2017 Intern'l Undergraduate Student Acculturation Report_FINAL_02.23.17

University Relations

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WVU & THE ACCULTURIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
Research Objectives:
The overarching objective is to determine how successful WVU is in creating a culture of internationalization and embracing international students. Specifically:
• To understand the factors that led international students to consider WVU
• To identify the most important drivers in their decision to attend WVU
• To identify the gaps between their expectations and current perceptions of WVU
• To explore the effectiveness of the onboarding process
• To determine messaging that will best resonate with prospective international students

Methodology:
This report is an addendum to the original report on WVU International Student Acculturation issued in December 2016. That report was a reflection of the attitudes and opinions of international graduate students and a few exchange students. This report is based on feedback and insights from international undergraduate students.
Demographics

Full-time students from the countries listed below were interviewed because they reflect the areas of the world WVU is targeting for international recruitment. Efforts were made to recruit a mix of undergraduate class levels as well.

- Canada
- China
- India
- Nigeria
- The Bahamas
- Rwanda (2)
- Vietnam
- Freshmen (1)
- Sophomores (2)
- Juniors (2)
- Seniors (3)
Student Participants

- China, Senior, Industrial Math & Statistics Major (male): In 2012, his mother’s friend, a visiting scholar at WVU, invited him to attend high school in Morgantown.

- Rwanda, Junior, Mining/Engineering Major (male): Had not been to the U.S. before.

- Nigeria, Senior, Management Information System Major (male): Had not been to the U.S. before.

- India, Sophomore, Business School planning to major in MIS (male): Had not been to the U.S. before.

- The Bahamas, Senior, Landscape Architecture (female): Quite familiar with the U.S. but not West Virginia. Had vacationed in the U.S. many times and often shopped with her family in Florida.

- Canada, Sophomore, Exercise Physiology (male): From Toronto and plays WVU ice hockey; went to boarding school in New York and delayed college until he was 21 because he had spent time playing in a semi-pro hockey league.

- Rwanda, Junior, Mechanical Engineering Major (male): Learned to speak English in an American missionary high school in Kenya and lived in Switzerland for three years in his teens. Had not been to the U.S. before.

- Vietnam, Freshman, Engineering Major (female): She was in the U.S. in 2015 visiting relatives on the West Coast and attending a scientific competition in Texas. She also visited New York.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
These were cited as the most important factors in these students’ decision to attend WVU:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors in Choosing WVU</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends (2)</td>
<td>- Acquaintance acquired a good job after graduating from WVU</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Relative currently attending WVU recommended it</td>
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<tr>
<td>National ranking (2)</td>
<td>- WVU ranks among the top schools for their majors</td>
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<tr>
<td>WVU recruiter (2)</td>
<td>- Recruited from Rwanda</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Recruited from Nigeria</td>
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<td>Value for the money (2)</td>
<td>- Significantly more affordable than other schools under consideration</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-country recruitment agent</td>
<td>- WVU has a high placement rate and high quality professors in business/MIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant requirements</td>
<td>- Writing was not a mandatory part of the SAT at WVU</td>
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<td>Sports and graduate school</td>
<td>- Could play a club sport here and as a WVU undergrad and, as an international student, would be given priority in graduate school</td>
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<td>Late admission, unique program and SAT not required</td>
<td>- Only university that offers a photography/videography major</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Does not require applicants to take the SAT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- One of a few schools that accepted late applicants</td>
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Academics

It’s difficult to discern if the academic-related issues students mentioned are related to their being international or if these problems are systemic.

a. **Courses**: Some undergraduate students receive incomplete information from their advisers when registering for freshmen classes and, in some cases, in subsequent years. Secondly, should circumstances result an international student arriving to campus late, they often find their desired course(s) have already been filled.

b. **Language**: For many students, English is not their first language, so they may misinterpret assignments or be reluctant to speak in class.

c. **Grading**: Some students do not realize how a poor grade in one class can significantly impact their overall GPA. In certain countries, grades are comprehensive rather than cumulative. The specifics and significance of plagiarism are not clearly explained.

d. **Credits**: Several students said they were not given helpful advice regarding the number of credits they should have taken their freshmen year.

