

INTRINSIC CASE STUDY OF ADVISORS' PERCEPTIONS OF ADVISING  
INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER STUDENTS TRANSITIONING FROM A TWO-  
YEAR COLLEGE TO A LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY IN THE SOUTHWEST  
REGION OF THE UNITED STATES

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative intrinsic case study examined advisor's perceptions of advising transitioning international transfer students transferring from a two-year college to a land-grant institution in the southwest region on the United States. Literature has demonstrated that the number of international students is increasing in the United States.

Thirteen semi-structured questions were asked of nine participants who were employed at a four-year land-grant institution. Advisors from the Office of Admissions, International Student Services Office and academic colleges were interviewed. The participants (advisors) were actively involved in working with international transfer students. Each office advisor had different advising functions. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The themes that emerged while analyzing the data were: (1) Bureaucracy, (2) Advising, and (3) Culture.

Although this university is involved in recruiting and retaining students, the researcher proposes that faculty and staff should do a better job in reaching out and advising international transfer students. Findings from this study suggest that the university should provide mandatory cross training where advisors from three units are trained in advising methods, diversity, and immigration procedures. Additionally, advisors should apply appreciative advising model as a technique to engage international transfer student advising.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family members who supported me throughout the whole process; my God, my wife, my brothers, my lovely parents, grandparents, and especially Vovô Francisco Soares de Souza, who is now in heaven with Jesus Christ. Thank you for always encouraging our family to be educated and thank you for sacrificing your education for those you love.

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## NOMENCLATURE

U.S.	United States
SEVIS:	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
TOEFL:	Test of English as a Foreign Language

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
NOMENCLATURE.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement .....	3
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Significance of Study .....	5
Conceptual Framework .....	7
The Research Questions .....	7
Definition of Terms .....	8
Researcher Profile .....	9
Summary and Organization of Dissertation .....	11
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
Introduction .....	12
International Students in the United States .....	12
Community/Two-Year Colleges .....	15
Transfer Student Obstacles.....	17
Culture Shock.....	19
General Advising.....	21
Advising International Transfer Students .....	23
Conceptual Framework .....	27

	Page
CHAPTER III METHOD.....	31
Introduction .....	31
Methodology .....	32
Context for the Study .....	33
Participants .....	37
Selection.....	37
Selection Criteria.....	38
Demographics of Participants .....	39
Instrumentation.....	42
Interview Protocol .....	42
Data Collection.....	42
Interview Questions .....	43
Data Analysis: Coding and Theming Process .....	44
Assumptions.....	47
Limitations of the Study.....	47
Summary .....	48
CHAPTER IV DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .....	49
Results .....	50
Interview Question 1 .....	50
Interview Questions 2 and 3.....	55
Interview Question 4 .....	61
Interview Questions 5 and 6.....	66
Interview Question 7 .....	67
Interview Question 8 .....	76
Interview Question 9 .....	82
Interview Question 10 .....	84
Interview Question 11 .....	88
Interview Question 12 .....	92
Interview Question 13 .....	95
Chapter Summary.....	99
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	101
Research Questions .....	101
Bureaucracy.....	102
Advising .....	108
Pre-Transfer Advising.....	112
Student Retention Advising .....	114
Course Transferability.....	118



	Page
Culture .....	121
Language Barrier .....	121
Handholding .....	123
Respect and Appreciation .....	124
CHAPTER VI SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	128
Overview of the Study .....	128
Review of Literature .....	130
Participants .....	133
Discussion of Results and Recommendations .....	134
Bureaucracy Theme .....	138
Advising Theme .....	140
Culture Theme .....	141
Overall Recommendations .....	142
New Addition to Appreciative Advising – Diversity Phase.....	146
Research Questions .....	147
Office of Admissions .....	149
International Student Services.....	149
Academic Departments .....	149
Summary and Conclusion .....	151
Implications for Future Research .....	152
REFERENCES.....	154

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1 Community College Locations.....	17
Figure 2 Research Question Themes .....	102

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1 International Student Enrollment by Academic Year .....	6
Table 2.1 Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students for 2011/12 and 2012/13 ...	14
Table 2.2 Types of Two-Year Institutions in the United States .....	16
Table 2.3 Diversity of Students in University, as Indicated by their Background .....	25
Table 2.4 Student Demographics at Community Colleges in the United States .....	26
Table 3.1 Application, Admittance, and Enrollment at the Land-Grant University. ....	34
Table 3.2 International Application, Admittance, and Enrollment at Land-Grant University .....	35
Table 3.3 Demographics of Admissions Advisors .....	39
Table 3.4 Demographics of International Advisors .....	39
Table 3.5 Demographics of Academic Advisors .....	39

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Transfer students are quickly becoming the center of attention at many universities today; thus there are a large number of students attending community colleges with the intention of transferring to a university. Two-year institutions may be particularly beneficial for students because tuition rates are usually lower and class sizes are usually smaller compared to four-year institutions. According to the American Association of Community Colleges fact sheet, the average cost of tuition and fees for a two-year institution was \$3,260 for 2013-2014 school year and for a four-year college was \$8,890 annually (AACC, 2014). This information is based on in-state tuition costs.

International students are coming from all over the globe. Statistics for international students enrolling in American universities are surprising. According to the Institute of International Education (2013), just in 2012 there were a total of 819,644 international students. There was a total of 235,597 students from China and 96,754 students from India in 2012 (Open Doors Report, 2013).

