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STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES FRAMED IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INSTITUTION'S FISCAL HEALTH

by

Tobias Bruhn

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services & Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
March 10, 2016

Dissertation Chair: Dr. MaryBeth Walpole

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Dedications

To my wife, daughter, and parents. Thank you for your love, support, and patience.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been completed without the support from so many people. I wish to offer my most heartfelt thanks to the following people:

To my wife, Laura. You always supported my pursuit of this degree despite the long hours in front of the computer which frequently resulted in missed family time and events. You have been my motivation throughout this time and were always there when I needed you the most. Thank you and I love you.

To my daughter, Lizzie. Sorry I was unable to attend all of your events over the last few years. You are an amazing person. Thank you for making me laugh when I needed it the most. I love you.

To my Mom and Dad. Nur durch Euch hatte ich die Möglichkeit in den USA erwachsen zu werden. Eure Großzügigkeit und Liebe werde ich nie vergessen. Vielen Dank für alles. And to my "American" family and friends. Thank you for your patience.

To my dissertation advisor, Dr. MaryBeth Walpole. Thank you for your guidance, encouragement, support, and for keeping me on the right path. Without our semi-monthly meetings, I probably would still be writing.

To the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. James Coaxum, Dr. James Linksz, and Dr. Jill Schwarz, as well as my graduate cohort. Thank you for your patience, advice, and support.

To my study participants. This dissertation could not have been completed without your participation. Thank you.

Abstract

Tobias Bruhn
STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES FRAMED IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INSTITUTION'S FISCAL HEALTH
2015-2016
MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this study was to understand the strategic role international students play in the overall fiscal health of select community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States, as well as to explore the marketing and recruitment strategies used to interact with international students and their effectiveness.

This study used a qualitative multiple case study approach and was conducted at 11 community colleges which varied in geographic location and by the student populations they serve. Academic capitalism served as the guiding conceptual framework.

Key findings of the study indicate that international students were generally viewed as an attractive and important revenue stream and financial opportunity, cultural benefits international students added to the classroom and overall campus environment outweighed the economic benefits, traditional marketing and recruitment strategies, including local agents and recruitment fairs, produced mixed results and received mixed reviews, and a lack of understanding of the community college system by international students and their families was a disadvantage in today's competitive recruiting market.

Finally, this study offers a leadership perspective on this topic by using senior college administrators' own rich description within the academic capitalism framework.

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Chapter 1

Introduction of the Study

According to the Institute of International Education, a total of 819,644 international students enrolled in America's colleges and universities during the 2012-2013 academic year, representing 3.9% of the 21.2 million students enrolled in the United States (IIE, 2013). Despite the relatively small number of international students compared to the total collegiate student population, the importance of international students is clear to campuses and well documented in today's literature (Alberts, 2007; Guruz, 2011). However, the United States has lost its competitive advantage in attracting international students due to governmental and institutional initiatives (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers: Association of International Educators [NAFSA], 2013). For example, the United Kingdom and Australia have both achieved double-digit percentage increases in international student enrollment in recent years, while international student enrollment growth in the United States has averaged 5.25% since the 2008-2009 academic year (NAFSA, 2013).

Although international enrollment growth has slowed, this enrollment has grown in strategic importance to higher education institutions in the United States because these students bring academic, cultural, and economic benefits (Alberts, 2007; Guruz, 2011). For example, the tuition structure at America's public colleges and universities requires international students to typically pay two to three times more than the average in-state student, which reflects positively on an institution's fiscal health. On the other hand, the high tuition cost presents a major obstacle for international students because they are unable to obtain a job with the exception of on-campus jobs. Additionally, international

students contribute to a diverse student body within higher education because international students represent various cultures, perspectives, and talents, which creates a desirable environment of varied viewpoints and experiences in and outside the classroom (Carini, Kuh, & Zhao, 2005). Further, while international student recruitment and education provides cultural insight, potential strategic partnerships, and global good will, revenue generation from out-of-state tuition rates motivates institutions to recruit international students (Carini et al., 2005). In fact, in 2013, the estimated contribution of international students to the United States economy was $24 billion according to the U.S. Department of Commerce (IIE, 2013). In addition to the significant financial implications, international students on campus are a clear and visible sign of a higher education system's globalization. For example, they contribute to the research enterprise, scholarly publication, the promotion of English as the world's major scientific language, and the internationalization of knowledge and research in an integrated world economy (Altbach, 1991).

The presence of international students is typically the result of higher education institutions' deliberate efforts to recruit and host them and of the students' enrollment choices. The global economic and political climate also contributes to international student enrollment trends, which, historically, have experienced periods of strong growth as well as brief periods of decline. The creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1944 and the Fulbright Act by the United States in 1945 aided the cultural exchange and education (Knowles, 1977). In 1948, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers was founded to promote the professional development of American college and university officials responsible for

assisting and advising the 25,000 foreign students who had come to study in the United States after World War II (Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, 2014; NAFSA, 2014). Not surprisingly, the presence of international students consistently grew due to enhanced institutional services and international students' demand for high quality education (Bochner, 1973).

However, community colleges have not enjoyed similar growth of their international student population compared to four-year institutions (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). In fact, their international enrollment declined from 95,785 during the 2008-2009 academic year, to 87,997 students in 2011-2012, representing an 8.1% decrease (IIE, 2013). During the same time frame, international student enrollment at four-year institutions grew 13.8% from 671,616 to 764,495 (IIE, 2013). While the enrollment trends are troubling for community colleges, the strategic importance financially is evident since international students attending America's community colleges in 2012 paid $1.2 billion in tuition, fees, books, and supplies (Economic Modeling Specialists Int. [EMSI], 2014).

This qualitative dissertation attempted to understand the strategic role international students play in the overall financial health of 14 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States, as well as how these institutions measured the effectiveness of their interactions with this student population.[1] Community college professionals in senior management positions responsible for the institution's strategic direction and fiscal health, as well as those working directly with international students or those engaged in strategic enrollment management, participated

[1] International students will be defined as those who are not United States citizens or permanent residents, possessing an F1 or J1 student visa, and who are enrolled full-time.

in this study. Academic capitalism served as the major theoretical framework to examine research findings. The term academic capitalism flourished in the 1990s as government support for education declined and government officials tried to link postsecondary education to business innovation (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Furthermore, higher education institutions became dependent on sources beyond public support.

In addition to background information, this chapter provides the purpose of this study, outlines its limitations, identifies the problem and the research questions used to explore it, and briefly describes the study's conceptual framework. The idea for this dissertation originated several years ago when I explored enrollment trends of international students locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. In addition, I came to the United States as an international student in 1993 to spend a year as a high school exchange student. After graduating from high school, I decided to enroll at a community college to continue my American higher education experience, which culminated in a bachelor's and master's degree.

Concept Map

In order to understand the strategic importance of international students for the overall fiscal health of America's colleges and universities, one needs to understand the tension between the benefits that this student populations adds to the collegiate environment in the United States, and the complexities associated with recruiting and marketing to them due to increased global competition, high tuition costs, and federal and state laws and regulations (Özturgut, 2013). The concept map in figure 1 shows the major themes found in today's literature that motivate higher education institutions to recruit international students. These themes are displayed as a perfect circle to emphasize

the close relationship and lack of linearity between the opportunities, challenges, risks, and benefits of recruiting international students.

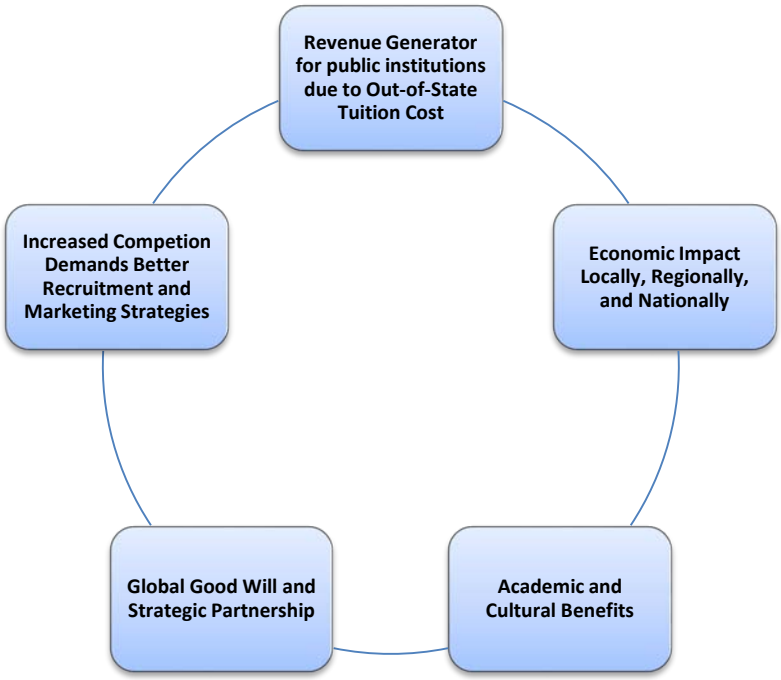

Figure 1. Concept map: Showing the strategic importance of international students to America's colleges and universities.

Statement of the Problem

Considering the challenging economic climate since the 2008 recession and the resulting budgetary constraints for community colleges, the international student population has grown in strategic importance at two-year institutions due to the fact that, on average, they pay three times the amount of tuition that an in-state resident student pays. For example, tuition at Houston Community College for the fall 2014 semester was $66.40 per credit hour for an in-district student compared to $155.90 for an international

student (Houston Community College, 2014). Houston Community College is America's top rated destination for international students, enrolling 5,333 (IIE, 2013). Despite this significant difference in tuition and the fact that community colleges offer international students a cheaper entry point into higher education and easy transfer to four-year colleges and universities, they make-up only 1.1% of community college enrollment and have not enjoyed similar enrollment growth as four-year institutions did (IIE, 2013).

Despite the importance of international students to higher education institutions in the United States, most studies on international student enrollment and recruitment have focused on four-year institutions. In addition, little is known about critical programmatic or academic gaps they encounter or about their perspectives regarding their academic engagement, retention, personal development, skill acquisition, learning, and success (Carini et al., 2005). Detailed qualitative research about community colleges' strategic view of international students has not been conducted. The strategic decision-making process, marketing process, and recruitment process analysis in this study will assist these colleges in understanding their needs and moving forward in enrolling international students.

The extent of community colleges' desire to recruit international students was important in terms of the conceptual underpinning of this study. Examining the literature, there seemed to be two general areas of international student issues that researchers tended to examine. On the one hand, acculturation and adaptation studies examined the campus factors impacting international students and their transition to college in the United States; on the other hand, academic studies examined classroom problems including language issues, unfamiliar teaching styles, class structure

differences, testing concerns, and plagiarism (Andrade, 2006; Berry, 1997). In contrast to these two foci, this study used a qualitative research approach to examine the strategic importance of recruiting international students for community colleges framed in the context of the institutions' overall fiscal health. It did not attempt to compare populations among institutions but rather focused on collecting a range of responses from the numerous community college administrators interviewed. The academic capitalism theoretical framework provided the lens to understand the collected responses, specifically how international students relate to an institution's overall fiscal health and how the marketing and recruitment strategies are geared to attract them to community colleges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the strategic importance of recruiting international students for community colleges framed in the context of an institution's overall fiscal health, as well as to explore the marketing and recruitment strategies used to interact with international students and their effectiveness. Successful international student enrollment results from effective marketing and active recruitment efforts (Tollefson, 2009). However, many higher education institutions are restrained by limited funding and resources. This is especially true for community colleges as many of them are experiencing budget cut from states, the primary source of their funding (Tollefson, 2009). Community colleges have shown great interest in enrolling more international students as evidenced by recruitment efforts sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and regional consortia such as Study Illinois (Bohman, 2009). This study provides educational leaders with information about the relationship

between international students and the fiscal health of select community colleges, as well as successful strategies to recruit and interact with this student population.

Research Questions

Framed by the research setting, problem and purpose, the following questions guided this inquiry:

(a) How do the community colleges under study describe the role of their international student population?

(b) How do the community colleges under study perceive the connection between international student recruitment and enrollment and their fiscal health?

(c) What marketing and recruitment strategies do administrators at the community colleges under study use to attract international students?

(d) How do marketing and admissions professionals at the community colleges under study measure the effectiveness of their marketing and recruitment efforts?

Data Collection and Analysis

All participants at the institutions under study were invited to participate via a letter followed by an e-mail reiterating the purpose and time commitment required. After completing a consent form, a mutually convenient time was arranged to conduct the interview at each person's campus. Video conferencing would have been used to conduct the interview only if a participant was unable to participate in person. First choice of a participant was the institution's president. Additionally, interviews were conducted with select vice presidents, dean/director of admissions, and/or international student program coordinators. Each participant was informed of his or her rights and assigned a pseudonym. A confidentiality statement and a biographic consent form was given to all

participants before the interview questions were asked (Creswell, 2014). An audio recording of each participant's responses was transcribed and analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and theme development (Creswell, 2014). The analysis was filtered through the academic capitalism theoretical framework to find themes in chapter five.

Importance of this Study

This study provides a qualitative account of the connection of international student recruitment to the fiscal health of 11 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. This was the first time qualitative data has been collected about the strategic importance of recruiting and enrolling international students in this particular higher education setting, with the intent for other community college presidents and administrators to learn strategic intentions, funding choices, and best practices from similar institutions. This was especially important considering the growth of this student population across higher education and the benefits they add to an institution's academic and campus climate.

Limitations of this Study

This study was limited by the number of participants. The research is not transferrable to other institutions in other parts of the country. However, this study provides an overview of how these institutions located in a Middle Atlantic state in in the United States view international students and their importance to the overall fiscal health. Specifically, the qualitative approach elicited personal responses from administrators that may be adding value to other institution's approaches to international student recruitment. Future research will be necessary to expand upon the views and strategies expressed by the institutions under study.