e. **Course Monitoring Systems**: It takes a significant amount of time for DegreeWorks to update when a student changes their major. This results in confusion about the ongoing classes they need to take.
Day-to-Day Living

a. **Culture:** Opportunities for internationals to interact with American students are sorely lacking. As a result, most internationals do not feel part of the fabric of the University. Rather, many feel compelled to stick with students from their country; others feel like outliers.

b. **Language:** The students interviewed for this study spoke English well but report that those students who struggle with the language are typically shunned.

c. **Transportation:** The bus service that runs outside of campus (e.g. University Town Center, Morgantown Mall, the airport, etc.) is said to be infrequent and inconvenient.

d. **Food:** As is true of international graduate students, many vegetarian students and those who follow religious dietary guidelines struggle to find acceptable food options at WVU or in the surrounding area.
Advantages of Attending WVU

Students have different perspectives on what they think would be important for someone from their country to know if they were considering WVU.

THE FACULTY
“‘I’ve had opportunities here and I personally have relationships with my professors, which I love. I feel like me interacting with them is super cool and super important. I feel if I were at NYU or somewhere else, I couldn’t be able to do that.’” – Senior, Nigeria

THE OPPORTUNITIES
“It’s a big school so there are lots of opportunities. There are also opportunities many states after school because of WVU’s location.” – Senior, The Bahamas

THE EDUCATION
“I would tell people if they want a good degree and a solid job, then go to WVU. We offer a good education that is affordable.” – Freshman, Vietnam

THE CAMPUS
“When I visited America before, there were just flat lands. I like the hills here because my country is full of hills everywhere. It feels like home.” – Junior, Rwanda

THE ACCESSIBILITY
“Because of the location, you have opportunities in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Ohio and Virginia once you graduate.” – Senior, The Bahamas

THE CULTURE
“I tell people you’ll never understand how amazing it is until you visit. I think this place is magical. You get to see and do so many amazing things but the craziest thing is that it’s just a small town in WV. When people hear that we have a 65,000 seat football stadium and we get to do cool stuff and see amazing games, they think, ‘Wow, I’d like to experience that kind of university life.’” – Junior, Canada

THE ENVIRONMENT
“You can get anything you want here. After you graduate, you can get a good job because it’s a very, highly-recognized school. In terms of the social life, it’s very good because there are so many social events and activities. If you like to party, there are a lot of parties. If you are athletic, you can play any sport you want.” – Junior, Rwanda
Recommendations
Nearly all of these recommendations echo those proposed in the initial report.

**Partner with the international student clubs and club sports to promote them.** Many students are unaware that such clubs exist, yet they can make a significant difference to international students who are struggling to adapt to a new culture in the U.S.

**Offer seminars for internationals who are concerned about being discriminated against.** Teaching students ways in which to react, as well as the options they have for coping with situations will help them feel more in control when they feel intimidated or at risk.

**Hold events that will help internationals better integrate with U.S. students.** Activities/events where students must work together to achieve a common goal may encourage a spirit of openness and shared appreciation.

**Establish a buddy system for international freshmen.** Assigning students of similar age as “buddies” to internationals will allow them to feel more comfortable when they are trying to figure things out when they first arrive.

**Assign an adviser to work with students who graduate from the IEP Program.** This direction would help students make a smoother transition into University life and classes.

**Consider using the Indian Student Organization as the standard for onboarding internationals.** This student organizations takes control as soon as students exit the plane. They pick students up at the airport and help them ease into life in Morgantown, thus helping to lessen the culture shock.
Recommendations (continued)

Make attendance at cultural events mandatory or offer a mandatory diversity course. Doing so would encourage students from difficult countries, including the U.S., to find commonalities.

Consider creating a social media site for international WVU students. These students should have an informal venue where can reach out, ask questions and have them answered without feeling embarrassed.

Have a diverse panel of international and American students speak during the International NSO. Seeing and hearing from other international students will likely alleviate some of the culture shock many students experience.

Have an international student(s) speak at the WVU career fairs. International students face issues that are atypical for American students so they need to develop an understanding of those issues early in their college life to better prepare and strategize.