International transfer students are an important resource for the United States and their native countries in terms of education, culture, and economy (Tas, 2013). The Institute of International Education (IIE) during the 2010-2011 reports a record number of 723,277 international students attending U.S. institutions and contributing more than 20 billion to the overall economy of the United States.

American community colleges offer international students a cheaper entry point into their higher education pursuits via low tuition rates on freshman and sophomore level classes, often with the added bonus of an easier transition to U.S.-style academics, (Gobel, 2012). Administrators at two-year institutions and universities need to be aware that getting adjusted to college and university life involves more than academics, but social acceptance at the prospective institution. Communication between community colleges and universities plays a key role in transfer student success. Flaga (2006) recommended that partnerships should be established in which community college academic advisors are comfortable with calling the university academic advisors to exchange knowledge and information when working with students who are in the process of transferring to a four-year university. This exchange of information in communication is extremely important to make a smoother transition for the students.

It is important for university advisors to understand community college students and how to advise them. An undergraduate advisor at a four-year institution typically advises several groups of students. At the university level, there are two main types of undergraduate students: Incoming freshman and transfer students. In addition to domestic students, there are international incoming freshman and international transfer students. Little research has been done on the international transfer population. In a qualitative study of community college transfers at a large university, Townsend and Wilson (2006) found that the transfer students struggled in making connections with university employees, and many expressed social and academic challenges.

According to Tas (2013), when international students enroll in a university everything in their lives has suddenly changed, and they are in the midst of often-dizzying personal change. Issues such as culture shock and transfer shock, or both, may occur. Understanding the degree of diversity within the international student population and how international student migration affects higher education is necessary in identifying programs to meet their needs (Tas, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

There is an increase in the number of international transfer students. The literature supports information about U.S. transfer students, but provides limited information on international transfer students and their advising process. As an international transfer student transitioning to a land-grant institution, a student usually work with advisors from three different departments. These organizations are the (a) Office of Admissions, (b) International Students Services Office, and with (c) the academic college itself. Each office has its focus and strategies in advising international transfer students. These students usually comes from a centralized advising center open to all students and all majors at their previous institution; at the current university, these students goes through several advisors in order to be fully enrolled.

There have been studies that have looked for ways to understand various components of campus ecology so that environments may be purposely created to facilitate positive outcomes, such as retention of students (Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007). Little research has been done on international transfer students in the United

States, because most of the studies focus on domestic students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Cross, 1995; Torres, 2003). On the other hand, there have been several studies on transfer students overall. Research shows that students experience significant post-transfer adjustment difficulties during their first term of enrollment at new institutions (Hills, 1965). The transitioning processes for an international transfer student consist of many bureaucratic policies. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, international students have to apply for admission and, once they are admitted, they must then apply for a student visa, which entails a long list of immigrations procedures (ICE, 2014).

Without a doubt, the application process is a long and tedious one for international transfer students. Many feel insecure and are scared to transfer to a university. They typically meet with several advisors from different units to learn and understand the procedures needed to transfer from a community college to a land-grant institution. In this study, the researcher interviewed advisors at each level of the transition process. A total of nine advisors were interviewed. The goal was to understand the advising process that an international transfer student goes through when transitioning to a land-grant institution.

Culture shock is a phenomenon experienced by many transfer students. According to Dulebohn (1989), culture shock is the learned social heritage that is covert and overt, implicit and explicit, conscious and unconscious, and serves as a model for perceiving, relating to, and interpreting reality. When international transfer students

transition to a four-year institution, they may also experience transfer shock. Transfer shock was first defined by Hill in the 1960s, and it refers to a drop in academic performance as noted by the grade point average (GPA) after a student matriculates from the community college to a four-year university (Hills, 1965).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand how three types of advisors are advising international transfer students at one land-grant institution in the Southwest region of the United States. At this particular institution, international student advising involves three offices. This study wanted to find out how international transfer students are being advised. The goal of the study was to find out how the three offices collectively advised international transfer students. The intent of this study was to provide information and knowledge to community college and land-grant institution personnel of factors that could influence transitioning success of international students and to analyze advising methods and processes among the three groups of advisors.

### **Significance of Study**

Community colleges play a vital educational role in attempting to be all things to all people. They provide technical training, basic education, and bridges to four-year colleges and universities in the United States (Roman, 2007). Most of these colleges receive their funding from their county or state; however, there are some private two-year institutions in the United States. A land-grant college or university is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the



Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. According to the Association of Land-grant Universities, the original mission of these institutions, as set forth in the first Morrill Act, was to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so that members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education (APLU, 2012).

International student enrollment has increased over the past five years in the United States. According to the Institute of International Education, international student enrollment has increased 5.7% from 2010 to 2012 school years (Open Doors Report, 2013). Table 1.1 is a chart that shows the number of students.

Table 1.1

*International Student Enrollment by Academic Year*

Year	Number of International Students	Annual % Change	Total Enrollment	% International Students
2008/09	671,616	7.7	19,103,000	3.5
2009/10	690,923	2.9	20,428,000	3.4
2010/11	723,277	4.7	20,550,000	3.5
2011/12	764,495	5.7	20,625,000	3.7
2012/13	819,644	7.2	21,253,000	3.9

Institute of International Education. (2012). "International Student Enrollment Trends."

## **Conceptual framework**

This study followed a qualitative approach to analyze the advising process that an international transfer student goes through. Conceptual framework is usually used for studies in which existing theory is inapplicable or insufficient. Therefore, this study was conducted using appreciative advising as a guide. The researcher looked at the creator lenses and will explain in thoroughly the results as it relates to this study on chapter VI.