Summary

This qualitative study explored the relationship of international student recruitment at 11 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States to the institutions' fiscal health. Using academic capitalism as a theoretical framework, the findings provide community college administrators with a better understanding of the ways international students can positively impact an institution's fiscal health (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

The next chapter discusses the emergence of the community college option, and provides a historical account of international students in the United States and a profile of those studying at U.S. higher education institutions, with a special focus given to those studying at community colleges. Further, Chapter 2 explores the strategic importance of international students to the higher education sector, discusses their decision-making processes in deciding to study abroad and selecting a particular institution, and how the marketing and recruitment strategies of colleges and universities impact this process. A discussion on legislative and immigration obstacles for international students, and an exploration of theoretical perspectives, specifically academic capitalism, on the selection process and factors that influence international students concludes Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Emergence of International Students and Community Colleges in the United States

During the 1800s, Germany was the top destination for American students and scholars, with over 9,000 Americans enrolling in Germany's universities (Fincher, 1996). On the other hand, only a very small number of students came to the United States to study (Melby, 1966). What Americans learned and brought back ultimately became the model for the today's university system. For example, Johns Hopkins University adopted the principles of German universities for the purpose of making studying abroad unnecessary (Fincher, 1996). Other institutions followed this example, including the University of Chicago, Harvard University, Yale University, and Columbia University. The German university concept not only influenced America's research institutions, but the entire higher education sector as well (Fincher, 1996). However, as will be explained later in this chapter, the U.S. became the top destination for international students in the 20th century.

The U.S. higher education system offers international students the opportunity to select from among thousands of different colleges and universities, including community colleges. Formerly called junior colleges, community colleges were founded in the 1900's, on the principles of providing the populations of their surrounding communities with affordable access to higher education, and of creating a more skilled workforce, which would result in a stronger economy (Anon, 2012). Communities responded because community colleges provided associate degrees, certificate programs, developmental courses, vocational programs, distance learning opportunities, flexible

scheduling, childcare, veteran resources, counseling, and employment for the communities in which they were located (Anon, 2012). Today, community colleges have grown to more than 1,100 institutions nationwide (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2014). They educate approximately 45% of all undergraduates in the U.S. as well as contribute to their communities through workforce training and economic development initiatives (AACC, 2014).

Driven by society's desire for access to public education and social equality, the popularity of community colleges grew rapidly after opening their doors because the graduation rates of public high schools across the country had increased dramatically, yet America's elite colleges were too costly to accommodate the increase (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, & Suppiger, 1994). Several prominent university presidents proposed establishing more junior colleges to educate freshman and sophomore students thereby addressing the growing high school populations (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). However, that plan was abandoned due to the growing need to train workers and advance knowledge in science and technology, which the establishment of community colleges filled (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). In fact, community colleges became an important destination for unemployed people during the Great Depression (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Vocational education became more prominent post-World War II, as community colleges tried to accommodate returning soldiers through the support of the GI Bill. In the 1960s and 1970s, more than 450 new community colleges opened their doors to accommodate the more than 1 million students who enrolled mainly to avoid the Vietnam War draft (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The 1970s saw continued growth despite growing concerns about the educational effectiveness of community

colleges. Double-digit inflation, state revenue shortfalls, and escalating energy costs gave rise to academic accountability issues (Thelin, 2004). However, by the end of the 1980s, 1,200 community colleges had been created with an enrollment of over four million students (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

During the 1990s, community colleges began to shift their missions due to the need to meet the economic development and workforce training needs of business and industry as well as the global economy (Levin, 2001). This shift was motivated by the need to increase enrollment and funding because of declines in political support, and the failure to enhance connections to political and economic elites (Dougherty & Bakia, 2000). Propelled by a need to generate additional sources of revenue to subsidize diminishing state allocations, business-education partnerships in contract training have become increasingly important and account for a growing percentage of community college enrollments in recent years (Bragg, 2002).

In an effort to identify additional revenue sources, community colleges also began to discover the strategic importance of international student enrollment, because these students bring academic, cultural, and economic benefits to campuses and communities alike. These students can serve as catalysts who promote academic exchange and international cooperation; promote faculty research and teaching; promote an institution's reputation, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; add diversity to the campus community; and expose other students to different perspectives and critical thinking skills essential in the global economy (Alberts, 2007; Guruz, 2011). However, with the emergence of the United Kingdom and Australia, which have achieved double-digit percentage increases in international student

enrollment in recent years, the United States has lost its competitive advantage in the face of global governmental and institutional initiatives at a time when these students' resources have become more valued (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers: Association of International Educators [NAFSA] and the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, 2013).

History of Foreign Students in the United States

In order to fully understand today's global competition for international students and the complexities of recruiting them, one first needs to understand the history of foreign students in the United States. Their beginnings in America are attributed to the sponsorship of Christian missionaries propagating Christianity in developing countries during the nineteenth century (DuBois, 1962). Organized efforts to bring international students to the United States started with the end of World War I when several organizations emerged to promote peace by increasing cross-cultural understanding through education (DuBois, 1962). For example, the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded in 1919 to promote, facilitate, and administer exchange programs between the United States and other nations (IIE, 2013). In 1921, 6,740 international students studied in the U.S. (IIE, 2013). Over the next decade, that number grew to 10,000. Rapid growth slowed, however, due to the global instability, resulting in only 10,300 reported international students in the U.S. by 1945-1946, the end of World War II (Knowles, 1977). Having more stability thereafter, the number of international students studying in the U.S. increased from 10,300 to 25,400, a 247% increase, between 1946 and 1949 (Knowles, 1977). This increase is attributed to scholars seeking refuge to continue their research and to students avoiding the draft or escaping prosecution (Du

Bois, 1962). In addition, the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1944 and the Fulbright Act by the United States in 1945 aided the cultural exchange and education (Knowles, 1977). The trend of dramatic increases in international student enrollment continued until the 1980s when such increases became more consistent each decade (see Table 1).

Table 1

International Student Enrollment and U.S. Higher Education by Decade, 1949/50 – 2009/10

Year	International Students	% Change by Decade
1949/50	26,433	-
1959/60	48,486	83.4%
1969/70	134,959	178.3%
1979/80	286,343	112.2%
1989/90	386,851	35.1%
1999/00	514,723	33.1%
2009/10	690,923	34.2%

Note: Population data provided by Institute of International Education. (2013). "International Student Enrollment Trends, 1949/50-2012/13." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from http://www.iie.org/opendoors

Analyzing the enrollment trends of the IIE's (2013) International Student Census, there have been periods of strong growth followed by periods of slow growth over the last decade. Following the September 11th attacks, the number of international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions actually decreased by 2.4% in the academic

year 2003/2004, as compared to the previous academic year, and another decrease of 1.3% occurred in 2004/2005 and of .05% in 2005/2006 (IIE, 2013).

Yet, the number of students began to grow again in the 2006-2007 academic year. In the 2012-2013 academic year, 819,644 international students enrolled in the U.S., which was 3.9% of the 21.2 million students enrolled in America's colleges and universities (IIE, 2013). Out of the 819,644 international students, 146,500 attended the 1,167 community colleges across the country. In addition, over 40 two-year colleges had 500 or more international students enrolled (AACC, 2012). According to the IIE (2013), the top ten places of origin for international students enrolled in America's community colleges during the 2012-2013 academic year were: China (25.4%), India (13.1%), South Korea (9.5%), Saudi Arabia (4.5%), Canada (3.5%), Taiwan (3.0%), Japan (2.6%), Vietnam (2.0%), Mexico (1.8%), Turkey (1.6%). This composition differed only slightly from to the top 10 places of origin of international students enrolled across all types of higher education institutions: China (28.7%), India (11.8%), South Korea (8.6%), Saudi Arabia (5.4%), Canada (3.3%), Taiwan (2.7%), Japan (2.4%), Vietnam (2%), Mexico (1.7%), and Turkey (1.3%) (IIE, 2013). The top five states that hosted international students included: California, New York, Texas, Massachusetts, and Illinois (IIE, 2013). Looking more closely at international students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which was the sixth ranked state in the nation based on total international student enrollment, 37,280 international students attended during the 2012-2013 academic year and contributed $1.2 billion dollars to the local economy (IIE, 2013). The top 5 places of origin for international students in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania mirrored the

national composition: China (32.4%), India (14.0%), South Korea (8.1%), Saudi Arabia (6.2%), and Canada (3.4%) (IIE, 2013).

International student demographics have remained fairly consistent over the years. For example, the vast majority of international students who came to study in the U.S. were single (94.8% for community colleges and 90% at all institutions). In addition, 50.6% of international students attending community colleges were male while 49.4% were female. In comparison, the total international student population in the U.S. was 55.6% male and 44.4% female. Finally, 88.6% of international students at associate degree-granting institutions attended full-time, while 93.9% did so when looking at all institutional types (IIE, 2013).

The United States has been the destination of choice for the majority of foreign students seeking to study abroad in the twenty-first century (Chin, 2004). Evan M. Ryan, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, commented in the Open Door report that international education promotes relationship building and knowledge exchange between people in the United States and around the world, and that the experience gathered during a cultural exchange lasts a lifetime (IIE, 2013). Further, Ryan encouraged U.S. schools to welcome international students to their campuses because of the fact that international students enrich classrooms, campuses, and communities in ways that endure long after students return to their home countries (IIE, 2013).

Without question, the presence of international students benefits the U.S. economically, politically, and academically. A 2014 study conducted by the Economic Modeling Specialists Int. (EMSI) for the American Association for Community Colleges, estimated that a total of 146,500 international students attended America's community

colleges in 2012 and paid $1.2 billion in tuition, fees, books, and supplies. In addition to these educational expenses, international students spent money to purchase groceries, housing, and transportation, as well as other necessities. The primary sources of funding for international students were personal and family resources (63.6%), stipends from U.S. colleges and universities (21.5%), foreign governments or universities (5.8%), current employers (5.3%), and foreign private sponsors (1.3%) (IIE, 2013). In 2013, the estimated contribution of international students to the United States economy was $24 billion according to the U.S. Department of Commerce (IIE, 2013).

The financial impact international students have on the higher education sector and the overall economy encourages U.S. colleges and universities to establish international branch campuses, hire recruiters and international student specialists, and build service organizations related to international students in order to increase the number of international students on their campuses (Altbach, 1998). From a political standpoint, educating the future leaders of foreign countries helps spread U.S. political values and influence, creating goodwill towards the U.S. throughout the world (NAFSA, 2003). Especially for developing countries, the opportunity for their students to study abroad can strengthen the home country's development due to the specialized training these students receive (Lee, 2007). The danger, however, is intellectual loss because of students not returning home, and a growing dependence on more developed countries, thereby reinforcing the inequitable distribution of resources and knowledge (Lee, 2007). Finally, international graduate students have become a key component of teaching and research in U.S. higher education, particularly in the scientific fields (Altbach, 1991).

Enrollment Choices and Obstacles

Literature on international students' enrollment choices can be divided into studies that focus on their motivations to study abroad, e.g. second language acquisition, and those that focus on their decision-making process to study at a particular institution, e.g. an institution's cost and location. The reasons why students pursue international study is to explore a different culture, learn a second language and new ways of thinking and behaving, make new friends, and improve their cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade 2006; Fry, 1984; McClure 2007). Competency in a foreign language is particularly important for professionals in countries where the national language is not used internationally in order to be able to interact with professionals in other parts of the world. Finally, upward social mobility is a motivator for some students to study abroad. Moreover, for some women students, studying abroad can provide a sense of self-fulfillment and independence not experienced in their home countries (Habu, 2000).

Looking at major obstacles encountered by international students, several authors note a lack of English preparation upon arrival in the U.S., a low level of interaction between international students and domestic students, difficulties with securing housing in the surrounding area, insufficient counseling and health services, documentation issues, safety threats, and dietary restrictions (Anderson, Carmichael, Harper, & Huang, 2009; Andrade, 2006; Chase & Mahoney, 1996). The lack of English preparation may even be the single greatest barrier experienced by international students, since it affects both their ability to academically succeed and socially engage with other students (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Additionally, academic and financial difficulties, interpersonal problems, loss of social support, and alienation and homesickness can be obstacles (Yeh & Inose,

2003). Occasionally, foreign students are exploited and receive a low quality education because higher education institutions regard internationalization as little more than a chance to sell products to foreigners (Altbach & Teichler, 2001).

Institutions should also consider the possibility of racial discrimination in the host community affecting this student population (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Discrimination in the lives of international students must be acknowledged, and institutions need to be mindful that there are different problems for people from different cultures and nations (Lee & Rice, 2007). Students from different countries reported different rates of discrimination, and students from Asia, India, the Middle East, and Latin America emphasized racism as part of their experiences (Lee & Rice, 2007). In sum, students who are not provided with effective social, cultural, or economic support may be vulnerable to exploitation or social exclusion. There is a strong need to be aware of such problems in order to ensure an effective and enriching experience for international students and the institutions which host them.

Despite the enrollment choices international students have to make and the obstacles they face, having international students on campus is a clear and visible sign of a higher education system's globalization. Further, they contribute to the research enterprise, to scholarly publication, to the promotion of English as the world's major scientific language, and to the internationalization of knowledge and research in an integrated world economy (Altbach, 1991). Internationalization, defined as integrating a global focus into the purpose of postsecondary education (Knight, 2004), engages different stakeholders in an effort to prepare higher education institutions for an increasingly diverse, globally focused external environment (Ellingboe, 1998).

Legislation Impacting International Students

As mentioned earlier, international student enrollment in the United States started to slow after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, largely because the U.S. Congress increased the monitoring of educational visas, resulting in delay in visa issuance, put in place by the federal Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (Patriot) Act (Kim, 2007; Lee, 2007). International students typically enter the United States as nonimmigrants under one of the following visa categories: F visas for academic study; M visas for vocational study; and J visas for cultural exchange (Chellaraj et al., 2008). In 2004, higher education institutions observed the first absolute decline in international student enrollments since 1971 (IIE, 2013). This decline was attributed to the increased competition from other host countries such as Britain and Australia, as well as the improved economic situation in home countries (Alberts, 2007). Other factors that contributed to the decline included perceptions of discrimination against international students from the Middle East; international sentiments opposed to the handling of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; barriers created by the United States to limit and monitor foreign students, such as the Patriot Act; the financial costs of studying and living in America; and rising employment opportunities in the sciences and technical fields in less developed countries (Lee & Rice, 2007).

Calls for an international education policy, led by NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange, intensified in the post-September 11th environment. In 2003, the two organizations called upon the U.S. government to renew its commitment to international education before losing market dominance to other countries, which had launched

aggressive recruitment strategies (NAFSA, 2013). In 2004, NAFSA (2013) warned the White House that the United States could become isolated and that top talent from abroad might go elsewhere. In the letter, NAFSA (2013) called for an improved visa process to facilitate the entry of foreign students, scholars, and scientists to the United States.