Establish a recruiting strategy in the Toronto area. WVU is one of the few schools that the Ontario government provides U.S. student funding for and U.S. schools currently have no representation at university fairs in Toronto. The powerful aura around athletics at WVU does not reportedly exist in schools in Canada and would likely be a powerful draw, in addition to the academic opportunities WVU provides.

Consider using infostations to promote scholarships for international students. This may help improve scholarship awareness.
THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
Schools Considered

Undergraduate students applied to a variety of schools:

- University of North Carolina (NC)
- University of Waterloo (CN)
- Hampton University (VA)
- Kansas State (KS)
- Suffolk (MA)
- Virginia State (VA)
- University of Florida (FL)
- Kentucky State (KY)
- Rutgers (NY)
- Babson College (MA)
- Syracuse (NY)
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (FL)
- Marshall University (WV)
- Union College (NY)

Students cited a number of factors that prompted them to choose to attend WVU. In several cases, the personal interaction students had with WVU administrators prompted them to choose WVU.

“I got into all the schools I applied to. I was in contact with the program secretaries and advisors and WVU’s program seemed to be the best for me. It seemed more personal, more hands-on, more intimate. They were more interested in me as a student and they catered to me.” – Senior, The Bahamas

“A recruitment officer, Michael Willum (?), came to my high school in Rwanda. He was really helpful when I got here. Some days I would stop by just to talk with him.”
– Junior, Rwanda
Drivers of Decision

Some students choose to attend WVU because of its national standing in their intended major.

“WVU was in the top five for what I wanted to study and that is how our counselor told us to decide. He advised us to find the top schools in what we wanted to major in.” – Senior, The Bahamas

“I researched the program and found it is ranked ninth in the country for engineering and for my major it’s one of the best.” – Junior, Rwanda

Others were influenced by University outcomes.

“My uncle’s subordinate graduated from WVU and he’ll be working at Deloitte. He’s done really, really good.”
– Sophomore, India

“My advisor said that all of his students who went to WVU got good jobs.”
– Senior, China

Others choose to attend WVU because of strong personal recommendations.

“Education in high school in Nigeria is great but then after that, there is really nothing. Students either go to Switzerland, Australia and some go to India. My sister went here in 2007 because she knew someone here and she has a great job. I came because of her.”
– Senior, Nigeria

Affordability/scholarships were important in some students’ decision, both in the short-term and long-term.

“I was offered 75% off tuition and it was better than what any other school offered.”
– Junior, Rwanda

“In addition to my sister having gone here, it’s much cheaper. If I go to graduate school, cost will continue to be important for me.”
– Senior, Nigeria

One cited a program that unique to WVU.

“WVU was the only school that combined photography/videography so that was what I wanted to do back then.” – Freshman, Vietnam
Higher Education in the U.S.

These students acknowledged the value of receiving a college education in the U.S.

“Hollywood teaches us that America is fun. It’s also the best education you can get. I thought about going to school in London. To us, we think Europeans are more cultured than Americans and we feel Americans are loud and proud. So that is why a European education is attractive but when it comes to school, I feel this was the best place to come.” – Junior, Rwanda

“I thought about going back home in my first semester and completing my college over there. It would cost $1,500/semester if I went to a private college, and if I went to a government college in India it’s about $200/semester but I came here so I could evolve.” – Sophomore, India

“This school rewards you for doing a good job. Canada did not reward you for doing a good job in high school. I’ve gotten over $50,000 from WVU so far and I’m not even a 4.0 student. Nobody I know in Canada has ever gotten something like that. What people don’t hear about in Canada is that it’s extremely difficult to get a job after college. And you don’t really have that many choices because all of them are public, state schools with all the same majors. There are no real differences between majors. There’s also not a real sense of comradery at those schools.

One thing I always wanted to do as a kid was come to American and start living here. When my family would go to Florida for vacation Morgantown always happened to be our night stop. One time I remember seeing the flying WV on every car from here to Orlando because I think that was one of the years they went to the Orange Bowl. That logo stuck with me and when I was looking at certain schools, I thought – West Virginia – that would be a cool one. I emailed the coach to see if there was interest and it snowballed from there.” – Junior, Canada
WVU’s Reputation

Some students acknowledged that WVU was known as a “middle of the road” school; nonetheless, them deemed it a good fit for them. However, American students often question their choice of school.