Appreciative Inquiry is a respected method for engaging international students, helping them modify their behaviors, and assisting them in achieving academic success. This approach is part of the conceptual framework for this study. Appreciative Advising is based on numerous theories, but is most deeply rooted in positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry (Bloom, 2008). The core of the Appreciative Advising methodology is its six phases: Disarm, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver, and Don't Settle (Bloom, 2008).

## **The Research Questions**

The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the advising strategies used by three groups of advisors at a land-grant university to advise international transitioning students?
2. How do the three groups of university advisors approach and build relationships with prospective international transfer students transferring from a community college?

3. How do advisors assist international transfer students with "transfer shock" and "culture shock" during their university experiences?

### **Definition of Terms**

1. Community College/ Two Year College: A post-secondary, undergraduate educational institution offering lower-level (freshman and sophomore) classes. Community colleges are centers of educational opportunity. They are an American invention that put publicly funded higher education at close-to-home facilities (AACC, 2014).
2. Domestic Student: Domestic students are citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, or have been granted Asylum, Refugee or Paroled in the Public Interest status by the U.S. government (ICE, 2014).
3. International Student: These are students who have earned college credit after high school graduation and do not have a bachelor's degree and are not American citizens (ICE, 2014).
4. Intrinsic Case Study: An intrinsic case study is the study of a case (e.g., person, specific group, occupation, department, or organization) where the case itself is of primary interest in the exploration. The exploration is driven by a desire to know more about the uniqueness of the case rather than to build theory or how the case represents other cases. (Grandy, G., 2010)

5. Land-Grant University: A land-grant university is an institution of higher education in the United States designated by a state to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. (APLU, 2012)
6. Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS): SEVIS is the web-based system that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) uses to maintain information on F and M students in the United States and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools that enroll them. SEVIS also maintains information on Department of State-designated exchange visitor program sponsors and J-1 visa exchange visitor program participants (ICE, 2014).
7. Visa: A conditional authorization given by a competent authority of a country for a person who is not a citizen of that country to enter its territory and to remain there for a limited duration (ICE, 2014).

### **Researcher Profile**

I was born in Brazil and moved to the United States of America in August of 1992. When I arrived in the United States, I did not know the English language and suffered culture shock. That year, I was placed in sixth grade in English as a Second Language class (ESL). There, I was able to meet other students that were experiencing the same transitioning issues that I was facing. I felt that I was not alone and received great support from my ESL teacher.

After one year, I was placed in classes with American students, where I was able to improve my English language skills. I made several American friends and, little by little, became adjusted to the American culture.

In 1999, I graduated from high school and started my undergraduate studies at a community college. After attending a two-year institution for almost three years; I then decided to apply to a land-grant university. I worked directly with an Associate Dean in one of the academic colleges, who guided me through the transfer transitioning process.

In 2004, I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Development and in 2008 with a Masters of Business Administration degree. My devotion and passion for recruitment and advising began when I attended this institution as an undergraduate student and was involved in recruitment activities for the university. During my undergraduate studies, I was involved in many international, recruitment, and leadership activities for the university. I had been president of the International Student Association at the community college where I attended.

After graduation, I decided to pursue a career in higher education. I served as Admissions Counselor in Dallas recruiting high school and transfer students to a land-grant institution. After working for this land-grant institution for more than one year, I took a position as Recruitment Specialist for a university center where six public institutions were housed and offered upper-level undergraduate course and graduate programs for the working professionals of the Metroplex. I also worked as a Recruitment Coordinator for an academic college at a land-grant institution after working at the

university center. Currently, I hold a position as Senior Regional Advisor at the Office of Admissions at a land-grant institution in the Southwest region of the United States.

Apart from my experience in recruitment, I speak English, Spanish, and Portuguese. I have enjoyed every step of my career in higher education and feel that working in education is an honor, as I am privileged to meet students and encourage them in decisions that will open doors and opportunities for the future.

### **Summary and Organization of Dissertation**

This study identifies many of the topics related to the international transfer student population and provides extensive ideas of services that can be used in the future. Since the international student population is growing in the United States and transfer students are becoming the new attention at many institutions today, the results of this study may be useful by many employees in higher education.

This research study is organized into six chapters. Chapter I includes an Introduction of the study and outlines the purpose of the study, significance of the study, the definition and key terms, framework, and the researcher profile. Chapter II includes a review of the literature. Chapter III provides a discussion of the methodology used in the study. Chapter IV is data analysis and findings of the study. Chapter V includes discussions of various themes. Finally, Chapter VI includes conclusions, discussions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The researcher divided this chapter into seven topics that help the reader understand the importance of this research and understand the gap in international student advising. They are (a) International Students in the United States, (b) Community/Two-Year Colleges, (c) Transfer Student Obstacles, (d) Culture Shock, (e) General Advising, (f) Advising International Transfer Students and (g) Conceptual Framework.

#### **International Students in the United States**

International students provide a variety of benefits to higher education institution within the United States (Lee, 2007). These students contribute to the diversity of student population, add fresh perspectives during classroom discussions with other students, and increase an overall knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of different countries and cultures around the world (Lee, 2007). Many international students begin their studies at two-year schools, with the possibility of completing a four-year degree at a land-grant institution (Tas, 2013). This approach can be financially beneficial since community college tuition cost is usually lower than at four-year institutions.