Another major, yet controversial, policy that would impact the ability of colleges and universities to attract international students to study in America is the Development, Relief and Education of Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. First introduced in 2001, the DREAM Act is designed to help individuals, including international students, have a path to citizenship. In fact, undocumented immigrants are considered international students in most of the United States with the exception about a dozen states (Lieszkovszky, 2013). While the co-sponsors have changed over the years, the DREAM Act has failed to become law despite the fact that it has generally enjoyed broad, bipartisan and public support from the following educational organizations and associations: National Education Association, American Association of Community Colleges, Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities, National Parent Teacher Association, National Association for College Admissions Counseling, and American Federation of Teachers (American Immigration Council, 2011). Evidence that the DREAM Act would help colleges and universities is strong. For example, by allowing a path to citizenship for America's roughly 12 million undocumented immigrants, trillions of dollars would be collected in tax revenue. As this legislation is once again being considered as part of the current immigration debate, NAFSA (2013) advocates for the following amendments that would benefit higher education institutions and their ability to attract international students:

- Exempt international student graduates, and outstanding researchers and professors, from the limit on the number of annual employment-based green cards that may be issued;
- Create a direct path to green card status for international students;
- Expand employment options for international students both during the school year and during breaks, and expand opportunities to study for their spouses and children; and
- Allow colleges and universities to petition for green cards for the most qualified applicants.

NAFSA (2013) believes that these amendments would create a sustainable policy that allows international students the freedom to explore their interests and become valued members of the community. However, despite bipartisan support in favor of retaining international students studying at colleges and universities to make America more economically competitive, people worry about the increase of foreign workers and negative impact on American citizens with fewer employment opportunities and decreasing wages.

International Students Choosing the Community College Option

Although limited research exists specific to the factors associated with international student enrollment in community colleges, the perceived benefits of a community college education include appealing areas of study, intensive English language programs, and smaller class sizes (Bohman, 2009; Desruisseaux, 1998). In addition, international students play an important role in the country's current and future financial and cultural health (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Guruz, 2011). We can

deduce from the fact that 146,500 international students enrolled in two-year institutions during the 2012-2013 academic year that the community college mission of accessibility, affordability, and transferability appeals to this student population (IIE, 2013). Further, community colleges' pursuit of internationalization and connecting students, faculty, and staff locally and globally is not an option but a necessity (Gu et al., 2010). Having international students on campus helps people be more accepting of other cultural perspectives and avoid the stereotypes of feeling that Eurocentric and American perspectives are the norm throughout the world (Gurung & Prieto, 2009; Matsumoto, 2009). International student recruitment has become important to an institution's overall financial health (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Therefore, higher education institutions should deepen their understanding of international students' decision-making processes, try different recruitment models, and make international student recruitment a strategic priority (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

International Student Recruitment and Marketing

Due to the increased competition for international students, some of America's colleges and universities have started to focus their recruitment strategies on encouraging interaction between domestic and international students thereby exposing all students to the benefits of a diverse environment (Brown, 2009). Another reason why this student population is being actively recruited is the fact that colleges and universities view international students as economic resources in an increasingly difficult financial environment (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). Higher education marketing is an essential component of the recruitment process and involves designing the institution's offerings to

meet the target markets' needs and desires, and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service these markets (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

Based on international student mobility trends, all higher education institutions need to diversify their international student pool due to the fact that recent economic struggles have negatively impacted the two main sources of international students to the United States, which are China and India (Choudaha & Kono, 2012). As a result, higher education institutions face numerous challenges, such as an over-dependence on China and India for students, increased complexity in recruiting students in emerging markets as well as more competition in those markets, and a new sense of urgency among institutions to recruit self-funded students (Choudaha & Kono, 2012). The top emerging markets for international students include Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Vietnam, and Turkey (Choudaha & Kono, 2012). The obvious danger in relying on traditional source countries is that the pipeline can dry up if the economy changes or other countries emerge as better destinations. Colleges and universities successfully recruiting students from emerging markets use their current international students as ambassadors, and have established dual degree programs with universities in other countries (Choudaha & Kono, 2012).

In the process of recruiting from emerging markets, institutions need to consider different groups of factors influencing students' decision-making processes. These factors are personal reasons, country image effect, institutional image, and program evaluations (Cubillo, Sanchez, & Cervino, 2006). Colleges and universities should understand and integrate these factors into the marketing of higher education for international students, and should analyze consumer behavior to allow educational

institutions to strengthen their images in hopes of attracting more international students (Cubillo et al., 2006).

Although the U.S. enrolls the largest number of international students in the world, enrollment is modest considering the country's overall population and total number of colleges and universities (Özturgut, 2013). Providing academic support, participating in international education and recruitment fairs, and maximizing institutional resources by partnering with other organizations are effective strategies in international student recruitment (Özturgut, 2013). In addition, engaging faculty, staff, and alumni in the marketing process tends to create the word-of-mouth reputation among international students that complements the traditional recruiting process (Özturgut, 2013).

Best practices of international student recruitment are complex (Allen, 2011). Traditional recruitment of international students has been conducted by local agents because of their ability to speak the language, understand the cultural differences and educational systems, and understand the importance families play in deciding on the eventual destinations of the international students (Wilkins, 2011). Additional advantages of international student recruiters include fast and direct access to specific markets, assistance with visa applications, and assistance with making travel arrangements (De Luca, 2011). Depending on the size of the recruiting institutions, this appears to be the most cost effective option for most institutions when combined with online marketing, which is considered to be the most common method producing quantifiable results (Wilkins, 2011). Other common recruitment strategies for international students used in the community college setting include: providing academic

support and campus resources; partnering with other organizations; presenting at international recruitment and educations fairs; and using faculty, staff, and recruiting agents (Özturgut, 2013; Wilkins, 2011).

Literature also points to the importance of parental influence in the college application and persistence process, and recommends specific strategies for policy makers and educators on how to engage parents and achieve academic success, such as parental involvement, bilingual outreach, face-to-face meetings between parents and school representatives, explanations of the college application process, and better financial options (Auerbach, 2004; Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010; Zalaquett, 2006). An extensive understanding of familial relations is essential as many students' families tend to pay for their study abroad experience and therefore need to be included in the recruitment process.

Community colleges especially rely on collaborative efforts among two-year institutions to work with local agents because of the logistics and financial considerations of sending recruiters to each country for recruitment. In addition to the financial considerations, the cultural nuances and overall expertise in the educational systems of different countries have been challenging for U.S. recruiters (Wilkins, 2011). For example, China's higher education system is highly regulated by the government. Even though using agents is an effective and preferred method of recruiting international students, there are still concerns because these agents simply work to increase the number of students they recruit for commission revenue rather than focusing on finding the most qualified and appropriate students and ensuring credibility and integrity when advising students on the educational choices in the U.S. (InsideHigherEd, 2009).

In order to make community colleges more attractive destinations for international students, recruiting them with programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL), and partnering with other higher education institutions, financially and strategically, to effectively recruit them in a more competitive marketplace are key (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Common Theoretical Perspective on the Selection Process and Factors that Influence International Students

Most of the research on international students' decision making utilizes some form of the push-pull model, a neo-classical migration theory (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Altbach, 1998; Mazzarol, 1998; McMahon 1992). The push-pull model was introduced in 1834 to explain migration universally and became known as Ravenstein's Law of Migration (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Lee (1966) was the first to refine the push-pull model into its typical interpretation: having both negative and positive factors on push and pull sides as well as recognizing obstacles between the origin and destination including political, social, environmental, cultural, and economic factors. One of the first researchers to utilize the model specifically for international student mobility was McMahon (1992) who studied mobility of international students from 18 developing Third World countries to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Considering the frequent use of push-pull theory in understanding international student behavior, push-pull theory will influence this study even though it will not serve as the primary theoretical framework.

In analyzing the selection and decision-making process of international students, several stages tend to occur in which information is collected and analyzed and in which decisions are made. These stages are commonly viewed theoretically through the lens of

the push and pull theory (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Referring to international students, the theory argues that there are push factors and pull factors. Push factors tend to initiate a student's decision to study abroad, while pull factors are those that increase a country's attractiveness to international students (Becker & Kolster, 2012, p. 11). For example, strict immigration policies are frequently viewed as negative pull factors, because they make it more difficult for students to pursue international study. When applying a push-pull theoretical framework to international student recruitment, one expects to see specific strategies such as targeted marketing that communicates the high reputation of a country's higher education programs, or offering new scholarship programs (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

Among the most important personal push factors to study abroad are the wish to acquire an advanced degree for personal satisfaction, the desire to improve foreign language skills, and the importance of an advanced degree from another country for the student's future career and salary level (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Other push factors include the perceived value of a foreign degree domestically, access to cutting-edge research, and the improved reputation of one's home country and culture (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Pull factors influencing international students to select a specific study destination include the availability of information on the country and its higher education institutions, the reputation of the country's educational system and institutions, the level of academic freedom and safety, the costs of higher education and living, and internationalization of a country (number of foreign students, availability and diversity of international programs, stringency of immigration policies, and social and geographical

linkages (friends/relatives living or studying in same country, geographical proximity)) (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Although push-pull theory is a commonly used theoretical framework in analyzing the selection and decision-making process of international students and expected to influence this inquiry, academic capitalism theory will serve as the major theoretical framework in order to understand the role international student recruitment plays in the context of an institution's overall fiscal strategy and health. The term academic capitalism flourished in the 1990s as government support for education declined and the concept of business innovation was linked to postsecondary education (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Furthermore, higher education institutions became dependent on resources in addition to public support. The community colleges in this study were founded as a result of the 1964 higher education act that stipulated a specific funding formula consisting of state, local, and student resources. The institutions included in this study have all been forced to increase student tuition and fees to compensate for the loss of public funding due to the economy, thereby disrupting the funding ratio set by the higher education act (Özturgut, 2013). Today, broad access to higher education is being threatened by rising tuition costs (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). For example, between 2000-2001 and 2010-2011, prices for undergraduate tuition, room, and board at public institutions rose 42%, and prices at private not-for-profit institutions rose 31%, after adjustment for inflation (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). During that same time, community college tuition cost rose 63% from $5,466 to $8,909.

Profit-generating practices are at the heart of the literature on academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In addition, academic capitalism examines an institution's vulnerability to environmental influences on its culture, structure, and core mission (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Considering the decline in public funding and rising operational costs, new strategic funding sources are needed to support today's institutions (Voorhees, 2001). Since international students are required to pay more than the average in-state student, they have the potential to become one of these new strategic funding sources and force colleges and universities to act more like a profit seeking organization (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Academic capitalism, while driven by the demands to generate revenue, describes the increasing authority of market-like practices, roles, and ideologies, and looks at entrepreneurial activities that are profit motivated (Hanley, 2005).

Some may view higher education's responsiveness to the marketplace as an erosion of knowledge and the traditional enterprise, while others view it as necessary in order to survive increased competition and uncertain economic conditions (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The academic capitalism literature points to a shift from traditional academic values of institutional autonomy and knowledge production and dissemination as a public good to one which focuses on knowledge privatization and profit making (Slaughter& Rhoades, 2004). Faculty tend to fear that academic capitalism puts economic pressures on the nature of academic work as it has been traditionally defined, potentially altering the primary teaching and research missions of institutions (Rhoades, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Academic capitalism encourages higher education decision makers to become market conscious and bottom-line oriented and to allocate institutional resources toward revenue generating activities, creating a climate of increased competition for funding (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). If recruited strategically and aggressively, international students have the potential to have an immediate, major impact on an institution's fiscal resources. Table 2 shows the more than two to one difference in per-credit tuition cost between international students and in-state students. Critics of academic capitalism fear that institutional resources will be allocated toward more profit promising disciplines, and that pressures from the external environment will be a strategic opportunity for institutions to restructure and meet the needs of the new economy (Barrow, 1996; Rhoades, 2006; Slaughter, 1998).

Table 2

Per Credit Hour Tuition Comparison - International Students versus In-State/District Students, 2013

Institution	International Student Enrollment	International Student Cost per Credit Hour	In-State Student Cost per Credit Hour
Houston Community College (TX)	5,333	$155.90	$67.40
Santa Monica College (CA)	3,471	$295.00	$46.00
De Anza College (CA)	2,728	$180.00	$31.00
Lone Star College (TX)	2,112	$250.00	$92.00
Northern Virginia Community College (VA)	1,901	$359.00	$161.75

Note: Top five institutions ranked by overall international student enrollment. Population data provided by Institute of International Education. (2013). Per credit hour cost retrieved from http://www.hccs.edu/; http://www.smc.edu/; http://www.deanza.edu/; http://www.lonestar.edu/; http://www.nvcc.edu/

Since their inception, community colleges have responded to the needs of the external constituencies. Although primarily focused on transfer and vocational education, responding to the marketplace has become a greater part of their mission due to reduced financial resources (Kisker & Carducci, 2003). As a result, seeking new partnerships and exploring different sources for revenue generation are applauded by academic capitalism advocates because they believe that higher education should play an increasingly active role in economic development (Kisker & Carducci, 2003; Spangler, 2002). Especially in today's environment of growing demand and decreased funding, community colleges' entrepreneurial efforts have received national attention (Roueche & Jones, 2005).

Colleges and universities have been admitting international students without having a strong understanding of their purpose and how these international students could fit within their institutions (Goodwin & Nacht, 1983). Further, international students are sought after for their financial contributions without institutions knowing how all their students benefit from this educational exchange (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Lasanowski, 2009). More research on the contributions and roles of international students in the United States is needed to understand this complex student population in the community college setting (Lemke, 2011).

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative multiple case study approach to examine the strategic role international students play in the overall fiscal health of 11 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States, as well as how these institutions measured the effectiveness of their interactions with this student population. The institutions under study varied in geographic location and by the student populations they serve. In addition, the desire to host international students was evident from visiting each institution's web-site although that desire varied in its intensity. International students represent a variety of cultures and educational systems, which presents a challenge to educational leaders to understand how international learners engage academically and socially (Bennett, 1998). The perceived institutional directive to recruit greater numbers of international students further requires educational leaders to understand how to best engage international students, which is part of what this study attempted to explore.