“Everyone asks me why, as an international student, I am at WVU. Some students are even shocked and ask me why I chose WVU and why I am in this small town. I told them it was big enough. I also like the quietness of Morgantown.” – Senior, China

“For internationals, WVU is considered a moderate university. It’s not Ivey league but it’s not bad. My sister told me a quote that convinced me that WVU would be a good choice. She told me I could be one among a lot of people, like at NYU or Rutgers, or someone who can take initiative in a smaller place.” – Senior, Nigeria

“They catered to me as a student when I reached out to different schools. I also had a lot of friends who were excited about me going here because they knew about the football team. However, when I got here everyone asked me ‘How did you end up here? You’re from the Bahamas. How did you get here? Why?’” – Senior, The Bahamas
THE CULTURE
Perceptions of Food

Internationals crave food from back home or food that is dictated by their religious beliefs. The lack of familiar food is one element that contributes to students feeling homesick.

“I feel like people put cheese in everything here. Back home, culturally you can’t dairy products and meat. The first time I had a meal here I didn’t know that they would put cheese on a burger when I asked for a burger, so it didn’t agree with me. Now I love it! Now that I live off campus, it’s easy. Freshman year you want something your mom cooked or something close to it. There is one African Restaurant but it’s really far.” – Junior, Rwanda

“I’m a vegetarian and I don’t eat any meat. That is a tough problem for me personally. I had 160 swipes but at the end of the semester I had 100 swipes remaining. When I visit my uncle on the weekends, we eat Indian food all weekend. I don’t expect the University to open a Indian restaurant where my meal plan works.” – Sophomore, China

“Halal meat is not available to purchase here. Well, one restaurant sells it but it is very expensive. The only option is for students to drive to Pittsburgh to get it. You’ll see a lot of Middle Eastern guys eat fish sandwiches, sushi and maybe fries and pizza. It’s an issue here.” – Senior, China (a Muslim)

“What I miss most is the food. We have really, really good food at home. It’s not that American food is not good but we have the noodle soup. American food is really dry and if there is little soup in it and it’s the real thick and cheesy. I won’t say that it’s not good but it doesn’t fit me. I prefer Vietnamese food more. There is a Chinese restaurant that serves pho but it’s not that authentic.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“I’m not picky with eating but I get tired of having the same thing. We have fast food at home but not being able to have Bahamian food at all was not good.” – Senior, The Bahamas

“I’m not picky with eating but I get tired of having the same thing. We have fast food at home but not being able to have Bahamian food at all was not good.” – Senior, The Bahamas
In some cases, these students’ expectations differed from what they actually experienced.

<table>
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<th>Expectations vs. Reality</th>
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| American students would be welcoming | - Most American students do not initiate conversations  
- Many Americans question why internationals attend WVU |
| Expected to see students from their country at WVU | - Could not find anyone of the same ethnicity |
| Adjusting to the education system would be easy | - The education in the U.S. differs greatly |
| Thought they would be accepted for who they are | - Would have to change the cadence of their speech to be understood |
| Expected to get lost because of the size of the university | - Found other students from his country and fit in right away |
| Stores are open on the weekend and transportation is readily available | - Many downtown stores are reportedly closed on Sundays and bus service to the surrounding areas is infrequent |
| Would not qualify for a scholarship if not a 4.0 student | - Scholarship opportunities abound |
Perceptions of Diversity

Similar to graduate students, most undergraduate students have found it challenging to connect with students from their native country, in addition to American students.

“When I finished my orientation, I asked myself ‘What is going on?’ I was totally blinded and didn’t have any idea where I was actually. I had expected to see a lot of students from India and I hardly found any. That was a big shock for me at the time. It would have helped to meet other Indian students. That would have been so much better. I’m certain about that!” – Sophomore, India

“Something I see but have not felt is diversity. Even though there are students from lots of countries here, you still see students from the same countries hanging out together.” – Junior, Rwanda
Social Barriers

While students acknowledge there is diversity at WVU and most describe American students as “friendly,” they are quick to point out that the interaction typically ends there.