There are traditional and nontraditional international students. Pre-service or traditional students are typically defined as recent college graduates who have never

been employed in their chosen career fields (White, 2000; Durant & Taggart, 1985). Mid-career or non-traditional students by contrast, tend to be older, have been out of school for at least five or more years, and are employed in a professional capacity, although they might currently be undergoing a career transition (White, 2000). Most international students have to be supported by either a government agency from their home country or a legal guardian.

According to the Institute of International Education, in 2012/2013 school year there were a little over 819,000 international student attending American institutions of higher education. These numbers reflects both community colleges and universities (Institute of International Education, 2013). Table 2.1 shows a list of where these students are coming from.



Table 2.1

*Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students for 2011/12 and 2012/13*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Place of Origin</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2012/13 % of Total</b>	<b>% Change</b>
	WORLD TOTAL	764,495	819,644	100.0	7.2
1	China	194,029	235,597	28.7	21.4
2	India	100,270	96,754	11.8	-3.5
3	South Korea	72,295	70,627	8.6	-2.3
4	Saudi Arabia	34,139	44,566	5.4	30.5
5	Canada	26,821	27,357	3.3	2.0
6	Taiwan	23,250	21,867	2.7	-5.9
7	Japan	19,966	19,568	2.4	-2.0
8	Vietnam	15,572	16,098	2.0	3.4
9	Mexico	13,893	14,199	1.7	2.2
10	Turkey	11,973	11,278	1.4	-5.8
11	Brazil	9,029	10,868	1.3	20.4
12	Germany	9,347	9,819	1.2	5.0
13	United Kingdom	9,186	9,467	1.2	3.1
14	Nepal	9,621	8,920	1.1	-7.3
15	Iran	6,982	8,744	1.1	25.2
16	France	8,232	8,297	1.0	0.8
17	Hong Kong	8,032	8,026	1.0	-0.1
18	Indonesia	7,131	7,670	0.9	7.6
19	Nigeria	7,028	7,316	0.9	4.1
20	Thailand	7,626	7,314	0.9	-4.1
21	Malaysia	6,743	6,791	0.8	0.7
22	Colombia	6,295	6,543	0.8	3.9
23	Venezuela	6,281	6,158	0.8	-2.0
24	Kuwait	3,722	5,115	0.6	37.4
25	Spain	4,924	5,033	0.6	2.2

Institute of International Education. (2013). "Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students, 2011/12-2012/13." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*.

## **Community/Two-Year Colleges**

A two-year institution of higher education is an institution that offers freshman- and sophomore-level courses. They are frequently called junior or community colleges. High school students can enroll at these types of higher education institutions without a high school diploma in hand and earn technical certificates or associate degrees. Goldrick and Rab (2010) considered community colleges to be democratizing institutions, which is a benefit for all. They offer the equivalent courses to a university lower-division courses. These two-year institutions are the pathway for a student to earn a bachelor degree (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). Programs such as articulation agreements and reserve transfer agreements link some community colleges to specific four-year institutions.

Students choose to attend a community college for several reasons. The cost is much less compared to a four-year institution (AACC, 2014). Others choose to attend for family reasons. Still other students prefer to stay closer to home. Two-year institutions are great places to start because students have the opportunity to explore career interest. Not only academic programs are offered at two-year institutions, but technical degrees are also an option.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2014), most community college missions have the following basic commitments: They exist to serve all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students; they provide a comprehensive educational program;

and they serve their communities as community-based institutions of higher education, teaching, and lifelong learning.

According to AACC, there are a total of 1,232 community colleges in the United States (AACC, 2014). These institutions are two-year post high school institutions whose main purpose and mission is to provide technical and academic education. Many students decide to achieve an associate degree and others prefer to transfer before pursuing a bachelors program. These two-year colleges can be found in almost every county in the United States. Table 2.2 and Figure 1 show the number of community colleges in the United States.

Table 2.2

*Type of Two-Year Institutions in the U.S.*

Type of Two-Year Institution	Amount
Public	986
Independent	115
Tribal	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,132</b>

