them feel more welcome. One, who had experienced home hospitality through the Fulbright Program, wrote, “I would suggest that all ISH residents should be invited to have an American family lunch/dinner. It was a valuable experience to me with Fulbright...I (also) think ISH should encourage donors or families who supports ISH to receive residents during Thanksgiving.” Another respondent wrote about the valuable experience of being invited by host university professors to their houses for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Sixty-one percent of respondents had not experienced home hospitality during their stay, and 80% said that they thought it would enhance their time abroad.

Employment

Sixty-one percent of ISH respondents did an internship or work in the host country during their time abroad. However, only 56% of respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question, “during your time abroad, were you informed about employment or internship opportunities?” Through the interviews with residents, board members, and staff, the research team realized that many of the residents of ISH have their internships and jobs arranged before they come to the United States and that for many of them, they are actually the reason for their time abroad, which explains that statistic. It might also explain why a slight majority, 51%, reported that they had not found barriers to entering the workplace. A much larger group, 70% of respondents, has an interest in finding employment in the United States after completing their program. Over half of respondents (54%) said that their host institution did not provide them with information about employment opportunities. Seventy-eight percent of ISH respondents had not applied for any type of full-time employment in the United States, but 59% reported that they knew of international students who had found such employment. The challenges and barriers that respondents see to employment in the United States are mostly structural, with 23 respondents mentioning visa and work permit challenges, and one stating that his or her degree is not recognized in the United States. Seven cited possible language barriers (knowledge of colloquial
English) or differences in cultural working style as challenges, and five said they lack information about opportunities and how to access employment in the United States.

During the individual interviews, the researchers were interested in seeing what role, if any, the residents believed the ISH should play in career development, especially since the survey data on programming had demonstrated that career development events were popular and that respondents wanted more of them. Three interviewees believed that the ISH did have an important role to play, two did not, one was unsure, and one was an American resident (who thus did not experience the same challenges while seeking employment in the United States). One resident who fell into the first group gave the suggestion (while recognizing that it might be difficult to put into place) of an ISH-centered “database resource…where you have job openings, you can find them quite easily.” She suggested that this database could be focused on jobs available for internationals to set it apart from school databases of the same type. She also found past networking workshops she had attended at ISH very helpful, and would like to see more of them per semester in the future if possible. Another interviewee also found ISH networking events helpful and believed that future events could have a strong value-added factor if they “drew from the resources of students that live here” and gave residents more input by asking them what kinds of fields they were interested in and organizing networking and career development workshops around their responses. A similar comment came from one of the recent alumni in the focus group who had studied computer programming, and found the mostly economic, business, and political focus of many of the events and guest speakers at ISH unhelpful for his professional development.

Of the two interviewees who did not see a role for ISH in career development, one said that it would be “nice” but that it created too much work for the staff who “work quite hard already.” The second interviewee also thought that the house should be careful of taking on too many responsibilities, saying of career development programming that it is “great, but not the house’s primary function,” and that the ISH “should not put finding students jobs/internships over house responsibilities.”

**Alumni Relations**

The respondents were very enthusiastic about their desire to participate in alumni events with ISH after their stay at the house ended. Eighty-nine percent said that they planned on maintaining contact with ISH. In response to the question on preferred method of communication with ISH, 76% said they preferred email (only 6% preferred Facebook as a method of communication). When asked how they would like to get involved with ISH after the end of their stay, the largest group of respondents expressed their desire to get involved with future alumni events such as meet-ups, reunions, local events, happy hours, alumni networking events and professional workshops, and programs connecting alumni to current residents.

Tempering this enthusiasm, a few of those who said they would like to participate in future alumni events expressed concern that their distance from the ISH if they ended up returning to their home country, or moving somewhere else, might prevent them from participating as fully as they would like. One respondent wrote: “the distance makes it difficult for us to stay close as we were before…face to face reunion counts.” Besides attending events, six respondents also
indicated that they would be willing and happy to promote the ISH in their home countries and to share information with future residents about their experiences here. (Examples of some of these responses: “I can promote the name of ISH in my home countries by word of mouth and any other means…” “Spreading the word of how great an experience it was living at ISH…doing presentations (in my home country”). One respondent mentioned that they would be willing to give donations to ISH, and one said that they would like to be an ISH board member one day. Finally, a couple of respondents were enthusiastic, but not specific, saying that they want to get involved “any way I can help,” “in all possible ways. I love…the ISH.”

The individual resident interviews and the informal alumni focus group supported the finding of enthusiastic support for a stronger ISH alumni network, and provided invaluable suggestions on what they want that alumni network to look like. All seven of the individual interviewees said that they would like to remain connected with ISH after their stay, and the recent alumni also expressed enthusiasm for continuing to come to alumni events at ISH like the happy hour/focus group. One interview subject, a recent alumnus, said that he felt like he was “more invested in maintaining contact with ISH” then they were with maintaining contact with him. When asked what they would want this contact to look like, the alumni and residents all agreed that it should begin with a strong digital/online presence. They offered a variety of suggestions for what they thought this presence should look like:

Four of the interview subjects and a few of the alumni focus group participants said that an online newsletter about the ISH, sent out two to four times a year to all alumni, would be a good first step for an ISH alumni network. Two of the interviewees mentioned that they would like to see news and pictures of events that happened at the house and a focus group participant said that he would like to see when ISH alumni appear in the news. One interview subject cautioned that receiving news more than “a few times a year” would risk being overwhelming to alumni who are also receiving updates from other institutions: “as soon as it’s too much you get bored…you have to find the right balance.”