“I thought it would be easier to make friends with someone from the same culture as you. The only way I make friends is in class. We talk about class but we don’t talk about personal things. They don’t ask me to go out with them – ever – and I don’t ask them to go out with me – ever. I think Asians should talk with Americans more but I’m not that confident with my English to do that. Actually, Americans usually have their group of friends and we feel left out. I’d love to go to the mall or get my nails done with a friend but I don’t have a girl soulmate. I haven’t grown any strong bonds.” – Freshman, Vietnam

A few international students are hard pressed to find students they can relate to.

“OISS advertised diversity, and it is diverse, but I was one of two Bahamian on this campus and I never met the other one. I found there were not a lot of faces like mine. There were other internationals who generally understood the difference, but not even any Caribbean people, much less Bahamian people. I am the president of the Caribbean Student Association, which is brand new. I know that it will help Caribbean student who come here at 18-19 years of age and not identify at all. They will want to go home.” – Senior, The Bahamas
Social Barriers

While international students feel more comfortable finding like students, they very much welcome establishing friendships with American students. However, Americans can appear clannish.

“I lived in Dadisman Hall and that experience wasn’t the best. I was put with a bunch of ROTC kids who did their own thing. If they were from Jersey, they’d say oh, we Jersey kids will all be together. If they were from Pittsburgh, they’d say...So that concept excludes you. They’d ask where I was from and I’d say I’m an international. So it would be like, okay, go find your own friends. The first six months I didn’t have any friends. It was terrible. I thought maybe I should go somewhere where there are more internationals.”
– Senior, Nigeria

“American students do not embrace internationals. This is the American students’ host country so they should say hello first. While I smile first, they just look at me.” – Senior, China

‘I would say the culture here is not very friendly. I was really looking forward to that part of integration...being with locals. It’s hard for internationals. They stay where they are from. I already knew that some people would see me as an outsider. I hung out with the Rwandans a lot but realized that wasn’t good for me. You need to be out there.” – Junior, Rwanda

A few students mentioned that once they got involved with a sport or Adventure WV, they were able to easily befriend American students.

“I’m a huge soccer person so that helped a lot. I know a lot of American students now because of soccer and I got to know a lot of different people here through soccer.” – Junior, Rwanda

“I met American students through Adventure WV. That was absolutely amazing. I’m still friends with the Americans I met there. Until they get to know you, they don’t want to know you. Until then they think you’re not like-minded so why should we get to know you.” – Senior, Nigeria
Language Barriers

Just one student said they feel somewhat uncomfortable speaking in class because English is not their native language. Another said his accent can make others uncomfortable.

“My writing is better than my speaking but I do ask questions if I have them. It’s hard to sometimes think of the word I’m looking for but I can email questions or ask. Before I ask a question, I will repeat it five times before I actually say it.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“I didn’t have trouble mixing with the American and local students in class but I did outside of class. First, you don’t have the same culture, the same experience and, for us, it’s hard because of the accent. Some of them don’t want to be offensive and ask you what you just said, so there are some challenges.” – Junior, Rwanda

Travel Barriers

A couple students find it hugely inconvenient to travel home, and one nearly transferred schools because it’s been such a hassle for her to get there.

“It’s really hard when I fly home out of Washington Dulles. It’s travel time and expense. We have a full range of airlines and so many restaurants back home (American, Korean, Thai) and we don’t have many choices here.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“At the end of my sophomore year, if it wasn’t for my program and the way they cater to us, I probably would have transferred. It’s mainly because I don’t drive home so I have to fly home. I tried flying out of Morgantown all three times and all three times were disastrous. Even flying out of Pittsburgh is difficult. There are buses but ideally you have to get there the night before because anything can happen. Just one trip has been smooth sailing.” – Senior, The Bahamas
Safety/Racial Discrimination

None of these students acknowledged feeling unsafe here. However, one student recounted being racially profiled. It is important to note only two undergraduate females were represented in this wave of interviews.