Source: AACC- 2014

## Community College Locations

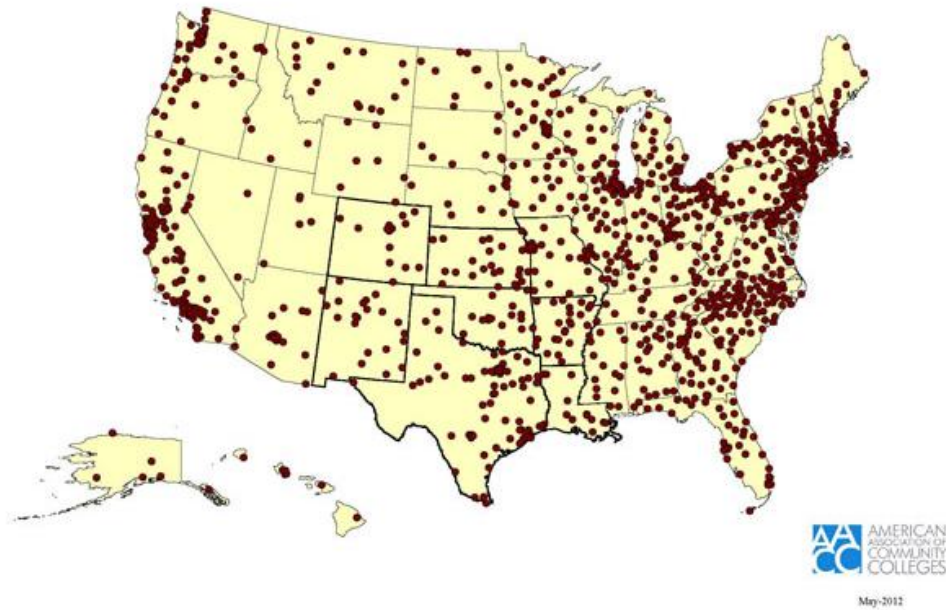


Figure 1. Community College Locations

## Transfer Student Obstacles

Transfer shock is common among all students transferring to four-year institutions (Thurmond, 2007). The term ‘transfer shock’ was invented in 1965; it refers to the tendency of students transferring from one institution of higher education to another to experience a temporary dip in grade-point average during the first or second semester at the new institution as defined by Hills (1965). A subsequent recovery in grade-point average is also common. Researchers since Hills (1965) tend to agree that transfer shock does exist in some form, although there is not unanimous agreement concerning the severity or manifestation of the phenomenon (Thurmond, 2010).

In the past, the literature showed that students who start their postsecondary schooling at a community college attain a bachelor's degree at significantly lower rates than those who enroll directly at a four-year institution (Alfonso, 2006). On the other hand, research has also indicated that students who transfer from a community college to a four-year school as juniors earn higher grades, have higher graduation rates, and have lower academic dismissal rates than students who transfer as freshmen or sophomores (House, 1989). Keeley and House (1993) found that sophomores transferring from a community college experience transfer shock and recovery in their first two semesters at a four-year institution, but didn't improve their GPAs much after their second semester. Students who transferred as juniors showed marked improvement in each of the three semesters following transfer. Even earning the associates' degree seems to be a positive factor in academic performance. Students who transfer as sophomores also don't graduate in the same proportions as junior transfers (Thurmond, 2010).

Laanan (2001), Johnson and Sandhu (2007) also mentioned that when community college students transfer to four-year institutions, they face challenges that are psychological, academic, and environmental. Townsend (2008) stated that for those who had transferred from small campuses, especially community colleges, they initially found the large size of the four-year campus and the faculty's attitude somewhat daunting. They must quickly learn to navigate through the demands of their day-to-day activities and adjust to new ways of communicating and behaving (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007).

Advisors are usually the number one point of contact for these students. Arthur (2004) stated that the tendency of academic advisors is to treat transitional students as members of a homogeneous group of learners. More contemporary research indicates that transfer ecstasy can often occur; although there is an initial dip, transfers often rebound to a similar or higher GPA than they produced at their previous institution (Nolan & Hall, 1978). Perhaps orientations could be an answer to transfer shock. For example, Kuh said that college and universities have a responsibility to communicate institutional expectation and commitments to new students with clarity and to “make the strange familiar” (Kuh, 1991, p.77). In a qualitative study of community college transfers at a large university, Townsend and Wilson (2006) found that the transfer students struggle to make connections with university employees and many express social and academic challenges. Very little research has been done on international transfer shock; therefore, the researcher asked questions regarding obstacles in this matter that international students are facing and how advisors deal with this problem.

### **Culture Shock**

Culture Shock, a theory developed by Oberg, an anthropologist, refers to the idea that entering a new culture is potentially a confusing and disorientating experience, and this concept has been widely used (and misused) to explain the difficulties of the cross-cultural sojourn (Tas, 2013). Oberg divided Culture Shock into four stages:

1. Honeymoon: Initial reaction of enchantment, fascination, enthusiasm, admiration, cordiality, friendliness, and superficial relationships with hosts.

2. Crisis: Initial differences in language, concepts, values, familiar signs, and symbols leading to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety, and anger.
3. Recovery: Where the crisis is resolved by a number of methods such that the person ends up learning the language and culture of the host country.
4. Adjustment: Period where the sojourner begins to work in and enjoy the new culture, even though occasional instances of anxiety and strain still exist.

Advisors at times may feel uncomfortable working with international students due to language barriers and cultural differences. These students often arrive in the United States confused, exhausted, and lost. A phenomenon called acculturative stress happens to some of these students; this experience occurs when individuals face problems arising from the acculturation process that leads to negative emotional states, such as anxiety and depression (William & Berry, 1991). There are many symptoms associated with this problem, but the most noticeable are loneliness, sadness, fear, homesickness, cultural identity confusion, and social withdrawal (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007). In addition, these students also may experience religious and racial discrimination. They may experience discriminations; therefore, past research has also revealed the effects of racial discrimination on individuals can cause health problems and can be mediated by low self-esteem, social support networks, and coping strategies (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). The college experience brings a number of academic, social/interpersonal, and personal stressors that could create an increase of mental/emotional suffering (Fisher & Hood, 1987). A four-year college is a whole new environment and advisors need to be responsive and acquainted to this issue.

Studies show that foreign students who come to the United States with temporary student visas face the same adjustment conflicts as all other college students regarding developmental, academic, and parental pressures (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). These students also face other dilemmas. Outside the classroom, where they should be able to relax, life is a challenge for many international students. Some find it difficult to socialize because the social cues used to get along with others can be confusing (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004). For example, Americans at times are practical communicators, but in other cultures, touching others may not be acceptable. Also, many cultures may require a certain personal space while in other cultures, such as the Brazilian culture, that is not the case. For instance, some international students are accustomed to standing very close to the person they are talking to, which can cause people from other cultures to avoid social contact with these students.