Another idea championed enthusiastically by the focus group participants was an online alumni network database accessible for alumni and current residents, which would include a list of alumni searchable by name, email, career field, city/country, and willingness to be contacted. A tech-savvy participant said that this needn’t be complicated, and could be accomplished with “self-populating Google spreadsheet.” One of the residents interviewed also said that there needed to be a kind of “platform for alumni-current resident networking”

Although almost all of those interviewed said they would prefer direct contact via email for things like event invitations, they also suggested ways in which various social networks could be used to create the ISH alumni network. One interviewee said that a “mix of e-mail and social networking,” run by staff, would be ideal. He suggested the creation of a LinkedIn group. Another interviewee said that she would love to see an Instagram account “where everyone could put their photos to show what was going on at the house,” utilizing an ISH specific tag to group them. Several interviewees and focus group participants mentioned that they are or were part of the ISH Facebook group for current residents, and that this could be extended into an alumni-specific group (although almost nobody thought that Facebook should be the primary means of communication and networking: a few of those interviewed did not use Facebook at
One interview subject said that a combination of Facebook and a newsletter would make organizing “reunions in country…easier” than using only emails.

As in the survey responses, a few of those interviewed expressed concern about how they would be able to participate in any future ISH alumni events if they are living in another country. An interviewee put it this way: “I think it would be easier if I were staying in DC. I think if I were staying in DC I’d really like to contribute…I wonder if ISH should spend…its energy…on alumni who are in DC—recent alumni—who can contribute more?” However, among the others interviewed, there seemed to be support for organizing meet-ups in their home countries with other ISH alumni, as long as there was an easy way to organize events through online databases and networks. Three interviewees mentioned that they would like to see “student organized reunions” in home countries: “if there were other people in (my home country) who’d been here…we could form some sort of group where we could meet and share the experiences,” said one resident interviewed. A focus group participant also said that she would be willing to take the lead in organizing meet-ups of ISH alumni in the country where she is moving in a few months.

When it comes to events among local and recent alumni in DC, a few of the focus group participants stressed that the house itself is a huge draw: they enjoy coming back and visiting, and would be more likely to attend happy hours and events at the house rather than at an external bar. An interviewee concurred and said that when she is an alumna, she would like to be able to come back a few times a month to the ISH to participate in House events, such as family dinner. The ISH should “have one evening a week or a month, where alumni could come and join students for dinner, and have that interaction, something as simple as that.” Finally, when it comes to donations to the house, one alumnus mentioned that he would like to eventually contribute financially to ISH “because it made him feel at home.” Other focus group participants agreed that once they made more money, they would like to donate to ISH. When asked when they would be open to be contacted by the ISH for donations, most participants agreed that 3-5 years after ending their stay at ISH would be an appropriate time frame.

The Hague University Of Applied Sciences

Orientation, Information and Housing

For international students coming to THUAS, one of the major ways in which they found out about the school was from Internet sources, with 12 respondents to the open ended question “where did you get the information about your host institutions?” listing an internet source, and four listing more specifically the THUAS website. Three additional respondents mentioned finding out from THUAS Open Day, and three more mentioned either education fairs or student ambassadors as the source of information. One respondent mentioned the International Office, and two found their information through NUFFIC. These findings show that as far as recruitment goes, official channels at THUAS are successfully used for communication with international students.

However, even before students arrive at the University, the responses on effective reception of information become more nuanced. In response to the question “what information were you
“provided before arrival by the host institution?” five respondents said that either they had received no information, or very little information. An additional five stated that they had only received information about their academic program of study. Four respondents mentioned they had received information about the introduction week. When asked what additional information they wished they had been provided before arrival, 32% of respondents answered “housing” and 37% answered “job opportunities”.

In response to the open-ended question “what information was most useful to you upon arrival in the host country?” only one respondent (out of 30 who answered the question) cited “information provided during the introduction week”. The most frequent answers involved information about the specific academic program (6 respondents) and information about housing (5 respondents). One respondent expressed frustration on the latter topic: “the most useful (information) would have been about housing possibilities and the taxation system in the NL, but I cannot recall receiving much help from the university.” When asked about the sources of information they received upon arrival in The Hague, the importance of word of mouth sources was apparent. Seven respondents mentioned getting information from friends or family already living in The Netherlands, and three mentioned their peers (“other students more than the institutions,” “I had to find this information on my own by asking fellow students,” “the fellow students only”). The student focus group allowed even further insight into some of the ways that international students at THUAS rely on word of mouth to obtain information. One Chinese student said that she and many other Chinese students obtain all their information—on finding part time jobs, housing, and social activities—from a popular Chinese-language website in The Netherlands, gogodutch.com.

Regarding the “orientation” (introduction week), the overall impressions were positive: 65% of respondents said it met their expectations, and 59% said that they were given information about logistics of life in their home country. Eighty percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that orientation made them feel welcome to the University, and 74% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that it made them feel welcome to The Hague. Eighty percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that orientation had been a valuable experience. When asked, “how could orientation be improved?” a slightly more nuanced picture emerged. Some of the more popular suggestions included more or better information about housing (four respondents), better information about bureaucratic procedures and logistics in The Netherlands (four respondents), and the inclusion of more bonding activities, both among international students and with local students (five respondents). Although most responses were neutral and practical, a few stood out as being either very negative (“the whole organizational process could be improved [pretty much ours was really chaotic, tedious, and lame]. There was really nothing worth remembering about it...in my opinion, it is in need of a complete makeover”) or very positive (“orientation has strongly improved since I was a first year”). Such extreme responses can probably be explained by referencing the individual respondent’s demographic data: for example, the respondent who wrote the negative comment is a fourth year student, meaning that the orientation he or she experienced should be very different to the newly centralized orientation that is being offered at THUAS.