Qualitative research is used to explore and understand a social or human problem by attempting to paint a complex, holistic picture through analyzing words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducting the study in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research also reveals important complexities and puts phenomena in context, addresses the process of self-awareness and self-reflection, and highlights previously silenced voices and marginalized groups (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Morrow, Rakhsha, & Castaneda, 2001). The use of a multiple case study design results from the need to explore differences within and between cases, replicate findings across

cases, and gain insight into a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). Comparisons were drawn between the community colleges under study, and resulted in similarities and contrasts across cases. Yin (2014) bases his approach to case study research on a constructivist paradigm, meaning that truth is relative and that it is dependent on one's perspective. He stresses the importance of a thorough literature review and explicit research procedures, and believes that case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) one cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) one wants to cover conditions believed relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Yin, 2014). Overall, the evidence created from this type of study is considered robust and reliable, but it can also be extremely time consuming and expensive to conduct (Yin, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Considering the challenging economic climate since the 2008 recession, and the resulting budgetary constraints for community colleges, the international student population has grown in strategic importance at two-year institutions due to the fact that, on average, they pay three times the amount of tuition than an in-state resident student. Despite this significant difference in tuition and the facts that community colleges offer international students a cheaper entry point into higher education and easy transfer to four-year colleges and universities, they make-up only 1.1% of community college enrollment and have not enjoyed similar enrollment growth as four-year institutions (IIE, 2013). Detailed qualitative research about community colleges' strategic view of international students has not been conducted. As a result, community colleges have

little understanding of international students' needs without analyzing the strategic decision-making process, marketing process, and recruitment process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the strategic importance of recruiting international students for community colleges framed in the context of an institution's overall fiscal health, as well as to explore the marketing and recruitment strategies used to interact with international students and their effectiveness. Community colleges have shown great interest in enrolling more international students as evidenced by recruitment efforts sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and regional consortia such as Study Illinois (Bohman, 2009). This study provides educational leaders with information about the relationship between international students and the fiscal health of select community colleges, as well as successful strategies to recruit and interact with this student population.

Setting

Research was conducted at 11 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States which have hosted international students in different numbers since the 1970s (see Table 3). The community colleges under study were located in a state which had the third highest growth rate of international student enrollment, 9.5%, among all American states in 2012 (Institute of International Education, 2013). All research sites were accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and the Commission on Postsecondary Accreditation. The study was approved by Rowan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Table 3

International Student Enrollment at Community Colleges under Study, 2013

Institution (Pseudonyms Used)	International Student Enrollment
Alpha	67
Bravo	1
Charlie	79
Delta	7
Echo	301
Foxtrot	212
Golf	33
Hotel	8
India	380
Juliet	124
Kilo	13
Lima	257
Mike	0
November	23

Note: Population data compiled from the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2013). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/

Research Questions

Framed by the research setting, problem and purpose, the following questions guided this inquiry:

(a) How do the community colleges under study describe the role of their international student population?

(b) How do the community colleges under study perceive the connection between international student recruitment and enrollment and their fiscal health?

(c) What marketing and recruitment strategies do administrators at the community colleges under study use to attract international students?

(d) How do marketing and admissions professionals at the community colleges under study measure the effectiveness of their marketing and recruitment efforts?

Participants

After the study received IRB approval, each community college was contacted to identify the appropriate administrator or administrators who have knowledge of the institution's international student recruitment practices and their strategic connection to the college's fiscal health. Each institution's president's office served as the initial point of contact to schedule appointments with the desired interviewees. Once determined, each participant was contacted via mail and e-mail to explain the purpose of this study, and to gauge their level of interest and availability to participate in this study. Eventually, all participants submitted their written consent to participate in the study. Upon selection of the interviewees, I contacted each participant by telephone to provide more information about the study as well as general subject matters that would be discussed during the interview to allow participants to think about these topics prior to the interview. All participants completed a basic demographic profile form, and gave both verbal and written consent to be interviewed. In order to guarantee confidentiality for their responses, pseudonyms were used to identify participants (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews (see Appendices A & B) with community college administrators, and examination of material culture including recruitment materials and social media use, such as Facebook for international student recruitment. A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which enhances data credibility (Yin, 2014). Although the opportunity to gather data from various sources is extremely attractive because of the rigor that can be associated with this approach, there are dangers. One of them is the collection of overwhelming amounts of data that require management and analysis (Yin, 2014). The benefit of semi-structured interviews lies in the flexibility to explore the participant's answers with probing questions (Creswell, 2014).

Most study participants were interviewed at their respective campuses, because it is important to make participants feel comfortable so that they can focus their attention on the interview (Seidman, 2006). Two study participants did not accept the invitation to be interviewed in person, but agreed to answer the research questions in writing. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and saved as a Microsoft Word file. In addition, all journal entries were saved as a Microsoft Word file. All files were saved on my portable computer to which I only had access, and were protected by a custom password.

Targeted participants were presidents of the community colleges under study. The individual research sites were also be asked to identify at least one other administrator who possessed in-depth knowledge of the subject matter under study, namely a vice president of enrollment management, director of admission, and/or international student program coordinator. To achieve consistency in the interview process, an interview

protocol was used to capture the different engagement levels of the international student population at the institutions under study. Interviews were recorded, and detailed notes were taken. The collection of material culture, via a campus tour of the international student-dedicated spaces, provided additional insights into the phenomena under study, and corroborated claims made by participants and themes identified during analysis (Hodder, 1994). A transcription service was used to transcribe all interviews. Once transcribed, I reviewed each transcript and listened to each interview multiple times to become familiar with the data (Creswell, 2014). In addition, meticulous notes on observations and collected materials were kept in a field journal.

Data Analysis

Data analysis starts with preparing and organizing the data, which involved transcription, scanning and cataloguing collected materials, and typing field notes (Creswell, 2014). Each transcript was reviewed twice to determine initial concepts before being coded. The language-based data was coded using an attribute approach which is particularly appropriate for studies with multiple participants and sites, and using in vivo coding in order to prioritize and honor the participant's voice (Saldana, 2009; Miles et al., 2014). Since this study took place at 11 sites involving 18 participants, attribute coding provides essential participant information for future management, reference, and contexts for analysis and interpretation (Miles et al., 2014).

Further analysis used a combination of pattern matching and explanation building (Yin, 2014). Described as one of the most desirable techniques in case study analysis, pattern matching was used to compare study predications and findings while also strengthening internal validity (Yin, 2014). Explanation building is a more specialized

type of pattern matching and tied in the theoretical framework and examined cause and effect phenomenon/phenomena, such as the link between international student enrollment and an institution's fiscal health (Yin, 2014).

During the analysis phase, I attempted to discover an alternate explanation of a phenomenon, thereby increasing confidence in the findings as propositions were addressed and accepted or rejected (Yin, 2014). Data were converged in an attempt to understand the overall case, not the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case (Yin, 2014).

Trustworthiness

This study incorporated a triangulated method of semi-structured interviews, media culture, a reflective journal, and field notes to study phenomenon/phenomena (Denzin, 1978). Used as a validity procedure, triangulation searches for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Semi-structured interviews allow for the flexibility to explore the participant's answers with probing questions (Creswell, 2014). Reflective journals capture feelings and impressions about conducting the research by recording one's reactions, assumptions, expectations, and biases about the research process (Creswell, 2014). This also adds rigor to the qualitative research process (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Field notes provided additional data and therefore strengthen the analysis. Finally, member checking was used to improve the overall reliability and validity of the findings (Morrow & Smith, 2000).

I developed an interest in this topic due to my decade-long work at a community college, as well as being an international student myself and starting my college career at

a community college in Southern New Jersey. Considering my background and the concept of internal validity, which Miles et al. (2014) define as presenting an authentic portrait of the phenomenon under study, I was committed to the integrity of all participants, and aware of potential biases as well as negative reactions toward experiences outside of my own cultural presumptions and experiences (Fetterman, 2010; Tillman, 2002). In addition, I avoided becoming an equal participant in the interview process (Seidman, 2006). Further, to aid in the dependability and trustworthiness of my study, pretesting and piloting the interview protocol assisted in identifying any flaws, issues, or weaknesses (Turner, 2010). The entire research process is shown in figure 2.

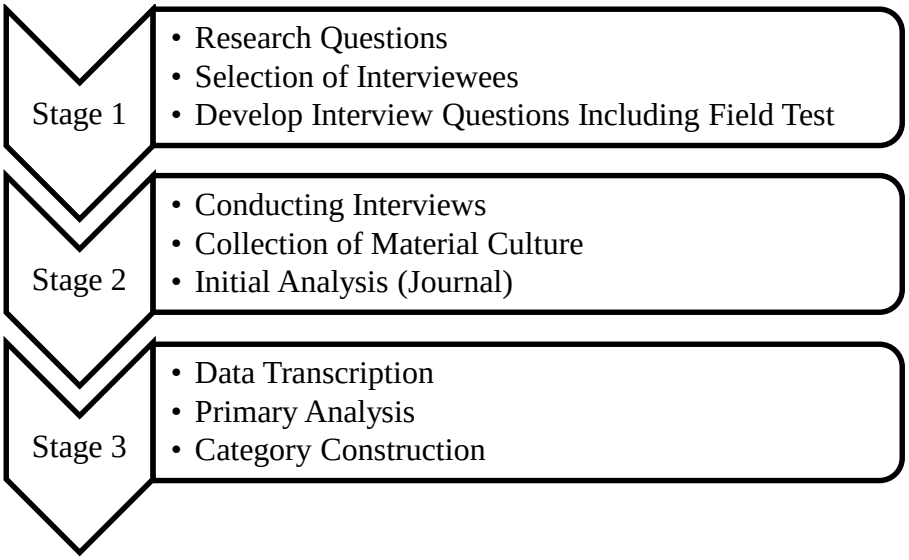

Figure 2. Concept map displaying the three-stage process of initial data collection, primary analysis, and category construction.

Ethical Considerations

All of the participants were treated in accordance to the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Rowan University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Although there were no identifiable risks for participating in this study, a couple of considerations were kept in mind when dealing with community college presidents, including the sensitivity of sharing financial data and strategic direction of an institution's student marketing and recruitment. Every caution was taken to ensure that all participants felt safe, comfortable, and empowered to withdraw from the study if they felt the need to.

Chapter 4

Findings

Considering the challenging economic climate since the 2008 recession and the resulting budgetary constraints for community colleges, all higher education institutions have become dependent on sources beyond public support (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The international student population specifically has grown in strategic importance at two-year institutions due to the fact that, on average, they pay three times the amount of tuition than an in-state resident student (IIE, 2013). In order to understand the strategic importance of international students for the overall fiscal health of America's colleges and universities, one needs to understand the tension between the benefits that this student population adds to the collegiate environment, as well as the complexities associated with marketing and recruiting due to increased global competition, high tuition costs, and federal and state laws and regulations (Özturgut, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to understand the strategic role international students play in the overall financial health of 14 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States, as well as how these institutions measure the effectiveness of their interactions with this student population. This chapter will present the study's findings, which were guided by the following research questions:

(a) How do the community colleges under study describe the role of their international student population?

(b) How do the community colleges under study perceive the connection between international student recruitment and enrollment and their fiscal health?

(c) What marketing and recruitment strategies do administrators at the community colleges under study use to attract international students?

(d) How do marketing and admissions professionals at the community colleges under study measure the effectiveness of their marketing and recruitment efforts?

This study was designed to provide a qualitative account of the perceptions regarding international student recruitment and the fiscal health of 14 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. In addition, the study looked specifically at these community colleges' marketing and recruitment strategies. This was the first time qualitative data had been collected about the strategic importance of recruiting and enrolling international students in this particular higher education setting. The study's findings are especially important considering the growth of this student population across higher education and the benefits they add to an institution's academic and campus climate.

Data in this qualitative multiple case study was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with community college professionals in senior management positions. The community colleges under study were located in a Middle Atlantic state which had the third highest growth rate of international student enrollment, 9.5%, among all American states in 2012 (IIE, 2013). Study participants were responsible for the institution's strategic direction and fiscal health, engaged in strategic enrollment management, and/or worked directly with international students.

Each study participant, see table 4, was initially contacted via mail to explain the purpose of this study and to gauge his or her level of interest and availability to participate in this study. Each institution's president's office served as the initial point of

contact to schedule appointments with the desired interviewees. I interviewed a total of 18 participants from 11 institutions including 8 college presidents, 1 satellite campus president, 4 vice presidents, and 5 directors, deans, associate directors or associate deans (see table 4). The majority of participants were interviewed at their respective campuses. One interviewee requested to be interviewed via telephone while two others were only willing to answer the interview protocol via e-mail. Although 14 institutions were invited to participate in this study, three did not respond to the invitation and follow-up e-mail communications. Another declined to be interviewed in person for the study but responded to select questions from the interview protocol via e-mail. Before the interview, I allowed each participant time to review and sign the informed consent form, and assured them in writing and verbally that pseudonyms would be used to identify participants to guarantee confidentiality for their responses.

Table 4

Total Number of Study Participants with their Respective Job Titles at the Community Colleges which Participated in this Study.

Institution	International Student Enrollment	Interviewee 1 Job Title	Interviewee 2 Job Title
Alpha	67	President (Alpha1)	Satellite Campus President (Alpha2)
Charlie	79	President (Charlie1)	Director of Admission (Charlie2)
Delta	4	President (Delta1)	Vice President of Student Services (Delta2)
Echo	301	President (Echo1)	Vice President of Enrollment Management (Echo2)
Foxtrot	212	President/Chief of Staff (Foxtrot1)	-
Golf	33	Vice President of Enrollment Services (Golf1)	-
India	380	Associate Director of International Student Services (India1)	Director of Student Recruitment (India2)
Juliet	124	President (Juliet1)	Associate Dean for International Education (Juliet2)
Lima	257	President (Lima1)	Vice President of Enrollment (Lima2)
Mike	0	President (Mike1)	-
November	23	Dean (November1)	-

Recognizing that I am an active part of the research setting, I disclosed my professional position at a community college and my background as an international student to gather honest perceptions of the participants. Further, it was important to share my life experiences to solicit comprehensive responses from participants and adapt my cultural and professional frame of reference to better understand the participants. As a result, I was able to relate to their experiences as well as understand their environment, opportunities, and challenges.