### **General Advising**

Advisors must understand the uniqueness of transfer students. They should not treat a transfer student that is recruited and/or advised the same as an incoming freshman. Wilkes (2006) wrote that quality mentors use their skill, positive attitude, friendliness, approachability, and accessibility to coach others to success.

To understand the situation, it is important to have a background on advising and counseling. College employees have been advising students since the first universities were built in the United States. America gave birth to its first colleges: Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, New Jersey, King's, Philadelphia, Rhode Island Queen's and Dartmouth



(Rudolph, 1990). In the 17th and 18th centuries, presidents of the colleges, and later the faculty members, were responsible for advising students regarding their extracurricular activities, moral life, and intellectual habits (Cook, 2001).

The 19th Century was an era of many changes. A large number of universities were created and academic advising became a little more popular (Cook, 2001). In the 20th century, the history of advising totally changed its path and became more direct. Kramer (1995) traces the role of faculty in academic advising to 1848. In the beginning, academic advising was prescriptive in nature and consisted of translating information found in college catalogues to assist students in the process of selecting appropriate courses required for graduation (Harrison, 2009). Vocational counseling was the advising method in the early 1900s. In the 1930s, the trait and factor model matched personal traits with job factors and was used by the military (DeVoss & Andrews, 2007). After the 1930s, many Americans went to war overseas and were part of World War II. The literature does not show much history of advising until the 1970s (Cook, 2001). In 1977, the first national academic advising conference was held in Burlington, Vermont. Then two years later, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) was established. Within its first year, NACADA had 429 members (Cook, 2001).

The NACADA grew tremendously and now is the largest advising organization in the 21st century. Many advisors at both two-year institutions and universities are members of NACADA. The organization vision recognizes that effective academic advising is at the core of student success, NACADA aspires to be the premier global

association for the development and dissemination of innovative theory, research, and practice of academic advising in higher education. Its mission is to promote student success by advancing the field of academic advising globally (NACADA, 2014). They provide opportunities for professional development, networking, and leadership for our diverse membership.

### **Advising International Transfer Students**

International students are considered students who are in the United States with a student visa. Before they are admitted to a university, they usually contact an admissions counselor who works with student recruitment and advising, and who assists these prospective students as they navigate the admissions application. Once admitted to their institution of choice, students meet with an international student advisor. Job duties of the international student advisor are advising students on maintaining lawful status, aiding them in receiving immigration benefits, resolving status violations, handling with income tax procedures, and traversing the student visa process (Russel, 2014). The international advisor serves as a designated school official approved by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and functions as the principal contact between the federal government and the school. Finally, once admitted and cleared through the International Student Services Office, the international student is introduced to an academic advisor who is a student's principal point of contact for academic issues that affect progress toward the degree; this academic advisor typically works with the student until the student graduates. The role of an academic advisor is to engage in a “series of

intentional interactions” with students for the purpose of facilitating student-learning outcomes, according to the National Academic Advising Association (NCADA, 2006). An academic advisor can assist a student with course planning, registration, academic counseling, and other capacities. Advisors are also able to direct a student to other university resources and personnel for any other type of assistance (NCADA, 2014).

The initial international admission application process to a community college in Texas is complex and time-consuming. Community college requires several documents in order for a student to complete the international application file. First, the student must complete the admissions application, provide confirmation of financial resources, take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), pay an application fee, and obtain a passport and visa. After the student is successfully admitted to the two-year institution, an acceptance letter and a federal document are issued to the student. The F-1 visa is a non-immigrant, full-time, student visa that allows foreigners to pursue education in the United States. Students are allowed to transfer their SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) to any four-year institution in the United States if they are admitted to another institution. The international admission for international students is a lengthy and difficult process.

Many international students choose the United States as a destination to further their education. Students from all over the world see the opportunity to study in the United States as being beneficial because the culture is looked on as a trendsetter and unique from other cultures (Tas, 2013). Perhaps many of these students choose to study

in the United States for the freedom that is present in this nation or just because of the level of the quality of education one.

According to Lanaan (2001), community colleges in the United States have a diverse population. The average age of a community college student is 28. Table 2.3 and 2.4 indicates the student demographics (AACCS, 2012).

Table 2.3

*Diversity of Students in University, as Indicated by Their Background*

Type of Student	Percentage
First Generation	40%
Single Parents	16%
Non-U.S. Citizen	7%
Veterans	3%
Students with Disabilities	12%

Source: AACCC 2012

Table 2.4

*Student Demographics at Community Colleges in the United States*

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	51%
Hispanic	19%
Black	14%
Asia/Pacific Islander	6%
Native American	1%
Two or more races	2%
Other/Unknown	5%
Nonresident Alien / International	1%

Although only 1% of the total student population is international, according to Carpenter, there are a significant number of international students, most of whom plan to transfer to a four-year institution (Carpenter, 1991). Most of these students choose to start at community college because of the cost.

The advisors interviewed for this study came from a flagship state university with more than 53,000 students. The university has internationally recognized faculty and is a major research university considered Land, Sea and Space Grant. This university in the Southwest of the United States and is trying gradually increasing its transfer numbers.

The process that an international transfer student goes through at this particular institution is long and bureaucratic. These students go through the Office of Admissions, International Student Services Office, and once admitted, they work directly with academic advisors in the academic colleges. This study took a qualitative approach to analyze the advising process that an international transfer student goes through.