Sixty-eight percent of THUAS respondents are currently living in off-campus apartments. As mentioned in the main findings, 74% believe that their housing situation has influenced their
experience in the host country, and 73% are satisfied or very satisfied with their housing situation. Sixty-two percent of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their housing situation supports their academic achievement and 70% said that it had enhanced their connection with The Hague. Only 24% said that their housing situation had given them opportunities to get better connected with local students.

However, despite the overall positive response to these questions, the answers to the follow up question asking them how housing has influenced their stay are slightly less positive. About half of the respondents who answered the question mentioned positive features of their housing, while about half mentioned negative aspects. Additionally, the positive experiences of housing are usually linked to friendships formed: “making friends,” “learning how to get along well with roommate,” “it has introduced me to my best friend here,” etc… The negative experiences most often cited with housing are difficulty finding apartments, high prices, bad landlords, unsafe neighborhoods, problems with the school’s partner housing agency DUWO, and overall bad conditions of the apartments. A student in the focus group panel mentioned that he thinks he is being cheated because “flats are more expensive for international students than Dutch.” The danger of a poor housing experience is that it can affect the overall quality of the international student’s stay to the point where his or her bond to the host institution or host country is put in jeopardy. Examples of housing having a strong negative effect on respondents’ experiences with the city and the university come out in some of the answers from the survey and the focus groups: “housing was a nightmare…it was the most stressful situation,” “the university makes no attempt to aid at all,” “it is very stressful to find a fine housing property for ok price range,” “the whole student housing thing was a joke (issues with rodents, expensive prices, etc.),” “the housing condition is poorly maintained, it reflects on how I feel the system is in Holland and reflects poorly on the University for associating with such a poor housing agency,” “finding housing) took way too much time and effort that I could have used for my studies instead!”

Programming

The most frequent types of enrichment programming offered by the host institution listed by respondents were social events, followed by guest speakers and professional workshops. The least frequently listed were “programs that pair international and domestic students.” The reaction to programming offered by the institution was overwhelmingly positive: 94% of respondents found the programs helpful. When asked to elaborate why the programs were helpful, the most frequent types of response mentioned social activities’ ability to form friendships and introduce new people, the way that workshops facilitated networking opportunities and helped in professional career and skills development (a typical response: “the workshops I went were really helpful, I learned how to write CV, and what to do in applying for jobs”), and the way some events helped aid integration into the host country. Clearly, students are impressed by the variety and quality of programming offered, and it seems to have an almost uniformly positive effect on their experiences. When asked, “what additional programs would you like to see offered” the three most popular responses were more career development events, city immersion activities, and more field trips, outings, excursions and tours to explore The Netherlands and have more chances for social interactions outside of parties.
Although the question was not included on the initial survey, the researchers were interested in gauging how much knowledge of specific enrichment programs offered by THUAS and the City of The Hague such as World Class and the Student Ambassador program exists among international students at THUAS. It was discovered that 6 out of the 6 students asked had not heard of World Class. On the other hand, 3 out the 6 had heard of Student Ambassadors (of these, one was a Student Ambassador himself). The general sense of the focus group when discussing programs was that international students who are involved tend to be very involved (such as the Student Ambassador, who also had created a chapter of Rotary International in The Hague with some of his friends), while other international students might not either be motivated to participate, or do not have access to information about some of the flagship international programs at THUAS.

Sense of Welcome and Connection to Host Country, City, and Institution

When trying to gauge the sense of welcome experienced by international students at THUAS, as well as the connections that they have formed to the University, the City of The Hague, and The Netherlands, the importance of personal connections to international students again becomes apparent. This is especially evident in the responses to the question “how could the University help you better adjust and integrate into the host community?” Eight respondents wanted more chances to meet and interact with local Dutch students, three more people stated a desire for more Dutch classes and opportunities to speak conversational Dutch (such as through a language partners program), and two respondents requested more events focused on “the cultures and customs of the Dutch.”

During the focus group, the students talked about appreciating some parts of the obligatory intro to Dutch culture and society during the first semester, however, as one survey respondent put it: “it was rather interesting but it still was work.” Two respondents put forth the idea of a centralized buddy program for all study programs (one of the respondents mentioned that some, but not all, of the academic study programs do currently offer this) that pairs Dutch students and international students during orientation/introduction week. Despite all these requests for more interactions with Dutch students, and anecdotes from the focus group participants that Dutch students are somewhat difficult to approach and hard to get to know, 76% of respondents reported having made “meaningful friendships with citizens of (their) host country.” As for what THUAS could do to help international students feel connected to the City of The Hague, three respondents called for more volunteer activities organized with the city, and events that would allow them to get connected to community projects. Seventy-nine percent of THUAS respondents had not experienced home hospitality during their stay, and 76% thought that this would enhance their time abroad and their sense of welcome.

Employment

Almost half of the survey respondents from THUAS did an internship or worked during their time abroad (47% had, 53% hadn’t). Although 62% of them stated that they were “informed about employment or internship opportunities” only 53% answered in the affirmative to the question “does your host institution provide information about employment opportunities for you?” This statistic opens up the question of where the respondents are finding information that
leads to jobs and internships. According to the results, the most common ways they went about finding employment were tied between the Internet and word of mouth (both 33%). Only 12% of respondents found their employment through more “official” channels such as a “job fair” or “career center”. A majority of respondents (73%) said that they had faced barriers to entering the workplace, but despite this, 71% still expressed “interest in finding employment in (their) host country after completing” their academic program. Only 24% had actively applied to long-term employment in the host country, but given that the THUAS sample included students from all four years of their University journey, this low number is not surprising, as the most likely to apply for long-term employment would probably be those respondents nearing the end of their academic program. Sixty-two percent of respondents claimed they knew of international students who had found employment in The Netherlands after completing their academic program.