The interviews took place over a period of five months from June 2015 to October 2015. The length of data collection was due to the difficulties of selecting a convenient date and time with at least two busy administrators at each institution. In addition, most colleges were closed one day a week over the summer months which made scheduling even more challenging. A standard protocol was used consisting of an opening explanation of how the interviews were to be conducted and how protection of participant's rights would be ensured. Further, participants were required to sign a consent form and verbal reinforcement of the document was given to ensure participants understood that they were confidential volunteers who were not required to participate and that that pseudonyms would be used to share their responses. Before the start of the interview, participants had the opportunity to ask any questions about the interview session.

After each interview was conducted and recorded, my initial analysis of the data and personal journaling provided an opportunity to reflect on the quality of the questions asked and my campus visit. After coding the data, general themes emerged from the interviews such as recruitment strategies and challenges, cultural exchange, campus

infrastructure, financial incentives, and institutional mission. Although these themes quickly emerged, the same initial interview questions were asked to each interviewee and probing questions were developed to explore institutional differences in depth. After conducting 14 of 18 interviews, I started receiving redundancies in the data I was collecting (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

This section will describe the data analysis process from the interview transcription to theme development. After each interview, a transcription service processed the audio recording. Each transcript was reviewed twice to look for specific words or phrases that related to the overall research questions and determine initial concepts before being coded. Eight categories emerged from the analysis, including community college mission, cultural exchange, financial implications, housing, infrastructure, institutional recruitment, marketing, and strategic plan. With the emergence of these categories, I carefully evaluated the amount of data related to each category and exercised further data reduction when insignificant amounts or overlapping data was detected. Ultimately, the initial categories emerged into the following themes: (a) economic benefits; (b) cultural benefits; (c) infrastructure; and (d) recruitment.

Economic Benefits of Recruiting International Students

As described in Chapter 2, the term academic capitalism flourished in the 1990s as government support for education declined and the concept of business innovation was linked to postsecondary education (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Furthermore, higher education institutions were forced to seek additional resources in addition to public support. Recruitment and enrollment of international students was thought to have the

potential to have an immediate, major impact on an institution's fiscal resources based on the more than two to one difference in per-credit tuition cost between international students and in-state students. Most interviewees acknowledged the financial opportunity presented by this student population. "I think a lot of them [presidents] are seeing [international students] as a way to bolster their enrollments…and as a way to compensate for the lower numbers of high school graduates," said Echo2. "It's a great market; it's a good fiscal stream," added his colleague Echo1. Another vice president of enrollment, Lima2, agreed that the fiscal impact of international students on his college is "huge".

A president from a city-based campus, Lima1, discussed the strategic importance of international students, describing them as a new revenue stream which needs to be expanded. Lima1 said that "you need to find new ways to generate revenue. You need to come up with a different business model." In contrast to his colleagues, Lima1 spoke plainly about the fact that community colleges are a business and therefore needed to figure out how to generate revenue. "We have to think beyond our local community if we're serious about changing the business model that we currently operate on."

Delta1 shared his colleague's opinion about international students being a new revenue stream, telling me, "I would be lying if from a presidential perspective that [recruiting international students] wasn't attractive." However, despite acknowledging the cultural benefits for the campus community, he remained realistic about the challenges of doing so since the institution only currently enrolled four international students. His Vice President of Student Services, Delta2, said, "If it's something that's going to cost us so much more than [it] brings in, then we really can't afford to do it."

Another community college president did not view his international student population as having a significant impact on the institution's fiscal health at all despite the fact that his college enrolled around 200 students. Foxtrot1 wrote in his email response that his institution had no interest in getting into international student education, and that he did not anticipate their strategic role significantly changing in the future. Further, the strategy of his institution was focused on serving the local population in the surrounding counties first. "Our main strategic and day-to-day tactical focus is mostly on the 10 counties we serve and to whom we are responsible," he said. Other community college administrators did see future growth opportunities despite some major obstacles, such as housing, due to the fact that the revenue potential was significant. For example, Juliet2 stated that his international student population paid more than $3 million in tuition as well as allowed the college to secure more than $1 million in grants. "One international student is really going to cover the fees of some of the local students that we lose," he said. While the strategic importance and financial impact of this student population varied among the institutions under study, international students can have a significant impact on an institution's fiscal health according to Juliet2.

Cultural Benefits of Recruiting International Students

Despite being a potential revenue source, most interviewees agreed that the financial incentives are secondary to the cultural benefits international students bring to the classroom and the campus community. Delta1 commented, "That's absolutely a distant second to the possibilities that exist in learning from people from other cultures." Alpha1 agreed noting that "the initial intent is to make a connection culturally and then

see the community college as an excellent first step to access higher education and transferring on to a four-year college." Fellow college president Mike1 said:

> [International students] provide ways to celebrate diversity that is very personal, which is good for the incumbent student body and the college community itself. International student stories help college communities teach the ways humans are similar in terms of hopes, dreams, and specific aspirations at the same time differences in culture can be shared.

Juliet1 also believed that the educational component trumps the financial piece, citing the infectious energy that international students bring to campus, which has a ripple effect through lots of different organizations. "The richness of having international students is that it fundamentally changes the conversations that happen on campus," he said. Alpha2 added, "We're in a global economy and students have to be exposed to people who are in other parts of the world because that's who they're going to end up working with." As presidents and senior administrators contemplate the opportunities and challenges of international students on their respective campuses, they all agree with Lima1who said that "the internationalization of higher education is big business nowadays" for higher education, meaning that the cultural exchange benefits the entire campus community.

All of the interviewees agreed that this student population adds much needed diversity to the campus community and promotes academic exchange and international cooperation. Further benefits observed by the interviewees (see figure 3 for a complete list) included exposing local students to different perspectives and enhancing critical thinking skills essential in the global economy. Delta1, Echo1, Juliet1, Lima1, and

November1 all pointed to the importance the international student population plays in their respective strategic plans and efforts to increase diversity on their campuses as well as to help globalize the curriculum. "They provide an enrichment to your cultural efforts…and add to the academic profile," said Lima1. He continued:

> Our strategic direction, specifically, states our goal of expanding our efforts in diversity: diversity awareness, diversity within our students, diversity within our faculty; diversity across the curriculum, diversity of thoughts, diversity of ideas; and I think their presence…enhances and reinforces that particular strategic initiative.

Fellow president Echo1 credited his faculty with embracing international students to help globalize the classroom and campus environment. "Some faculty pair international students with American students in class to share their experiences…to have peer relationships," he said. President Delta1 recalled his first exposure to international students when he first attended college. "The opportunity that came from me sitting by and getting to know people who were different than I was…was absolutely outstanding," he said. Charlie1 concluded that sharing one's culture "is part of the informal learning that goes on at a college."

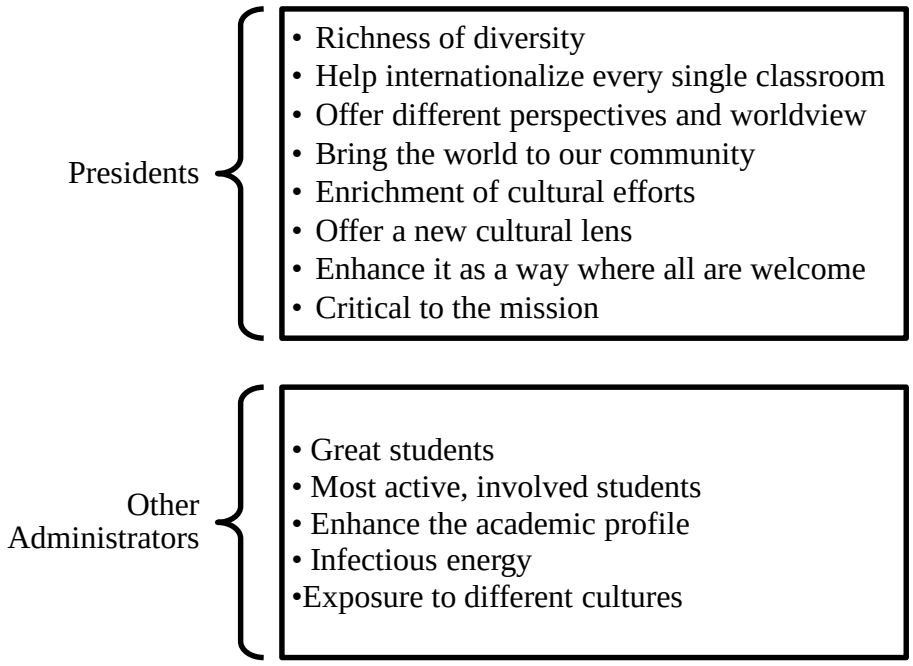

Figure 3. Interviewees' perceptions of having an international student presence on campus.

Cultural diversity is "the icing on the cake" and part of the institution's mission remarked Echo1. His colleague, Echo2, added that an education is not solid if one does not know anything about another culture:

> I think it's very important as the world gets smaller and smaller, that we connect our students, our domestic students with these international students, so that they begin to see that there are other ways of doing things, other ways of perceiving things, an appreciation for the differences of value as opposed to fear, which I think so often is the case for people who aren't exposed to differences.

Juliet1 also spoke at length about adding more of a global perspective to the curriculum to prepare students for the complexities of the world. He credits international

students for “fundamentally changing the conversations that happen on campus,” and for “changing the tenor of those conversations because they will bring in perspectives that most of our U.S. students don’t have.” His colleague, Juliet 2, viewed the cultural benefits international students through the faculty lens. Although there was an initial lack of understanding why the institution would actively recruit international students, he remarked, the faculty now love these students because they are great academically, add different perspectives to the classroom, and “tend to be the most active students on campus and some of the most involved.” “I really think they helped to internationalize every single classroom that they’re in,” Juliet2 added. However, he stated that to add these global perspectives to one’s campus, the infrastructure to support such efforts needs to be in place.

Infrastructure Needs and Challenges

As expected, the infrastructure theme revealed big differences among the community colleges under study. These difference range from those who provide student dormitories or have a home-stay program in place, to those who are considering housing for different student populations, including international students, to those who do not even consider recruiting international students due to the lack of an existing infrastructure and costs involved to establish one. The most common response by senior administrators was the feeling of being ill-prepared to support them as soon as they get off the plane and not being able to offer a good academic experience. “I actually feel a little guilty trying to recruit foreign students given that I don’t feel like I can adequately support them when they arrive,” said Charlie1. India1 shared those feelings, adding that until all the pieces are connected, such as housing options and more extensive English as a Second

Language (ESL) program options, it was difficult to actively recruit this student population. "That is what we have started talking about, how we can improve our ESL program and what are the other options for students to come to [India institution]," she said.

One major component mentioned by all interviewees was their ability to offer convenient housing options to international students. Alpha1 summed up those feelings:

> Without housing we aren't able to control the community in which [international students] reside, meaning being able to create a community of learners that supports the students and also gives them the safety, the comfort, the close proximity, the assurance that I have what I need, easy to get to the campus, and easy to engage with my peers.

Only one institution among the community colleges under study had student dormitories on campus. In fact, Juliet 1 informed me that the college recently added more beds due to the demand by regional and international students. "The fact that we have residence halls makes us more attractive," he said. Echo1 cited his institution's homestay program, which was effective due to the existence of a comprehensive transportation system which provides services to all campuses. "I'm not interested in dorms at this point," he said. On the other hand, presidents Delta1, Lima1, and Alpha1 were all actively assessing the possibility of adding campus dormitories. "I think it's an idea whose time has come, and we need to give it serious consideration if we're going to get into [international student recruitment]", said Lima1. Alpha1 added, "We've done a study for housing, so it will be in the next phase [of our strategic plan]."

Another institution experimented with securing dormitory space at a local hotel as well as an area four-year college knowing how important it was to offer housing to foreign students. "I worked with [local hotel] to make sure we could have some place to tell students to live because the residence piece is the biggest problem," said Charlie2. Unfortunately, both of these strategies were abandoned after several semesters due to a lack of transportation and eventually student interest according to her. Most administrators acknowledged the importance of housing, but at the time of the study simply provided a listing of local apartments and real estate agencies to international students upon application. Delta1 summarized the desire to add housing to campus: "If and when [housing] happens, I think we'd really look again at international students. We just don't want to bite off something we can't chew."

Another component that interviewees specifically pointed to was the importance of an ESL program. "Our ESL program is pretty strong here, and we just put a lot of emphasis on growing it even stronger," remarked Juliet2. He described their ESL program as a "big component of international [recruiting], because we can bring them in, and they don't have to have a TOEFL." His president, Juliet1, agreed. "We want to continue to enhance our English as a second language program, to provide a broader pipeline of opportunity for international students who are coming here," he said. At another institution, the successful recruitment of international students generated revenue that was invested in the ESL program to, not only recruit more international students, but also to better serve the local immigrant population. Echo1 said:

> The profit we make off international [students] flows directly into the ESL program…It has allowed us to really have a pretty deep and wide ESL programs

for the students, but also for the international students, so it has really helped us serve better the native students here by having, as I said, a pretty robust ESL program.

Further, Echo2 and India1 suggested to model an ESL program after a basic skills development program allowing international students to accelerate through ESL levels while taking college-level courses. "We are in the process of creating a different pathway to take ESL courses along with college course," said India1. He continued, "This will help us in the near future to improve our support services and educational services in general for [international students] to come [here]." On the other hand, November1 noted that his institution did not even start an ESL program until about five years ago. "We didn't have an ESL class for credit before I came here," he said. "The enrollment has been insufficient for it to run in the past two years."