Unfortunately at present, four-year institutions provide minimal support for transfer students, even though such students continue to demonstrate heightened adjustments difficulties (Eggleton & Laanan, 2001). For these students from outside the United States, the process is, perhaps, even harder. Acclimating to a new culture takes is time-consuming. A positive transition can result in better language development, acculturation, and attainment of educational and individual objectives (Tas, 2012).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Miles and Huberman (1994) define a conceptual framework as a visual or written product, one that explains, either graphically or in narrative form (p. 18). Through in-depth, focused interviews, informants provided an interpretation on how they advise international students on their transition to a land-grant institution.

Community college and university staff have a wide range of theoretical perspectives and methods to choose from in developing a philosophy of student advising. When choosing a model, they must choose one that best fits the student. Appreciative Advising can be particularly useful with international transfer students.

Appreciative Advising is a supportive, positive, dynamic, and holistic approach (Truschel, 2008). According to Truschel (2008), appreciative model can have a profound impact on advising students. This advising model came from the theory of Appreciative Inquiry that was developed in David Cooperrider in 1979. The appreciative model can assist in the development of a campus connection, linking the student with a member of the campus community. This model can be related to the advising model researched by Seligman (1975) that defined an advising model called learned optimism. Truschel (2008) believes that advisors should ask their students to indicate what is important to them and what achievements give them most pride when using this model.

Bloom (2002), in her first article published in the *The Mentor* on August 29, 2002, incorporates appreciative inquiry into academic advising. In this article, Bloom writes about appreciative inquiry and how in the past it has been an organizational development tool that focuses on bringing out the best in people and organizations, instead of viewing them as problems that need to be solved. With that in mind, she came up with an idea of incorporating this method into academic advising. In 2002, Bloom includes four phases. They were:

**1. Discovery Phase:** Use positive open-ended questions to draw out what students enjoy doing as well as their strengths and passions. Listen to each answer carefully before asking the next positive question.

**2. Dream Phase:** Help students formulate a vision of what they might become and then assist them in developing their life and career goals.

**3. Design Phase:** Give students a clear idea of what they will need to do by devising concrete, incremental, and achievable goals to make these dreams come true

**4. Destiny phase:** Be there for them when they stumble, believe in them every step of the way, and help them continue to update and refine their dreams as they go.

However in her 2008 work, Bloom revised the model, adding a few more phases and changing its name to Appreciative Advising. This model came from the Appreciative Inquiry, which is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. This method of advising is based on numerous theories but is most deeply rooted in positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry (Bloom, 2008). The core of the appreciative advising framework is its six phases: Disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle (Bloom, 2008).

Advisors search for ways to improve academic advising skills and to increase international student retention rates. Appreciative Advising involves asking positive, open-ended questions that help students enhance their educational experiences and achievements and is an excellent example of a fully student-centered approach to student development.

According to Bloom, the Six Phases are better described below (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008):

- 1. Disarm:** Recognizing the importance of first impressions and create a safe, welcoming environment for students.



2. **Discover:** Use positive, open-ended questions to draw out what the students enjoy doing, their strengths, and their passions. Listen to each answer carefully before asking the next positive question.
3. **Dream:** Help students formulate a vision of what they might become, and then assist them in developing their life and career goals.
4. **Design:** Help students devise concrete, incremental, and achievable goals.
5. **Deliver:** The student follows through on their plans. The advisor is there for them when they stumble, believing in them every step of the way, and helping them continue to update and refine their dreams as they go.
6. **Don't Settle:** The advisor challenges students to proactively raise their internal bar of self-expectations.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### **Introduction**

This case study used a qualitative approach where the researcher examined advisors' strategies in advising this group of students and looked at their perspectives when advising international transitioning students. Creswell has a unique view of qualitative research. According to him, it is an appropriate strategy to use when attempting to understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Research in social sciences can be conducted through experiments, surveys, histories, archival analysis, or case studies (Yin, 1989). The researcher used intrinsic case study. This kind of case study research is often appropriate for the purposes of evaluation research because it can be about assigning worth to a particular set of activities and experiences (Cousin, 2005).

This chapter is divided into several topics: (a) Introduction; (b) Methodology, where the researcher will explain in depth how data was collected; (c) Context – University Setting; (d) Participants; (e) Instrumentation; (f) Data Analysis, where the researched will explain how the interviews were analyzed; and (g) Summary.

The study was guided by through three research questions.

1. What are the advising strategies used by three groups advisors at a land-grant university to advise international transitioning students?

2. How do the three groups of university advisors approach and build relationships with prospective international transfer students transferring from a community college?

3. How do advisors assist international transfer students with "transfer shock" and "culture shock" during their university experience?

### **Methodology**

Qualitative case study methodology provides ways for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. Case studies have been considered a research strategy or design, an evaluation method, and a reporting mode. According to Stake, case studies are defined by individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used (Stake, 1994, p. 236). This study is considered an intrinsic case study approach because the findings add value to international transfer student advising (Stake, 1995).

Data collection included standardized open-ended interviews, informal conversational interviews, and persistent engagement. In order to gather data for this research, the researcher conducted interviews with admissions counseling advisors, international student advisors, and departmental academic advisors from an academic college at one land-grant institution. The academic advisors were chosen from three departments in the academic college. The researcher used interviews to determine the advisors' different roles, approaches, and strategies when advising international transitioning students. The information gathered was to better define strategies for international students to make a smoother transition from a community college to a land-

grant institution. This land-grant university has admissions representatives working in various parts of the southwest region. There are admissions advisors constantly attending recruitment events at community colleges. The International Student Advisors are only housed on the main campus. They are not involved in recruitment. The academic college, where the academic advisors were interviewed, is considered by many to be a transfer-friendly college. The reason for this reputation is because the advisors want to get to know the students and advise them before they apply for admission to the university; this information is listed on the university's transfer publications.