When asked to identify barriers that the respondents had faced trying to enter the workplace in The Hague, as well as more general challenges that they see to accessing employment for internationals in The Netherlands, the results were striking. Unlike in the ISH survey results, where the main challenges to finding employment were visa and work permit issues, the THUAS respondents answered overwhelmingly that language (specifically, the inability to speak Dutch) was the main barrier to internationals accessing employment in The Netherlands. In the two questions that encompassed this section (“if you found barriers to entering the workplace, what types?” and “what are the challenges to accessing employment in your host country?”) 31 out of 44 responses mentioned language as the primary barrier to employment. Despite the widespread use of English in The Netherlands, according to the respondents “most employers require to be able to speak Dutch,” “if you don’t speak their language (Dutch) it is a problem” and “even starter functions require a couple of years of experience in Dutch language.”

In this context, the earlier findings in programming in which respondents called for more contact with Dutch students and more opportunities to learn and practice Dutch seem logical, and the fact that some of the international study programs do “not offer language courses” seems problematic. A distant second to the language barrier is the fear of competition and not having access to the right networks (four respondents mentioned these factors as challenges). Not having access to networks and contacts seems like another problem that could be behind the calls by many of the international students for more contact with Dutch students (who presumably have better access to these networks) throughout their time at THUAS.

When asked, “what type of employment opportunities would encourage you to stay in the host country?” the greatest commonality between responses was that a sizeable majority included an international element, with many expressing desire to work at “world-wide companies,” “international organizations/institutions,” multi-national corporations,” “a job with international perspectives,” etc.

Finally, in the focus group interviews, two students were asked their opinion on the usefulness of a more centralized career center that could help them locate internships, jobs, give career counseling and offer services such as help writing CVs. The students did see a value in a “one-stop shop” for things like CV reviewing, saying that currently the only way to access this sort of service would be seeking out individual professors in their program of study. However they also
said that having the academic programs controlling internships has positive aspects, especially given the close relationships between students and lecturers, who sometimes might understand their unique employment needs better than a large, centralized career office.

Alumni Relations

In response to questions about how they felt overall about their study abroad experience, the findings were quite positive. Eighty-five percent either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they felt connected to The Netherlands. Even more impressive, only 3% of respondents disagreed with the statement “I would recommend studying abroad in my host country.” Sixty-eight percent of respondents said they plan to keep in contact with their host institution, and 62% were interested in “staying connected” with the host institution (HUAS) after completing their program (the difference in implication being that staying connected has a stronger emphasis on action than simply keeping contact). For those who were planning to keep in contact with THUAS, a little over half (53%) preferred e-mail as a means of communication.

After the quantitative questions on staying in contact, the respondents were asked to clarify further: “If you plan to stay connected with the host institution, how would you like to get involved? If not, why not?” For those who were interested in staying connected, the most common response was a willingness to come back and participate in a range of events geared to alumni; from coming back to speak at events such as “info days for students, to participating in future “alumni network events,” and organizing social events (10 respondents mentioned these and similar events). Three respondents said that they were willing to receive updates and news from THUAS and its international alumni (although that doesn’t mean that these respondents would be opposed to attending events as well). Two respondents mentioned that they would like to serve in some sort of mentor capacity for future international students, and help them “get integrated in this country.” Among those respondents who indicated disinterest in continuing their connection with the institution, two responded that they didn’t see how staying connected with the University would help them in the future. This response was echoed by one of the participants in the focus group, who said he would like to stay in touch with the City of The Hague, but not THUAS because he had already “learned what I needed” there, and continuing that association seemed pointless to him.

Finally, the last open-ended question of the survey asked, “Please explain the type of connections that you hope to build with your host country in the future.” The plurality of respondents expressed their desire to continue to live and work in The Netherlands. Two respondents said that they would like to form a network in The Netherlands, even if they didn’t necessarily end up living there. Three mentioned that they would like to have some sort of future business connection with The Netherlands (for example, one respondent stated: “I would like the company I am planning on starting to have contracts with others in the NL”), and three people said that they would like to come back primarily for visits or vacation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Best practices and recommendations are derived from research conducted with the participation of various stakeholders in the field of international exchange and development in Washington, DC and The Hague. Some of these stakeholders include: the case study clients, ISH and THUAS; NUFFIC, an international and domestic workforce development agency in the city of the Hague that supports internationalization in higher education, research and professional education in The Netherlands and abroad, and helps improve access to higher education worldwide; International Community Platform, an organization that helps build the bridge between international demand and local supply in the Greater The Hague region; The World Class program (special events and lecture series for international and domestic scholars studying in the Hague); and the Student Hotel, a residence for a select group international students studying in The Netherlands (opening in the Hague by 2014). Extensive survey data, interviews and the literature review informed the following amalgamation of best practices and recommendations.

International Student House

Sense of welcome upon arrival:

1. Formalize a peer-to-peer orientation and welcome staff committee; train interested individuals as peer orientation leaders whose primary role is to welcome new residents to the house and city and show new residents how to do basic things such as opening a bank account, arranging insurance, finding good food and grocery shops, renting bikes, etc. This will not only ensure a standardized orientation for new residents and strong social connections in the house, but it will also provide a professional development opportunity (as an orientation leader) for those interested in building their work experience while in the United States.