Not surprisingly, the majority of the administrators at the community colleges under study cited the lack of dedicated staff for international students as a significant infrastructure challenge. "We don't have enough staff in our department to do all the things we need to do," said Juliet2. While those institutions with low enrollment numbers struggle to dedicate full-time staff to their international student populations, those who serve them well continue to add staff. Echo1 explained that he recently added a homestay coordinator because the institution "had problems placing students in homes…until we ended up with a part-time person who is dedicated to doing that," he said. All interviewees agreed that full-time staff was needed simply due to the administrative requirements imposed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service for each enrolled international student. They agreed that staffing was a big concern for most

institutions. Interviewees at eight out of 11 institutions told me that they were understaffed for the amount of work international students require. Several institutions had no designated staff for international students. Instead, they were merely using existing admissions staff or faculty members to assist international students with the enrollment and registration processes, which are quite complex. Charlie2 voiced her frustration about the amount of time required to manage the complex international student requirements. Additionally, Golf1 said, "I think we've just not had the appropriate staffing and resources to do a good job at the recruitment initiative," referencing her institution's enrollment management plan, which calls for addressing the lack of dedicated staff in recruiting international students. "We just haven't done a good job at how we could get out there and recruit these students," she said. Charlie1 added, "There are a lot of compliance issues involved that you have to be really mindful of and you have to have somebody who's really good and trained at that." In contrast, staffing at Echo2's institution did not appear to be an issue. "I was able to get a full-fledged office," he said. He continued,

> It became that person's primary responsibility, not only to help with recruitment and attracting international students, but providing services for them once they got here, which is critical. It's pointless to bring them here if you don't have anything to support them.

In the end, assessing the type of infrastructure that is needed to support international students on a daily basis needs to withstand a thorough cost-benefit analysis. "If it's something that's going to cost us so much more than it brings in, then we really can't afford it," said Delta2. Further, all interviewees agreed that the infrastructure needs

to be in place before the institution can effectively recruit international students. "For an institution to [recruit international students], there really needs to be a commitment from top to bottom," said Delta1.

Recruitment strategies. International student recruitment has become important to an institution's overall financial health (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Although most interviewees acknowledged the fiscal benefits of enrolling international students at their institutions, they felt even stronger about exposing all students to the benefits of a diverse environment. Delta2 pointed to the importance of seeing "the world through someone else's lens" and developing "cross-cultural skills." College president Echo1 remarked that the "globalization of our students…is an important part of our mission." As higher education institutions deepen their understanding of recruiting international students and make it a strategic priority, Mike1 believes that any college needs to make the case for why any international partnership or recruitment effort benefits the institution and its primary constituencies. "Recruiting students merely for their money can result in recruitment efforts that are not coordinated with or supported by faculty, student services, and other entities on campus resulting in less than [optimal] experiences for the student," said Foxtrot1 in agreement.

Higher education marketing is an essential component of the recruitment process and involves designing the institution's offerings to meet the target markets' needs and desires, and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service these markets (Kotler & Fox, 1995). The community colleges under study use a mixture of local agents, recruitment fairs, dedicated landing pages on their web sites, social media, direct mail, and word-of-mouth referrals to attract international

students. Interviewees experienced mixed results with these marketing strategies. Charlie2 mentioned that the lack of multi-language web sites and minimal presence on social media created a constant problem for his institution. In addition, a $3,000 annual subscription in a publication targeting international students resulted in no return on the investment. "We have a specific portion of our website dedicated to international student admissions and the process," remarked Lima2 while the Juliet institution offered the pertinent information in five different languages. An example of how simple, yet impactful, the right marketing approach can be came from November1 who shared a story about the institution's public relations department featuring a young female Chinese student on a direct mail piece advertising online summer courses. As a result, a lot of Chinese students from a prominent, local four-year institution enrolled for online courses that summer. "It shows you how simple recruiting could be," said November1.

Based on the literature referenced in Chapter 2, a comprehensive enrollment plan for international students typically includes the use of local agents and fairs (Özturgut, 2013; Wilkins, 2011). However, responses to these recruitment strategies were mixed among the interviewees. Budgetary concerns over the cost of participating in fairs were evident in some responses. "Fairs are really good, but it requires a big budget," said India1. Delta2 felt strongly about the possibility of unethical behavior in local agents recruiting on behalf of his institution. "Some agents will sell the school that has the biggest commission rather than trying to help the student find the best option," he said. As a result, Delta institution opted to pilot a project with another organization to test the efficiency of a retaining international students who were brought to the United States to attend a summer ESL program rather than using overseas agents. "This organization

essentially offered to be our agent and bring students to us," said Delta2. The difference, however, is that no commission is being paid since this organization is bringing these international students to the United States as high school students for a flat fee. The Delta institution would then have the opportunity to recruit students to extend their stay to obtain an associate's degree. Lima1, on the other hand, wants to outsource his institution's recruitment efforts to a third party. "I don't have any immediate plans to create our own infrastructure to be able to do that…it would be cost prohibitive for us," he said. His colleague Lima2 is working with agents from specific regions in the world because of the success they have experienced. "None of us, particularly community colleges, and many of the four-year institutions, have enough budget dollars to send somebody like our coordinator of international students to China or Japan", he said. "You have to use agents."

Budget constraints have forced many of the community colleges under study to consider strategies outside of the traditional recruitment plan. For example, Mike1's institution is considering a "special arrangement with one or two Caribbean institutions for a small pilot student and faculty exchange program." Another institution is focusing its efforts on connecting with foreign embassies to create a student exchange program that would be connected to a full-time ESL program. "We are trying to create this new pathway program for them so they can see the big picture from the beginning," said India1. Juliet1 mentioned a grant opportunity through a state department which had been one of the most successful mechanisms for recruiting international students at one of his previous institutions. "They tried to bring students from parts of the world where they thought exposure to U.S. culture would be advantageous as those students went back into

their culture," he said. As a result of this grant, the institution enrolled international students from less privileged countries from around the globe, such as Afghanistan and Indonesia.

Juliet2 mentioned his college's success in sending their domestic students out into the world through a comprehensive study abroad program which allowed them to globalize the community college story and recruit abroad through their students. This is especially important since the lack of awareness of the community college system in foreign countries is a big hurdle for institutions to overcome in their marketing and recruitment efforts. India1 remarked:

> Most of the time they are not aware of the community college system…I try to emphasize the importance of the community college system and how much money they can save and the quality of the education that they are going to get…They [parents] need to understand the system very well in order for them to send their children to us.

Alpha1 agreed with the importance of a study abroad program and educating international students about what community colleges can do for them:

> We strengthen what we do for study abroad as a way to connect all students to other countries and they could be reciprocal to bring persons from other countries into our learning environment to create that similar pathway for more students to consider the community college as their first step.

Echo2's institution is using local agents to help educate people about community college in countries where his institution was recruiting. Parents especially need to be educated about what community colleges have to offer. "They want quality education,"

said Echo2. "They want to know that their students are going to be supported. They want to know that you care about them as students and they're not just numbers and they're not just cash cows."

Throughout the interview process, interviewees continued to mention the lack of a coordinated consortium among the community colleges under study. "Community colleges should be able to collaborate on this because we're not really competing against each other," said November1. However, he continued, "I get the sense that the community colleges that do it well are not interested in collaboration." India1 discussed her attempt to establish a consortium among the community colleges under study. Unfortunately, only 6 out of 14 agreed to be part of it. Golf1 preferred to increase collaborations with current four-year college and university partners since they are already in the field recruiting international students and have the resources to do it effectively. Lima2 suggested pooling resources among all institutions to send one or two international student coordinators to recruit on behalf of all 14 institutions. "None of us, particularly community colleges, have enough budget dollars to send somebody like our coordinator of international students to China or Japan or Vietnam or India or Africa," he said. Finally, Echo2 described a consortium of community colleges across the country that his institution was a part of as a result of a personal friendship between college presidents. "The five of us pool our resources and recruit as a group," he said.

In the end, international student recruitment is an expensive undertaking and therefore should be encouraged carefully and strategically to fit each community college's capacity and needs, especially since an institution's geographic location and community census can play a significant role in predicting the success of one's

recruitment efforts. Mike1 discussed her belief that a diverse ethnic population in one's community tends to result in international student referrals. "Our international student enrollees are mostly referred by current student or local residents," she said. "The very diverse Hispanic population in the area is the base for most of our international student enrollment." Even though international students are "not a magic fiscal bullet", Mike1 remarked that community colleges understood the value of international students.

The majority of interviewees were asked during the interview process to consider the value of this student population by reflecting on their institution's enrollment goals for this student population five years from now. Figure 4 shows the current enrollment numbers and compares them side-by-side with the desired, future enrollment goals. Discrepancies among interviewees were recorded not only for the current international student population, but also varied, at time significantly, among interviewees from the same community college. While four anticipated no or low growth for this student populations, most community colleges under study were eager to significantly increase their international student population over the next five years.

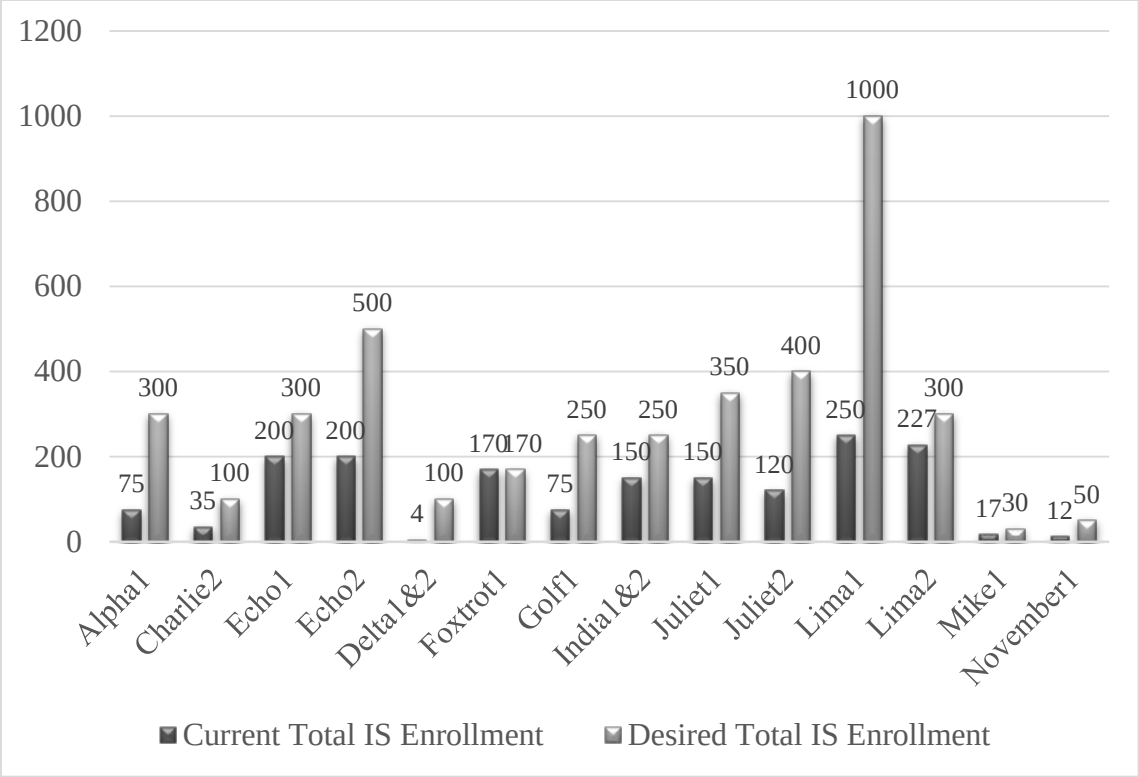

Figure 4. Comparative view of current versus desired international student (IS) enrollment by study participants.

While most study participants agreed that the financial incentives are secondary to the cultural benefits international students bring to the campus community, this student population remained a desirable source of revenue with most interviewees. As interviewees reflected on the study's themes, including economic and cultural benefits, infrastructure and recruitment, a significant finding emerged in that many participants felt that the lack of knowledge of the community college system overseas negatively impact their recruitment efforts. A discussion of these findings and their implications for higher education administrators takes place in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to elicit responses from presidents and senior administrators at community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States to understand the relationship of international student recruitment and the institutions' fiscal health. Using academic capitalism as a theoretical framework, the findings provide community college administrators with a better understanding of the ways international students can positively impact an institution's fiscal health.

This study was conducted during a time when it was believed that the United States had lost its competitive advantage in attracting international students due to governmental and institutional initiatives (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers: Association of International Educators [NAFSA], 2013). Considering the challenging economic climate since the 2008 recession and the resulting budgetary constraints for colleges and universities, the international student population has grown in strategic importance due to the fact that, on average, they pay three times the amount of tuition of an in-state resident student, and they bring academic, cultural, and economic benefits (Alberts, 2007; Guruz, 2011). However, community colleges have little understanding of international students' needs without analyzing the strategic decision-making process, marketing process, and recruitment process.

This research was a qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews with community college administrators from 11 institutions located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. A total of 18 interviews were conducted. The qualitative data produced from the interviewees were coded using an attribute approach (Saldana, 2009).

Theme development produced several key findings worth highlighting before presenting the discussion:

- International students were generally viewed as an attractive and important revenue stream and financial opportunity. For the majority of interviewees, however, the financial impact on the institution was minimal.
- The cultural benefits international students added to the classroom and overall campus environment outweighed the economic benefits.
- Convenient housing options, a comprehensive English as a Second Language (ESL) program, and dedicated staffing were identified as the most important infrastructure components in international student enrollment.
- Traditional marketing and recruitment strategies, including local agents and recruitment fairs, produced mixed results. In addition, a lack of understanding of the community college system by international students and their families was a disadvantage in a competitive recruiting market.
- Lack of cooperation and coordination between the community colleges under study prevented more consistent recruitment results and sustained a culture of haves and have nots.

These key findings guide the following discussion and provide focus for the study's implications. The institutions that have made a significant investment of time, staff, and capital are able to reap the benefits of their investments during a time of declining enrollments and financial hardship by investing some of the revenue in other educational initiatives like an ESL program. The research questions I developed to guide this study highlighted the discrepancies among the institutions and ways they wish to

grow their respective enrollment and find creative ways to enter the international student enrollment business. A closer look at certain aspects of these desires is warranted.

Recruitment of International Students as an Innovative Business Solution

The term academic capitalism flourished in the 1990s as government support for education declined and the concept of business innovation was linked to postsecondary education (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). As a result of declining support, higher education institutions were therefore forced to seek additional resources in addition to higher tuition. The institutions included in this study have all been forced to increase student tuition and fees to compensate for the loss of public funding due to the economy, thereby disrupting the funding ratio set by the higher education act (Özturgut, 2013). The broad access that is part of the community colleges' mission has become threatened by these rising tuition costs (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

Profit-generating practices are at the heart of the literature on academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Recruitment and enrollment of international students are thought to have the potential to have an immediate, major impact on an institution's fiscal resources based on the big difference in per-credit tuition cost between international students and in-state students. Findings from my study suggest that the institutions that have developed a strong infrastructure in support of international students, such as offering on-campus housing or a homestay program, use this infrastructure as successful pull factors to increase a country's attractiveness to international students (Becker & Kolster, 2012). Further, these institutions use the revenue generated from enrolling international students to support their staffing structure, ESL program, and recruiting initiatives, thereby making other dedicated institutional

resources available for other initiatives and personnel. On the other hand, institutions that do not yet possess such infrastructure either remain cautious about investing too much time and money into creating the necessary infrastructure or remain rooted to the traditional mission of a community college to serve the local population.