“Safety concerns here? No, it’s really good here. I don’t care about that.” – Sophomore, India

“I don’t feel any racism here. Even after the election, people expressed their opinions with flags or by wearing a shirt. But it’s not like they are going to talk to us in any bad language or anything. I’ve never experienced that.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“In Towers, there was a group of young men that wouldn’t get in the elevator with me. That’s not the only time I’ve experienced it, but I chose to put other occasions out of my mind.” – Senior, The Bahamas

“My dad did the research on WVU in terms of internationals. I think he looked for the most racist state in the United States and to be honest with you, West Virginia came up really high. I haven’t encountered any racism myself. I feel WVU is a really welcoming place. When you find people who don’t know where you are from, it will be a teaching/learning experience.” – Junior, Rwanda
International House

One student who currently resides in the International House believes closing the house will be detrimental to incoming international students. He believes they will have greater difficulty acclimating to the University, and that it will eliminate an effective source of information for them. Additionally, it will eliminate one of the reportedly few opportunities for interested American students to socialize and befriend internationals. Another student echoed that there is a void in communication.

This student also argued that moving OISS from E. Moore Hall to the basement of a building eliminates an environment where internationals enjoyed spending time socializing.

“They are closing the international house this semester. I can send you stories about how international students would not have survived in West Virginia without the international house. There will be nowhere for internationals to learn what is going on in and around the campus. It was beautiful because no one could be from the same country. On top of that, Americans were teaching us how to play football, etc. and we are teaching them things. Exchange students will have no idea of what’s going on.” – Senior, Nigeria

“I live to live with American students more than internationals because I can keep track of what is happening at WVU and in society. I’ve found that difficult.” – Senior, China
THE RESOURCES
Health Insurance

Several students recounted issues they had with their health insurance which caused them to spend money unnecessarily.

“The policy that most students get in the Bahamas is what we need. I had that insurance when I came and had the waiver. In my junior year, I got an email saying I was being enrolled in Aetna because my insurance was insufficient. I told them my insurance agent gave me what the school was asking for. My insurance agent said it was far beyond what I needed. Since the school had already enrolled me in Aetna, I ended up paying for two sets of insurance. They told me in my third year, I had been selected to be randomly audited. I was okay with this insurance, you approved this insurance, and now decided that it doesn’t work. That’s not my fault, but they already signed me up for Aetna.” – Senior, The Bahamas

“I didn’t understand where to start for choosing my insurance. I found that I was always paying extra fees, etc. for insurance so I asked a few international students why I was paying so much. They told me that I needed to change my company. Now it’s half off the original company. I don’t recall anyone explaining it to me. It used to be $750 but this is the first semester that I got to pay only $300.” – Senior, China

“The health insurance was confusing to start. I was struggling but someone reviewed my policy and said I need this and not this. At first it was very impersonal because we had to submit information and they said they’d let us know if we qualified for the waiver or not. One thing was confusing was how much I had to pay if I died. They kept denying me but my father said, ‘You live six hours away so I would drive down and get your body.’” – Junior, Canada
University Support Systems

None of these students acknowledged facing difficulties that dictated assistance from an office in the University. One student faced a couple of serious challenges. Despite that, he never sought assistance from the University.

“In my first semester I took a sociology class, something I knew nothing about, so I got an “F” in the class. My, my father and uncle had a serious talk about that. My uncle said I should have at least told him so he could have arranged for a tutor for me. I just ignored it and took things very lightly because I was doing well in my other classes. I didn’t realize how much it would impact my GPA. Later on I realized that getting an “F” would make a big difference. I did very well in my second semester. Even though I got an “F,” I thought it will be fine, it will be fine. I didn’t know how badly it would affect me but today I know. I didn’t visit the professor; I’m not saying there wasn’t any help for me. I took it real lightly and I paid for that. My father and my uncle and I had a serious talk about that.

I don’t think anyone can adapt to so many changes in a few weeks or even in a few months. In the first semester, I refused to leave my room. I just wanted to stay by myself. I wasn’t connecting well with people. I couldn’t figure out anyone. I wasn’t mentally ready. I knew that I was going to have to do but I didn’t realize how tough it would be.”

– Sophomore, India
Student Accounts
The lack of face-to-face communication and inflexibility in University policies has plagued a few students.