2. Place a welcome letter from the Executive Director (or the ISH Board) to be placed in the room of the international resident (along with a chocolate) to create a positive welcome experience.

Community bonding (Programming and Support):

3. Formalize a voluntary buddy program that pairs American students (from inside or outside the ISH) with international residents; this ensures higher likelihood that the international student will be fully oriented and bonded to the institution, city and even American culture.

4. Incorporate home hospitality into the international resident experience by partnering with the ISH Board, local universities and the DC community to identify and connect American families interested in hosting an international
resident. Offer varied options for those interested in hosting students for a meal/day/weekend or longer term stays.

5. Develop a participant driven dialogue group for international and domestic students desiring to learn about different cultures and interested in developing their intercultural competence by engaging in cultural activities, simulations and assumption-challenging dialogues on different topics pertaining to identity. One or two facilitators may be utilized to guide dialogue among participants and to ensure respectful conversation. Dialogue programs are found not only to improve social bonding between international and domestic residents, but they also increases intercultural competence and language development of participants.

6. Organize more site visits to various schools, businesses and education institutions in the area as a means to building community partnerships and fostering dialogue among residents and the greater DC community.

7. Develop more social and professional opportunities for residents to get to know ISH Board members in more meaningful ways (i.e. invite ISH Board members as guest speakers at professional development events and ISH alumni-student networking receptions).

8. Invite community and business leaders from diverse fields and industries to speak on various topics such as community involvement and career development opportunities.

Alumni Retention:

9. Generate a longer-term sense of welcome and community among alumni by leaving one or two rooms available in the house for alumni to stay in as guests.

10. Open the house once or twice a month for alumni to come to dinner.

11. Host happy hour and networking events for current residents, alumni, ISH Board members and partnering community members to bond in a more casual atmosphere (the house).

12. Hire staff or create a resident internship position to manage alumni relations or incorporate alumni relations into an existing employee’s duties. The manager of alumni relations would primarily provide outreach to alumni, ensuring frequent communication via social media, tracking and monitoring of alumni, organizing events and fundraisers, and engaging alumni interested in contributing to ISH financially and in other ways.

13. Formalize a mentorship program for current residents and alumni in the area; those alumni in various parts of the United States and abroad can still offer mentorship services through virtual means like Skype, email and phone contact.
14. Identify chapter leaders to coordinate country-specific alumni activities and events.

15. Incorporate a mixture of social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) and email to reach out to alumni.

Employment:

16. Continue offering career development workshops on topics such as U.S. style resume and cover letter writing, DC networking, job searching and the nature of professionalism.

17. Provide career information handout for residents during their stay at the house; this can be as simple as consolidating a list of job search resources, outlining the process for work authorization (longer term) and offering references to additional points of contact in the city for further information on employment.

18. Diversify guest speakers at the house to include professionals from the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields.

19. Organize Resident-Alumni networking receptions at least twice a year in the house.

20. Create searchable alumni database by region or country on ISH website that allows both current residents and alumni to search by name, organization, field/industry, desired mode of contact and possible mentorship areas of interest; this helps connect the ISH community to alumni in particular areas of the world in which there is an interest in finding employment, study abroad, or travel opportunities.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences

International Recruiting:

1. Emphasize to international students the importance of learning Dutch if the student is seeking employment during/after studies in The Netherlands.

2. Manage expectations of students regarding employers understanding of HBO versus WO university systems.
Orientation/welcome and sense of belonging:

3. Incorporate home hospitality into the international student experience. This can be done by utilizing the network of Dutch students currently studying at THUAS and Dutch families interested in hosting a student. Offer varied options for those interested in hosting students for a meal/day/weekend or longer term stays.

4. Implement a buddy system that pairs Dutch students with international students; the Dutch buddy will serve as a social liaison into the Dutch community and as a resource for orientation and other academic/non-academic concerns.

5. Develop a participant driven dialogue group for international and domestic students desiring to learn about different cultures and interested in developing their intercultural competence by engaging in cultural activities, simulations and assumption challenging dialogues. Dialogue programs are found not only to improve social bonding between international and domestic residents, but it also increases intercultural competence and language development of participants. Can be offered for course credit if aligned with certain program curriculum (like International Communications, Cross Cultural Studies, and Peace and Conflict Resolution programs).

Employment:

6. Develop one standard employer information handout for international students outlining the hiring and work authorization process for foreign workers.

7. Hold information sessions with local and international employers explaining the differences between HBO and WO, dispelling myths around employability of students from these university systems.

8. Organize employer information sessions for international students as a means to increase students’ network and awareness of job opportunities, and as a means to inform employers of the economic, social and cultural benefits of a diverse workforce and how to go about hiring international students.

9. Advise international students on the importance of learning Dutch if seeking employment in The Netherlands; provide resources for inexpensive ways to learn Dutch in the neighborhood (language centers, informal conversation groups, university offices).

10. Develop professional mentorship program between current students and alumni.

The researchers would like to thank International Student House and The Hague University of Applied Sciences for assisting with this research project. For any questions please refer to the researchers’ contact information in the Team Biography section.


Key Figures: How Many International Students are there in Holland?” NUFFIC (4 October 2013). http://www.studyinholland.nl/education-system/key-figures


1. Student Surveys
2. Sample ISH Board Interview Questions
3. Sample THUAS Interview Questions
4. Team Biographies
Survey on International Student Experiences

* Required

Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to complete the Survey on International Student Exchange experience. Please answer the survey as honestly and with as much detail as possible. Your responses will help us discover best practices in the recruitment and retention of international students studying in the United States and The Netherlands. The information will be used to prepare recommendations for The Hague University of Applied Sciences and the International Student House.