The success of other community colleges in using international students to help globalize the curriculum and campus environment does not, however, go unnoticed. Several community colleges in this study were investigating the possibility of adding student housing on or off-campus and including the recruitment of international students as an objective in their institution's next strategic plan. The desire to grow this student population was clearly reflected in the ambitious enrollment goals of the interviewees, with the exception of one (see figure 4). In fact, 8 out of the 11 institutions under study wanted to at least double their enrollment of international students in the next five years. The potential financial gain from enrolling international students is reflected in this decision which requires releasing other dedicated institutional funds. For example, using funds generated by international student enrollment to pay for staff and educational resources related to an institution's ESL program, which in many cases serves both the international student population as well as the local immigrant population, releases other budgeted funds that can then be used for other purposes. This revenue-generating approach was best expressed by president Lima1 who advocated for developing a different business model. "We have to think beyond our local community if we're serious about changing the business model that we currently operate on," he said. Once again, academic capitalism, while driven by the demands to generate revenue, describes the increasing authority of market-like practices, roles, and ideologies, and looks at

entrepreneurial activities that are profit motivated which takes away from the traditional mission of community colleges (Hanley, 2005).

The campus housing option was clearly viewed as an entrepreneurial activity and positive pull factor that needed to be evaluated and discussed carefully (Becker & Kolster, 2012). While only one institution currently offered international students an on-campus housing option, four others were actively considering this option and engaged in this conversation as part of their strategic plan review. Another community college found housing for its international students through a staff-administered homestay program. According to this institution's president, Echo1, opting for a homestay program was largely based on the fact that the community offered students a sophisticated public transportation network. Certainly this is a luxury only a few of the community colleges under study possessed. However, not having these options decrease a country's attractiveness to international students which would be a negative pull when considered through that framework (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

One of the reasons housing is part of several institutions' strategic discussions is the fact that the competition for transfer students, including international students, between community colleges and their four-year counterparts is increasing (Choudaha & Kono, 2012). Four-year colleges and universities also feel the economic pressures of the current economy and need to fill their student dormitories. While four-year institutions recruit local community college students more aggressively, a fact disclosed by all interviewees, the reality of additional revenue from every international student recruited increases the competition for this student population among all colleges and universities.

Additional challenges the community colleges under study mentioned during the interviews included the lack of dedicated staff to deal with the complex legal environment that results from recruiting international students, the lack of ESL program support, and a lack of dedicated financial resources required to market and recruit this student population. Academic capitalism defines these shortcomings as environmental influences on an institution's culture, structure, and core mission (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Considering the decline in public funding and rising operational costs, new strategic funding sources are needed to support today's institutions (Voorhees, 2001). Some institutions are attempting to explore those new funding and recruitment sources without overcommitting financial resources to the recruitment process. For example, the Mike institution was contemplating a cultural exchange with a Caribbean institution to boost its international student enrollment numbers. India1 was pursuing a closer relationship with local embassies to educate countries about the community college option and attract desirable student population to her institution. November1 pursued closer relationships with non-profit organizations that worked closely with immigrant populations. Finally, several community colleges in this study planned to increase their study abroad offerings and use their own students as ambassadors to help their overseas recruitment efforts.

Community Colleges Need to Improve Their Brand

Considering that America's higher education system started in the 17th century, the emergence of community colleges in the 1900's is relatively new (Anon, 2012; Melby, 1966). Founded on the principles of providing the populations of their surrounding communities with affordable access to higher education, and of creating a

more skilled workforce, community colleges have grown to more than 1,100 institutions nationwide enrolling 146,500 international students (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2014; Anon, 2012; IIE, 2013). In an effort to identify additional revenue sources to subsidize diminishing state allocations, community colleges began to discover the strategic importance of international student enrollment (Bragg, 2002).

Limited research exists specific to the factors associated with international student enrollment in community colleges. Traditional strategies include recruitment fairs and local agents who recruit students for commission (Wilkins, 2011). Institutions that were successfully recruiting international students used these strategies despite their associated expenses. Others shied away from them due to the expense and/or the ethical considerations of paying local agents a commission. A major finding from this study that seemed to be a major recruitment obstacle was the lack of awareness of the community college system in foreign countries. India1 said:

> Most of the time they are not aware of the community college system…I try to emphasize the importance of the community college system and how much money they can save and the quality of the education that they are going to get…They [parents] need to understand the system very well in order for them to send their children to us.

Juliet2 added:

> You are selling community colleges, which is not easy because the world does not understand community colleges. A lot of the families that want to send their

children abroad are very label conscious; they want them all to go to Harvard and Yale which is not possible, but they do not believe you.

Literature specifically points to the importance of parental influence in the college application and persistence process, and recommends specific strategies to educate parents, including face-to-face meetings between parents and school representatives and explanations of the college application process (Auerbach, 2004; Eder, Smith, & Pitts, 2010; Zalaquett, 2006). Educating international students and their parents about the advantages of the community college system appeared to be a major obstacle for most participants since they did not engage in traditional recruitment practices that tend to be conducted by local agents because of their ability to speak the language, understand the cultural differences and educational systems, and understand the importance families play in deciding on the eventual destinations of the international students (Wilkins, 2011). As a result, the need to educate students and their families about the community college system and its benefits, an important push factor to initiate a student's decision to study abroad, such as appealing areas of study, intensive English language programs, and smaller class sizes, becomes an additional burden due to the fact that there are limited resources for recruiting this student population (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Bohman, 2009; Desruisseaux, 1998).

While academic capitalism encourages innovative and entrepreneurial market-like practices that respond to the demands to generate revenue, president Foxtrot1 was uncomfortable with the idea of diverting funds from the traditional community college mission which is to educate the local student population thereby resisting the economic pressures academic capitalism puts on institutions (Hanley, 2005; Rhoades, 2005;

Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Echo1 also mentioned that conflict during his interview and acknowledged that he spent a considerable amount of time educating the external stakeholders about the benefits of recruiting international students. Clearly, this is an illustration of the tension between embracing market forces and maintaining their traditional focus, as predicted by academic capitalism.

A popular recruitment strategy with interviewees is offering a comprehensive study abroad program to its local students. Not only does it help to globalize the campus environment through the experiences local students bring back to campus upon their return from a semester abroad, it helps institutions communicate the benefits of the community college system through its local students who act as ambassadors overseas. Juliet2 spoke at length about his college's success in sending their domestic students out into the world through a comprehensive study abroad program, which allowed them to globalize the community college story and recruit abroad through their students. Alpha1 agreed with the importance of a study abroad program and educating international students about what community colleges can do for them; telling me,

> We strengthen what we do for study abroad as a way to connect all students to other countries and they could be reciprocal to bring persons from other countries into our learning environment to create that similar pathway for more students to consider the community college as their first step.

The literature points to community colleges' pursuit of internationalization as not an option but a necessity (Gu et al., 2010). Some tend to fear that academic capitalism puts economic pressures on the nature of academic work as it has been traditionally

defined (Rhoades, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The methods by which the community colleges under study pursue such internationalization differ tremendously.

One area of contention is the use of local agents to recruit international students. Institutions with a large international student population felt that local agents were necessary to build a comprehensive international program. The literature agrees, pointing to agents providing fast and direct access to specific markets and being the most cost effective option for most institutions (De Luca, 2011; Wilkins, 2011). However, ethical concerns about the commission-based recruitment practice were clearly expressed by interviewees. The fear of recruiters sending unprepared and unqualified students to the United States was reflected in the responses. Further, some participants feared that students would be referred to the institution that pays the highest commission. Juliet2 acknowledged those fears, but said that his institution built a trusted network of agents which, combined with recruiting visits and fairs by college staff, is the only way that they were able to build their international student program.

One surprising finding from my study was the overall lack of social media usage in the marketing and recruitment process especially since online marketing is considered to be the most common method producing quantifiable results (Wilkins, 2011). Colleges and universities should understand and integrate these factors into the marketing of higher education for international students and strengthen their image in hopes of attracting more international students (Cubillo et al., 2006). None of the interviewees fully embraced social media as a tool to assist their marketing and recruiting efforts. Considering the potential reach and low cost of social media channels, the opportunity

exists to educate international students about America's community college system and the benefits of starting one's higher education career at such an institution.

All of the aforementioned outreach strategies can be viewed through the academic capitalism lens as entrepreneurial activities driven by the demands to generate revenue (Hanley, 2005). As we learned through the study's findings, international student recruitment as well as the strategic commitment to this student population by the institutions under study are complex and dependent on the available resources. Therefore, higher education institutions must deepen their understanding of international students' decision-making processes and try different recruitment models and tools (Choudaha & Chang, 2012).

Collaboration in Times of Crisis

Critics of academic capitalism fear that institutional resources will be allocated toward activities that create revenue at the expense of traditional or historical educational activities, and that pressures from the external environment will be a strategic opportunity for institutions to restructure and meet the needs of the new economy (Barrow, 1996; Rhoades, 2006; Slaughter, 1998). Taking a closer look at the data in figure 4, the Alpha, Echo, Delta, Golf, India, Juliet, and Lima institutions each were interested in growing their international student populations by at least 96 students over the next 5 years. On the other hand, Charlie, Foxtrot, Mike, and November institutions were targeting low or more moderate growth. The growth oriented institutions discussed the intent to further emphasize the globalization of the campus environment and curriculum in their next strategic plan and to have international students play a key role in accomplishing this objective. The other community colleges were still contemplating their institutional

readiness to handle international students, specifically how to enroll them, how to house them, how to include them in the campus community, and how to pay for it all. Foxtrot1 said that his institution's commitment to the local community superseded any ambitions to recruit international students as it would be difficult to justify devoting resources to this student population to the college's stakeholders. Again, this is a perfect example of institutional leadership resisting the call of academic capitalism, which calls for developing new revenue streams at the expense of traditional missions (Hanley, 2005).

While many strategic plans referenced globalization and cultural diversity, the reality of the high cost of international student recruitment prevents many institutions from pursuing this student population more aggressively (Choudaha & Chang, 2012; Kotler & Fox, 1995). Collaboration among community colleges is one innovative alternative, viewed through the academic capitalism framework, for how the institutions under study could maximize their available human and financial resources (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). However, my study's findings suggest a lack of interest to collaborate among the institutions under study. Seeking new partnerships and exploring different sources for revenue generation are areas in which academic capitalism advocates believe higher education should play an increasingly active role (Kisker & Carducci, 2003; Spangler, 2002). So the question is why the institutions under study, all located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States, do not find more ways to collaborate for the greater good of the state as well as their individual institutions. November1 seemed equally perplexed when he described this phenomenon. "Community colleges should be able to collaborate on this because we're not really competing against each other," he said.

That is not to say that no efforts were ever made to establish a formal consortium between the community colleges under study. Several years ago, India1 tried to gather all 14 institutions to collaborate on international student recruitment. However, only six responded to her invitation, which was surprising considering the potential benefits of a consortium approach like that of Study Illinois, a non-profit Illinois International Education Consortium dedicated to welcoming international students to the state (Bohman, 2009). The consortium consists of 57 colleges and universities, including three community colleges, that pool their resources to make Illinois an attractive destination for international students. Only one of the community colleges under study participates in a consortium. Echo community college has been a member of a consortium of four community colleges from across the country for decades, allowing it to pool resources and recruit all over the world without the fear of competing against one another. The result of their collaborative effort has been very positive according to their president and vice president of enrollment. When asked about collaborating with other institutions within their own state, the idea was less desirable for them due to the fact that the current arrangement worked well. November1 summed up the feeling shared by many interviewees whose campuses do not enroll large numbers of international students saying, "I get the sense that the community colleges that do it well are not interested in collaboration."

Implications

Implications result from the findings and discussion of trying to understand the strategic role international students play in the overall financial health of select community colleges. The academic capitalism theoretical framework provided the lens

in investigating the continued decline of funding for community colleges and the need to develop other revenue sources (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Due to the fact that international students, on average, pay two to three as much in tuition and fees, all participants agreed that the international student population was an attractive opportunity for their institutions (Bok, 2003; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). However, according to the interviewees, the cultural benefits this population added to the campus environment outweighed the financial ones. This answers the first research question exploring how the community colleges under study describe the role of international students. Research question number two asked about the connection between international student recruitment and enrollment and the community colleges' fiscal health. Clearly, institutions struggled with this. The anticipated cost of the necessary infrastructure, including staffing, housing, and recruitment, worried many participants who felt a responsibility to provide an appropriate experience once international students enrolled at their institutions.

This responsibility was reflected in figure 4 in that Charlie, Foxtrot, Mike, and November institutions were targeting low or more moderate growth when asked about their desired international student growth over the next five years. In contrast, the Alpha, Echo, Delta, Golf, India, Juliet, and Lima institutions each were interested in growing their international student populations substantially because of their present enrollment, existing infrastructure, and strategic view of these students. These community colleges had either made an investment in the past to accommodate international students, such as campus dormitories or staffing to supervise a homestay program, or were in the process adding such infrastructure to their long-range plans.

In general, participants acknowledged their institution's efforts to incorporate the globalization of their campus communities in their respective strategic plans (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). Whether such globalization comes in the form of recruiting international students, expanding ESL programs, international partnerships, or offering study abroad programs, the fact that more and more strategic plans incorporate such directives is an encouraging sign for the future of community colleges' recruiting efforts of international students. Another encouraging sign is that one community college out of the 11 under study already offered student housing. Four more were contemplating housing, which would serve as a crucial component in any effort to increase international student marketing and recruitment efforts.