“I had a problem with a wire transfer. They gave me misinformation so my money got delayed. It was time consuming because I had to go to the office and go home and wait. I had to go back and forth until the issue was resolved. I would have preferred to speak with someone so I could get an immediate answer. They told me to go home and wait but the email never came. I had to follow up with them; they didn’t follow up with me.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“Going to the registrar was an issue. Although the scholarship check was coming, it was not here yet so my fees were not paid. But they were holding the check because they needed my official transcript. So the school wouldn’t give me the transcript but they were holding it because they didn’t have the check. They were unmoving on the matter. It took about 5 weeks to resolve. This transcript thing was a big thing.” – Senior, The Bahamas
THE ACADEMICS
**Academic Information**

There appears to be a shortage of information provided to international students regarding academics. This void can create a situation that can compromise their future success.

“A lot of international students, because of certain restrictions or their travel gets delayed – WHEW – are late and the classes are all taken. Then they have to take the math test and that puts them even further behind. All of that takes so much time. That whole thing is not explained to us at all. At all. The fact that you can go on your MIX account and get classes is not discussed. The advisor does it for you in the first semester but then you are on your own. There should be international advisors who tell us how classes go. I didn’t know that attendance is necessary because professors don’t mention it. It’s on the syllabus but they don’t talk about the importance of it and it makes a big difference. My first semester I had a 2.1 and since I’ve not gotten anything less than a 3.5, because I got it. But my cumulative has always been bad because of that.” – Senior, Nigeria

“Professors say, ‘See the syllabus, you can’t do this.’ In other countries, they say ‘don’t copy’ but they don’t have a way to check. In other countries, you can reference things but you don’t know you have to cite it. It was my first semester and I got a direct fail…not even a warning. Now I know the word plagiarism really well. That’s not something common until you’re in college. We know that you can’t cheat or copy something but plagiarism is more of a thing they put in the U.S. dictionary. I had no idea that the consequence would be direct fail, and it’s really impacted my GPA.” – Senior, Nigeria
**Academic Information**

When a student receives incomplete information, it can also deter their ability to graduate on time.

“When I got here I didn’t understand the credit system and GPA system. The first semester I only took 12 credits. I had an advisor but he said it was up to me. My advisor said I could take between 12 and 20 credits, so I thought 12 would be good for me. So now I’m in a hurry to get enough credits to graduate, so I’m taking 15-16 credits, minimum. If I could go back to my freshman year, I would have taken 14-15 and would have finished the easiest things first.” – Senior, China

“I only had 15 credits for an engineering degree and I should have taken 18. They thought I was behind so they thought I should take few classes but now I have to take a lot of summer classes to catch up.” – Junior, Rwanda

A senior pointed out the challenges international students might face if they don’t understand that they might have fewer opportunities than American students.

“I would tell them to be sure to think about opportunities in neighboring states early in their early years, not something you deal with at the end. As an international student, it’s not as easy to get those internship positions. A lot of firms do not employ internationals on the whole, at least not in my field, because it’s a Visa issue. You have to know the firms that do cater to you. Usually it’s the larger firms and more difficult to get into. You need to have good grades from the beginning and have connections with those firms from the beginning.” – Senior, The Bahamas
Scholarships

While scholarships are thought to abound at WVU, they may not be widely discussed or advertised.

“I was one of the students who got the international merit scholarship. This is one thing that blows my mind and where I think WVU can get a lot of students here. I thought I didn’t have a shot for this because I had a 3.1 and a I knew a Russian students with a 4.0 who was planning on getting the scholarship, but I applied anyway. I had a reference from a guy from the Exercise Physiology program, my assistant coach and a family from Morgantown whose son I taught to skate the second week I was here. I won the scholarship because I was able to use WVU not just for academics but also to reach out to the community, make a difference for other people and make myself a more well-rounded person.” – Junior, Canada

“I think we have a good range of scholarships but we should offer more of them to get more international students. For instance, Alabama University offers a full tuition scholarship for the SAT test. You can get 100%, 50%, 30%. My other friends from Vietnam chose to go to those places. I only have $7,000 yr. so I had to apply for another scholarship because I have a hold on my account.” – Freshman, Vietnam

“I know there are scholarships for international students but they’re not widely promoted. You get one email and all the OISS emails would go to spam in the beginning. I think that the scholarships should be promoted using the infostations so at least international students would know what was available to apply for.” – Senior, Nigeria