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes.

Demographics

1) What is your age? *
   - Under 18
   - 18-20
   - 21-23
   - 24-26
   - 27 and older

2) What is your country of citizenship? *

3) What year are you enrolled in? *
   - 1st Year
   - 2nd Year
   - 3rd Year
   - 4th Year
   - 1st Year Masters
   - 2nd Year Masters
   - Other Post-Graduate
   - Intern
   - Visiting Scholar

4) What is your program of study? *

5) Do you have previous experience studying or living abroad? *
6) Please Explain *

Pre-Program Questions

7) How long have you been in the host country? *
   - <12 months
   - 1-2 years
   - 2-3 years
   - 3-4 years
   - 4 or more years

9) Where did you get the information about studying in this country/information about your host institution? *

10) Why did you choose to study in this country? *
    Please check all that apply
    - Location
    - Financial aid provided
    - Academic reputation
    - Desire to learn a language
    - Professional opportunities
    - To learn more about the culture
    - Other:

11) What information were you provided before arrival by the host institution?
12. What was the most valuable information you received before your arrival in the host country?

- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Information about academic program
- [ ] Job opportunities
- [ ] Language/culture
- [ ] Other: ________________________________

13) What additional information do you wish you had been provided before arrival? *

Please check all that apply

- [ ] Housing
- [ ] Information about academic program
- [ ] Job opportunities
- [ ] Language/culture
- [ ] Other: ________________________________

Program Questions

14.) What information was most useful to you upon arrival in the host country? *


15) Did orientation meet your expectations? (Orientation refers to information or programs received from the institution before departure, upon arrival, or throughout the adaptation process. It is designed to help students adapt and transition into living and studying in the host country. (Meyer, 62) ) *

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not Applicable

16) During orientation, were you given information about the logistics of living in your host country? (Logistics include but are not limited to: information on opening a bank account, how to access health insurance, finding housing, using public transit, and knowing where to buy necessities.) *

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not Applicable
17) What was the source of this information? *

Please respond to the following statements:

18) Orientation made me feel welcome in (the University/ISH) *
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
   - Not Applicable

19) Orientation made me feel welcome to my host city (The Hague/Washington, D.C) *
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
   - Not Applicable

20) Orientation was a valuable experience *
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree
   - Not Applicable

21) How could orientation be improved?
22) What best describes your current housing situation? *
Please check all that apply
- Homestay
- International Student House
- Shared dormitory (on campus)
- Off-campus apartment (living alone)
- Off-campus apartment (living with roommates)
- Other: 

23) Please rate your overall satisfaction with your housing situation *
- Very Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

24) Do you believe your housing situation has influenced your experience in the host country? *
- Yes
- No

25) If so, how?

Please respond to the following statements:

26) My housing situation has enhanced my connection with my host city *
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not Applicable

27) My housing situation supports my academic achievement *
28) Has your housing situation offered opportunities to get better connected with local students? *
   - Yes
   - No

29) Have you had the opportunity to experience home hospitality? (Home hospitality “pairs international students with [local] host families or individuals who seek to welcome, befriend, and know international students for occasional interactions,” providing the opportunity to observe and experience local family life.) *
   - Yes
   - No

30) Do you think this would enhance your time abroad? *
   - Yes
   - No

Enhancement Activities

31) How could the (University/ISH) help you better adjust and integrate into the host community? *

32) What types of programs were offered by the host institution during your time abroad? *
   Please check all that apply
   - Professional workshops
   - Social events (such as happy hours, parties, movie nights, dinner)
   - City immersion activities
   - Guest speakers
   - Program that pairs international and domestic students
   - Other: [ ]
33) Do you find these programs helpful? *
- Yes
- No

34) Please explain your response to #33. If they were helpful, why? If not, why not?

[Box for free text input]

35) What additional programs would you like to see offered? *

[Box for free text input]

36) Have you made meaningful friendships with citizens of your host country? *
- Yes
- No

37) Have you made meaningful friendships with other international students?
- Yes
- No

**Employment/Internships**

38) During your time abroad, were you informed about employment or internship opportunities? *
- Yes
- No

39) Did you do an internship or work in the host country while you were abroad? *
- Yes
- No

40) If so, how did you go about finding employment?
- Job fair
41) Did you find barriers to entering the workplace?
   - Yes
   - No

42) If so, what types?

Post-Program Questions

43) Do you have an interest in finding employment in your host country after completing your program? *
   - Yes
   - No

44) Does your host institution provide information about employment opportunities for you? *
   - Yes
   - No

45) What are the challenges to accessing employment in your host country?

46) Have you applied for any long-term employment opportunities in your host country? *
   - Yes
   - No

47) Do you know any international students who have found employment in your host country?
after completing your program? *
- Yes
- No

48) What type of employment opportunities would encourage you to stay in the host country?

Please respond to the following statements:

49) I feel connected to my host country *
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not Applicable

50) I would recommend studying abroad in my host country *
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Not Applicable

51) I plan to keep in contact with my host institution *
- Yes
- No

52) If you plan on keeping in contact, what is your preferred means of communication? *
- Phone
- E-mail
- Facebook
- Skype
- Other: 

53) Are you interested in staying connected with your host institution after the program? *
54) If so, how would you like to get involved? If not, why not?

55) Please explain the type of connections that you hope to build with your host country in the future.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

100%: You made it.
ISH Board Interviews

Board Member Name: ______________________________

ISH Board Interviews:

Project Overview
1. Welcome/Intro
2. Explain what we we trying to do

Personal Connections/Perspectives
3. What inspired you to get involved in international student exchanges?
4. What do you think is the value of the International Student House and other organizations that help welcome international students?
5. Please explain briefly how you got connected with ISH.