Marketing and recruiting strategies were the focus of research questions three and four; specifically exploring the marketing and recruitment strategies the community colleges under study used to attract international students and how they measured their effectiveness. The marketing and recruitment strategies used by the community colleges ranged from traditional strategies, such as local agents, comprehensive ESL and study abroad programs and recruitment fairs, to more unique partnerships such as a cultural exchange program with a Caribbean institution. No institution seemed to use any specific marketing strategies, including social media, beyond traditional strategies of offering a website landing page, student testimonials, virtual tours, or colorful recruitment brochures to engage and recruit international students. This was surprising considering the research that has been conducted on international students' decision-making process. Referring to international students, the popular push-pull theory argues that push factors tend to initiate a student's decision to study abroad, while pull factors are those that

increase a country's attractiveness to international students (Becker & Kolster, 2012). When applying a push-pull theoretical framework to international student recruitment, one expects to see specific strategies such as targeted marketing that communicates the high reputation of a country's higher education programs, or offering new scholarship programs (Becker & Kolster, 2012). In this study however, most community colleges only used traditional marketing strategies to appeal to the international student population. Further several interviewees acknowledged the limited amount of knowledge international students and their families had about the community college option. Finally, the effectiveness of the marketing and recruitment efforts are simply measured via the institution's annual student enrollment and retention numbers.

One major marketing and recruiting challenge faced by all community colleges under study was the general lack of knowledge of the community college option overseas. Although community colleges received a lot of positive media attention nationally for their accessibility and affordability as a result of the recession that started in 2008, interviewees believed that most international students are generally unaware of what community colleges have to offer, namely affordable cost and transferability of credits, and still prefer to attend well known four-year institutions. This belief seemed to be supported by looking at the overall enrollment numbers of international students in community colleges compared to four-year institutions (Choudaha & Chang, 2012). In fact, their enrollment declined from 95,785 during the 2008-2009 academic year, to 87,997 students in 2011-2012, representing an 8.1% decrease (IIE, 2013). During the same time frame, international student enrollment at four-year institutions grew 13.8% from 671,616 to 764,495 (IIE, 2013). The community colleges under study used

traditional strategies, including local agents or attending recruitment fairs, as well as non-traditional ones, such as establishing relationships with local embassies, to raise their profiles.

While strategic partnerships can benefit international student recruitment efforts, dedicated staff to assist with the complex international student enrollment process, a fully-developed ESL program to assist this student population in their transition to the academic environment, and a comprehensive study abroad program to help in the recruiting efforts were essential components and positive pull factors according to the interviewees (Becker & Kolster, 2012; Choudaha & Chang, 2012). While establishing such an infrastructure appeared daunting to some interviewees based on the available resources and long-term payoff for their institutions, several community colleges under study decided to improve their infrastructure selectively, such as hiring a part-time employee to assist with the necessary IRS paperwork, or commission a study to determine the feasibility of campus housing. Time will tell and more research is needed to determine whether these strategies and partnerships are having the desired effect. In addition, presidential leadership changes will have a considerable impact on an institution's strategic plan. For example, when Juliet1 became president he embraced the institution's prior strategic goal of aggressively recruiting international students. He credited his background in international student recruitment for allowing him to fully embrace the institution's goals. On the other hand, Alpha2 had to start from the beginning when assuming the presidency. There were no efforts made to actively recruit international students, so he had to start the institution's efforts by establishing a more comprehensive ESL program. No matter the size of the institution, current status of

international student program, and desired growth of such program, many strategies exist to balance the relationship between international students and the fiscal health of the community college.

Recommendations

While critics of academic capitalism fear that institutional resources will be allocated toward activities that create revenue at the expense of traditional or historical educational activities, the majority of interviewees embraced the fact that international students have the capability of having a positive impact on an institution's fiscal health (Barrow, 1996; Rhoades, 2006; Slaughter, 1998). Faced with an uncertain economic climate, political and public debates about the value of a higher education degree, and rapidly changing student demographics, the administrators in this study are exploring revenue generating ideas, such as international student recruitment, which are at the heart of the academic capitalism theoretical framework (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Leadership and practice. The perceived lack of knowledge international students have about the community college system in the United States is a big concern to institutional leaders as this identity crisis directly impacts the bottom line. In addition, the continued decline of public funding and shrinking enrollments force institutional leaders to restructure their institutional goals and objectives and meet the needs of the new economy (Barrow, 1996; Rhoades, 2006; Slaughter, 1998). Although quite different in their context, both issues require the attention of leadership in order to meet ambitious international student enrollment goals or to enter the competitive environment of recruiting this student population. Educational leaders need to be flexible and prepared to

use multiple paradigms in their decision-making approach considering today's complex higher education environment, as well as ask themselves what is in the best interest of the community and students (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). On the one hand, marketing and recruitment practices are expensive, evidenced by the cost of attending the necessary recruitment fairs or hiring local recruiting agents according to best practices outlined in today's literature, and they may not require an immediate pay-off as pointed out to me by Lima2. On the other hand, convincing the campus and local communities of the benefits of international students may be an even more difficult task and once again highlights the tension between generating new revenue sources without sacrificing the traditional mission of community colleges (Hanley, 2005). This tension exists despite the fact that all institutions in this study sought diversity and globalization of the curriculum as part of their respective strategic plans. However, the interpretation of such strategic objectives varied. That said, the potential benefit of pursuing international student recruitment is not just financial. As Juliet2 said:

> In the beginning, there was not a lot of understanding why we would do international. The community did not think it was important. As I brought more and more students on campus, I have seen there is now a tremendous buy-in from the faculty…The faculty love them because they are great students, they are wonderful, great people, and they add a level to our classrooms that most schools do not have.

Only one community college in this study had the benefit of campus dormitories. Another had a successful homestay program. Both institutions had consistent enrollment numbers over the years as well as ambitious growth goals. That said, the other

institutions participating in this study had varying levels of success in attracting international students. However, most of them still embraced the benefits of international students as outlined in the literature (Alberts, 2007; Guruz, 2011). More importantly, institutions can learn from one another regarding different recruitment and partnership approaches that allow these community colleges to embrace their desire to recruit international students without having to fully commit precious financial resources. For example, adding or enhancing a study abroad program, increasing web and social media presence, or adding ESL program levels are all pull factors that would increase the appeal in the eyes of international students and would allow an institution to start building an infrastructure for international student recruitment without having to make an investment in student housing or a homestay program (Becker & Kolster, 2012).

As simple as some of these strategies sound, the lack of cooperation between the community colleges under study makes implementation more difficult. Bolman and Deal's (2003) political framework is used describe organizations that experience such conflict due to the differing needs and perspectives of competing individuals and groups. November1 and Charlie1 shared their frustrations about this lack of cooperation despite several efforts to share best practices and resources as a group. However, the community colleges that have been successfully recruiting international students have already established relationships that serve them well and therefore no need for greater collaboration. Despite that fact, the other institutions should continue to pursue the concept of a consortium to lower the overall cost to each institution and learn from each other's successes and failures. Visionary leadership is essential to empower the campus community to move toward shared goals and objectives, seek innovative solutions, and

take calculated risks (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). More strategies are needed to raise the overall profile of community colleges in order to claim a larger enrollment percentage of international students among all of America's colleges and universities.

The institutional readiness for recruiting international students among the community colleges under study varied greatly. However, interviewees agreed on the necessity to explore new revenue sources considering the challenging economic climate (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While academic capitalism encourages such exploration, organizational change is complex as described in Kezar's (2001) research-based change principles, including organizational self-discovery, institutional culture, political implications, sustainability, balance between external and internal environment, facilitation of shared governance and collective decision-making, and connecting change to individual and institutional identity.

For most interviewees, investing in the necessary infrastructure to recruit international students required significant organizational change and was a frequent subject of disagreement among colleagues because of the "combination of scarce resources and divergent interests" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 206). For example, while Echo1 felt satisfied with his institution's recruitment efforts and the globalization of the curriculum, Echo2 sought more aggressive growth goals for this student population, which in his mind could be accomplished with additional staffing and more study abroad opportunities.

In order to undergo such a complex organizational change, institutional leaders must overcome their organizational defenses. "One of the major objectives of change management is to defeat or to prevent political activity so that the organization can

continue to function as a unitary entity" (Demers, 2007, p. 96). Argyris (1990) suggests that institutional leaders must properly link the importance of recruiting international students to the future financial health of the institution for all of its stakeholders to increase understanding and decrease ignorance. Naturally, stakeholders, such as an institution's board of trustees, may demand more evidence that such a dramatic change is needed, potentially causing what Argyris (1990) describes as paralysis by analysis. Based on the responses received by the interviewees who wish to grow their international student population, most have already started the process of seeking coherence during the change process, which includes aligning policies and coordinating strategies (Fullan, 2001). Incorporating international students into the institution's strategic plan would reflect a serious commitment toward the organizational change process.

Finally, a key component of institutional change is creating a guiding coalition and developing a comprehensive vision and strategy (Kotter, 1996). At least two out of the 11 community colleges under study developed such a vision and supporting strategies, which was reflected in the current and desired international student enrollment numbers. The ultimate goal was to make changes to the organization's activities, structures and strategies, and anchoring this change in the organizational culture (Bartunek & Moch, 1987).

Theory. Some participants in this study wrestled with the idea of whether or not to divert current resources to international student recruitment, thereby opposing what academic capitalism theory would predict (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The traditional ties of community colleges to their local constituents may counterbalance the academic capitalism pressures. For example, Foxtrot1's reluctance to more aggressively recruit

international students was related to his community's belief that community colleges should serve its local student population and not divert resources to recruitment activities that take away from that mission. Academic capitalism, which examines an institution's susceptibility to environmental influences on its culture, structure, and core mission, is reflected in this belief (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Although the concept of business innovation being linked to postsecondary education is at the heart of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), most interviewees valued international student recruitment for the cultural benefits this student population added to the campus environment rather than the financial benefits. In the end, interviewees' responses did not completely corroborate the shift from traditional academic values of institutional autonomy and knowledge production and dissemination as a public good to one which focuses on knowledge privatization and profit making as highlighted in academic capitalism literature (Slaughter& Rhoades, 2004). However, they did reflect a growing interest in this student population, a trend outlined in academic capitalism literature which encourages higher education decision makers to become market conscious and bottom-line oriented and to allocate institutional resources toward revenue generating activities (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Research. During the development of this study's findings, several issues presented themselves that require further investigation and research. A thorough analysis of the aforementioned external partnerships would provide useful data to other institutions contemplating similar efforts. In addition, as more community colleges start offering campus housing to their student populations, an analysis of international student

perceptions, enrollment, and financial impact would aid institutional leadership in their decision-making.

A comprehensive analysis of international students' perceptions of community colleges and how to best communicate with this population about the benefits of starting their education at a two-year college would aid institutional leaders in their decision making process. Further, investigating the local economic impact of international students in specific communities would provide key data to administrators who wish to pursue this student population more proactively. Finally, more research on academic capitalism in the community college setting is needed to further highlight the delicate balance of community colleges' vulnerability to succumb to the demands to generate revenue while staying true their mission of serving the academic and workforce needs of their local communities (Hanley, 2005).

This study was designed to provide a qualitative account of the perceptions regarding international student recruitment and the fiscal health of select community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. Guided by four research questions, this study discovered that the majority of institutional leaders interviewed acknowledged the potential financial impact of the international student populations, but valued the cultural benefits this student population added to the campus environment event more. In fact, only two of the 11 institutions in this study acknowledged the positive impact international student enrolment had on the fiscal health of their respective institutions. The other institutions were either working on incorporating this student population into their strategic plans, or felt a lack of institutional readiness to aggressively pursue international students.

In conclusion, this study should foster an understanding of the relationship of international student recruitment and the fiscal health of community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. It offers a senior leadership perspective on this topic by using their own rich description within the academic capitalism framework (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). While this study is limited in its relative lack of transferability of findings and recommendations to other community colleges, it provides relevant information and examples that can be applied elsewhere. In addition, it revealed personal and institutional experiences at 11 community colleges located in a Middle Atlantic state in the United States. Knowledge, understanding, and possible next steps to strategic decision-making resulted from the interviewees' participation and the research design. It revealed the different approaches and thought processes surrounding international students, and offered possibilities on how to learn from each other's experiences.

While more research is needed about international students in the community college setting, this study offers a solid starting point on this topic and can serve as an important resource to institutional leaders. Although not transferable to other institutions, the study's findings and recommendations offer numerous examples that can aid other community colleges in their decision-making process about international student recruitment and its possible financial impact.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for Community College Presidents

Q1. How would you describe the strategic role international students play in America's colleges and universities today?

Q1a. Do you perceive a difference between the community college setting and four-year institutions?

Q2. What are the perceived academic benefits international students bring to campus?

Q3. Considering the balance between the benefits international students add to the collegiate environment and the complexities of recruiting and enrolling them, what are the most important factors that motivate higher education institutions to recruit them?

Q3a. Do you encounter the factors you mentioned at your institution? If not, why not?

Q4. How would you describe the role international students play in your institution's strategic plan?

Q4a. How many international students are currently enrolled at your institution?

Q5. What are your institution's marketing and recruitment approaches for international students?

Q5a. Why did you decide to/not to deliberately recruit international students?

Q5b. How do you measure the effectiveness of the marketing and recruitment strategies used by your institution?

Q6. Considering the ongoing decline in public funding for America's college and universities, what is your reaction to the belief that international students need to be recruited for their financial impact on the bottom line?

Q7. How do international students affect the traditional mission of a community college?

Q8. What connection do the international students at your institution have on the overall fiscal health of the college?

Q8a. How do you envision the future role of international students at your institution?

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Recruitment and Enrollment Specialists

Q1. How would you describe the role international students play at your institution?

Q1a. How would you describe your institution's desire to recruit international students?

Q1b. How many international students are currently enrolled at your institution?

Q2. What are the perceived academic benefits international students bring to campus?

Q3. Considering the balance between the benefits international students add to the collegiate environment and the complexities of recruiting and enrolling them, what are the most important marketing and recruitment strategies used by your institution?

Q3a. What role, if any, does social media play in your recruitment efforts?

Q3b. How do you measure the effectiveness of the marketing and recruitment strategies used by your institution?

Q3c. What opportunities and barriers do you face in your marketing and recruitment efforts?

Q4. What is your perception of using local agents in foreign countries and collaborating with other community colleges to assist your marketing and recruitment efforts?

Q5. What connection do the international students at your institution have on the overall fiscal health of the college?

Q5a. How do you envision the future role of international students at your institution?