Involvement
6. How involved are you in the ISH? Would you like to be more involved? If so, how?
7. Have you had interactions with the residents at ISH? Please explain your relationship.

Organizational Goals and Practices:
8. What practical information (logistics, orientation, etc.) does your organization provide to international students?
9. What information does your organization wish it could provide to international students?
10. Is there a discrepancy between international students’ expectations and what is offered to students before/during/after their stay in the host country?
11. Do you believe ISH does a good job making international students feel welcome to DC and the United States?
12. What programs do you provide that help international students feel welcome?
13. How do you think programming influences international students’ experiences?
14. What do you think ISH does best?
15. What changes or improvements would you like to see at ISH?

International Student Experience
16. What challenges do you see to international students feeling welcome?
17. What do you see as the most pressing needs for international students?
18. How do you think housing influences international students’ experiences?
19. Do you think international students generally have a positive experience living at the ISH?
20. How are international students first introduced to ISH? the city?
21. How does the ISH help international students build relationships between residents and local students, the local community, and the country as a whole?
ISH Board Interviews

22. How does the ISH work together with businesses, universities and nonprofits to support international students?

Employment Opportunities
23. Do you see international students having access to internship, part-time employment or long-term employment opportunities?
24. Do you see international students remaining in the host country for long-term employment after their studies are complete (6 months-10 years)?
25. How do you help international students secure internships and interact with local businesses?
26. Do you have any recommendations for connecting more international students to internship or employment opportunities?

Alumni Relations
27. Describe ISH’s current relationship with alumni?
28. How would you design ISH’s ideal alumni network?

Thank you so much for all of your time. Are you open to being contacted for any future clarifications or questions? If you think of anything, feel free to reach us at ____________.
THE HAGUE INTERVIEWS

Interviewee Name: ______________________________

The Hague Interviews:

Project Overview

1. Welcome/Intro
2. Explain what we are trying to do

Personal Connections/Perspectives

3. What inspired you to get involved in international student exchanges?
4. What is the current international student make up of the students in The Hague?

Organizational Goals and Practices:

5. What information does your organization wish it could provide to international students?
6. Is there a discrepancy between international students’ expectations and what is offered to students before/during/after their stay in the host country?
7. Do you believe your organization does a good job making international students feel welcome in The Hague?
8. **What programs do you provide that help international students feel welcome?
9. What do you think your organization does best?

Government Questions
10. Does the existing policy promote retention of foreign talent? If so, how? If not, why not?
11. What types of challenges do foreigners encounter when trying to find employment in the Netherlands?
12. How would you change the existing policy to encourage foreign nationals to stay and work in the Netherlands, particularly in desirable sectors?

International Student Experience
13. What challenges do you see to international students feeling welcome?
14. What do you see as the most pressing needs for international students?
15. How do you think housing influences international students’ experiences?
16. What is the current situation with housing and international students?
17. How are international students first introduced to the city?
18. How do businesses, universities and nonprofits work together to support international students?
19. What are the most pressing challenges international students face?
20. What are the “moments” of contacting students during the study abroad life cycle?
THE HAGUE INTERVIEWS

**Employment Opportunities**
21. Do you see international students having access to internship, part-time employment or long-term employment opportunities?
22. Do you see international students remaining in the host country for long-term employment after their studies are complete (6 months-10 years)?
23. How do you help international students secure internships and interact with local businesses

**Alumni Relations (THUAS)**
24. Describe your current relationship with international alumni?
25. How would you design your organization’s ideal alumni network?
26. Can you describe your organization’s connections with alumni?
27. Are your alumni actively involved? If so, how are they remaining connected to The Hague University?

**Specific Questions**
THUAS: How are World Class students selected?
THUAS: Why is World Class program so popular?
THUS: What is the difference between World Class representatives and Student Ambassadors?
THUAS: Alumni in W.C and S.A?
THUAS: Is there resistance to any of the internationalization policies?
THUAS/NUFFIC: What is the general knowledge about Internationalization?
ICP/Nuffic: Do you have any recommendations for connecting more international students to internship or employment opportunities?
NUFFIC: What are the best practices that you have seen for making international students feel welcome?
NUFFIC: What expectations do you have for universities in implementing effective welcome programs?
The Student Hotel: How does the ISH help international students build relationships between residents and local students, the local community, and the country as a whole?

**Extra Questions**

Thank you so much for all of your time. Are you open to being contacted for any future clarifications or questions? If you think of anything, feel free to reach us at ____________.
Gretchen Mielke

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Concentration: International Communication
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Gretchen Mielke was born in Easton, Maryland in a family with a rich tradition of hosting Rotary exchange students. Gretchen attended Dickinson College, graduating in 2006 with a B.A. in American Studies and minor in History. After completing a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in South Korea, Gretchen served as a national campus consultant for the Bonner Foundation in Princeton, NJ. The Bonner Foundation is a national leader of best practices in student development, campus-community partnerships, and academic service learning, with a network of 89 colleges and universities. Committed to its mission, providing “access to education, opportunity to serve,” Gretchen was part of a team providing management and support for a four-year academic community service scholarship program that provided more than $7.5 million annually to 1,500 students at 27 campuses; in addition, Gretchen supervised compliance for $1.5 million dollars in AmeriCorps education awards for 900 members at 61 affiliate campuses.

In 2009, Gretchen became the Assistant Director of Academic Community Engagement at Siena College in Loudonville, NY. In this role, Gretchen directed the Siena College Bonner Leaders Program for 40 students, which resulted in a $1 million endowment. Gretchen facilitated weekly leadership and professional development trainings, oversaw federal work-study, coordinated national conferences, and recruited students for summer internships, and a 30-person VISTA Fellows program. Gretchen is particularly proud of her role in creating a multi-year internship program in Bangalore, India. Gretchen vetted local partners and sought to create long-term, mutually beneficial, academic partnerships. Students were taught to understand the root causes of poverty locally, nationally, and internationally. They also learned how to act professionally across cultures by working in a leprosy hospital, unionizing domestic workers, or teaching children with disabilities in a country with more than 120 different languages.

As a graduate student in her final semester, Gretchen is the graduate assistant for Alternative Break at American University. She trains students to understand the power of global citizenship in addition to focusing on program evaluation.
Lauren Moloney-Egnatios was born in Detroit, Michigan and raised in a Lebanese-Irish family with her three older sisters. She grew up in Detroit for the first 10 years of her life and lived in the suburbs of Detroit for the next 8 years. Living between these two worlds, she gained awareness of racial inequity and intercultural conflict. At age 18, having received a full merit-based scholarship, Lauren attended the University of Michigan of Ann Arbor for her undergraduate education. There, she studied organizational development and leadership and minored in the Spanish Language.

Lauren was first immersed into the world of international education and cultural diplomacy after studying abroad in Sevilla, Spain. After spending 8 months living with a host family and traveling through Europe, she received a teaching scholarship through the Spanish Ministry of Education and began her career overseas in Malaga, Spain. Her first experience working with international students was as an ESL teacher at an International Language School in Malaga. In this role, Lauren planned, facilitated, and implemented several language and culture classes for international students. This experience taught her the power of intercultural education as a means to building cultural understanding and acceptance of difference. Seeking a way to give back to her community, during the next three years, Lauren continued to teach English and culture to international students and founded an international exchange program, Adelante Journeys, for disadvantaged Spanish and American high school students.

In efforts to expand the program and gain further knowledge of the field, Lauren returned to the United States to attend graduate school. While applying to graduate schools, she spent a year teaching Spanish and serving as the International Program Developer at Emerson Waldorf High School in Chapel Hill, NC. At the end of the academic year, she led a group of 13 high school boys on a Spanish language service learning trip to Costa Rica. That summer, Lauren traced her family lineage in Lebanon and spent two months studying Arabic in Beirut. In the Fall of 2011, Lauren moved to Washington, DC to begin her graduate program in International Communication at the School of International Affairs, American University.

She is currently the Information Specialist at the Career Center at American University. Lauren serves as an administrator, career resource broker and front line advisor to undergraduate, graduate and international students. Lauren is particularly proud of her work in collaboration with the International Office developing web and print career resources for international students and a workshop program series for this student population. She also provides intercultural training for the Career Center and other department staff members.
Julie Trinh is a first generation Vietnamese-American who was born and raised in San Jose, California. She attended Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she received her bachelor’s degree in 2012 with degrees in Political Science, with an emphasis on Congress, as well as International Relations, focusing on humanitarian operations and East Asian studies.

Her first experience with international education and cultural exchanges occurred while at Duquesne working as a teaching assistant, tutor, and conversation partner for the English as a Second Language Department. A part of her responsibility was to organize and facilitate bi-monthly meetings between American and international students to discuss varying educational and social topics. During her undergraduate career she also studied abroad in the summer of 2011 in Shanghai, China where she participated in an intensive Mandarin language program. After studying abroad under The Alliance for Global Education, she became an Alumni Advisor at her university and represented that program. She became the main point of contact for students who were interested in studying abroad in China and participated in panels and study abroad fairs.

After graduating from Duquesne, she served with KEYS Service Corps AmeriCorps working with at-risk youth in the Pittsburgh community. In fall 2012, Julie began her graduate studies in Comparative and Regional Studies, specializing in the East and Southeast Asian regions, at American University in Washington, D.C. In the spring of 2013, she interned at the Ameson Education and Cultural Exchange Foundation, which promoted exchanges between students and educators within the United States and China. During the summer of 2013 she served as an intern in the economic section at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing through the U.S. Department of State. In the fall of 2013 she served in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. She aspires to join the Foreign Service in the future. Julie is currently working as a counselor at Janney Elementary School in Washington, D.C.
Monika Young was born in Rhode Island, and grew up in Greenville, South Carolina. She earned her BA in French and Political Science at Furman University in May 2011, during which time she experienced her first international exchange experience, spending four months living with a family in Versailles, France in 2008. She spent eight months (from October 2011 to May 2012) with the Teaching Assistant Program in France (TAPIF) assistant teaching English in the northern Paris suburb of Ermont. The experience of teaching many students from immigrant backgrounds led her to develop a research interest in immigration and identity in Europe, and more specifically, in North African identity in France. This interest led her to the Comparative and Regional Studies (CRS) program at the School of International Service, and to a European regional specialization.

During the first semester of her second year, she was an exchange student at l’Institut d’études politiques de Paris, or Sciences Po, studying in their European Affairs masters. After taking a class that focused on educational exchange programs as a tool of public diplomacy for the European Union, she became interested in the field of cultural exchange and public diplomacy. For her, public diplomacy provides a theoretical framework in which to place interests that she has held for some time while not knowing that they constituted a field of study. Because of this newfound interest, she is currently pursuing a Topic Concentration in Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, and taking courses in Global Public Diplomacy and Diplomatic Practice. This semester, she is working as a intern at the European Institute. She hopes to continue working in transatlantic relations after her graduation, with an eventual career aspiration to either become a Foreign Service Officer or work in the field of diplomacy more generally.