This is a qualitative study where the researcher asked opened-ended deep questions where the researcher analyzed all of the responses by coding and selecting themes. The information gathered from these interviews were analyzed and described on chapters four, five, and six.

### **Context for the Study**

The United States is gradually increasing its number of transfer students. Table

3.1 is a chart of students that applied, were admitted, and enrolled at this land-grant institution.

Table 3.1

*Application, Admittance, and Enrollment at the Land-Grant University*

YEAR	TOTAL APPS.	COMPLETED APPS.	ADMITTED	ENROLLED
2010	7300	6294	3045	2397
Summer / Fall	5164	4435	2093	1589
Spring	2136	1859	952	808
2011	7809	6764	3298	2582
Summer / Fall	5608	4824	2298	1738
Spring	2201	1940	1000	844
2012	7399	6450	3244	2545
Summer / Fall	5299	4589	2470	1876
Spring	2100	1861	774	669
2013	8485	7199	3654	2909
Summer / Fall	6300	5310	2680	2059
Spring	2185	1889	974	850

International transfer student enrollment has not been consistent at the institution where this study took place, as the international transfer student enrollment almost doubled from the Summer/Fall 2010 to Fall/2011 Table 7). Since 2011, the university has not seen the same outstanding results. These numbers, however, do not reflect the overall number of transfer students attending universities in the United States.

Table 3.2

*International Application, Admittance, and Enrollment at Land-Grant University*

Term	Year	Applicants	Completed	Admitted	Enrolled
Spring	2010	99	61	37	22
Summer / Fall	2010	402	286	148	66
Spring	2011	88	65	39	27
Summer / Fall	2011	627	505	250	102
Spring	2012	96	76	23	12
Summer / Fall	2012	554	465	197	86
Spring	2013	76	60	33	19
Summer / Fall	2013	592	490	228	89

There has been little research on how to properly advice international transitioning students transferring from a community college to a land-grant institution. The researcher conducted this research following Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations. A total of nine advisors participated in this study. The participants were all employed by this land-grant institution.

A land-grant college or university is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890. The original mission of these institutions, as set forth in the first Morrill Act, was to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so that members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education. This university is one of the largest university campuses in the world. Although it is a big

institution, the retention rate is the highest compared to the other public universities in the region.

This four-year institution is one of a select few academic institutions in the nation to hold triple federal designations as a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant university. Also, this university holds membership in the prestigious Association of American Universities, one of only handful institutions with this distinction. The *Wall Street Journal* named this institution the second among all universities in the nation in a survey of top U.S. corporations, nonprofits, and government agencies, based on graduates recruiters prefer to hire. This institution attracts students from all over the world.

The admissions office has approximately a total of 35 advisors. The international student services office has roughly 13 advisors. The academic departments that were selected are under one that offers a large number of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors that has more than 37 academic advisors. The researcher believes that it is important to conduct research using participants from different backgrounds. For moral and ethical purposes, the researcher believes that is important to understand different views when interviewing participants, therefore the researcher chose a diverse participant group.

This research can be duplicated and be accomplished at any other four-year institution in the United States. The researcher first contacted participants via the telephone/email and asked for permission to interview them. All of the participants accepted and agreed to the terms. The researcher followed IRB procedures and

interviewed each participant in his or her office. Later, the data was gathered and the researcher transcribed the data. Then, the data were analyzed and the researcher developed themes and subthemes from the data.

## **Participants**

### Selection

The participants were advisors purposefully selected from the land-grant institution. There were a total of nine individuals that fit these criteria. Participants were all advisors who have worked for the land-grant institution for more than one year and were actively working with international students. The population included three admissions counseling advisors, three international advisors employed by the university International Students Services department, and three academic advisors employed by the academic department. Each advisor had a unique personality. Some were more cultured than others and some displayed more encouragement when advising international transfer students. Each department worked independently when helping international students transition to the university.

There were a total of nine interviewees with different backgrounds. Each office had its own strategy for advising students. The admissions office concentrates on recruitment, admissions advising, and career counseling. The International Student Services Office has a focus on immigration documents and retention programs. Academic colleges and departments try to do all of the above, according to the data collected.



The goal of the researcher was to choose a group of participants from different ethnic backgrounds, genders, ages, educational levels, and length of employment. In order to protect the respondents' confidentiality, the researcher decided not use their real names.

#### Selection Criteria

The criteria of the participants were the following:

- a) Full-time university employee.
- b) Have and advisor title.
- c) Works with international students.
- d) Has more than one year of experience working in higher education.

The researcher began this study in December 2013 by making contact with participants. These advisors were from three different departments at this institution. At this institution there are admissions advisors, international student services advisors, and academic advisors houses in the academic colleges. In this case, the academic advisors were all from one of the academic colleges.

Tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 show the demographics of the current sample group. The sample make-up was of nine individuals who submitted responses to 13 open-ended questions. There were eight females and one male. All of the advisors were 25 years of age and older.

## Demographics of Participants

Table 3.3

### *Demographics of Admissions Advisors*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Title</b>
Lewis	Hispanic	Male	7 Years	Senior Admissions Counseling Advisor
Tatiana	White	Female	6 Years	Senior Admissions Counseling Advisor
Grace	Hispanic	Female	6 Years	Admissions Counseling Advisor II

Table 3.4

### *Demographics of International Advisors*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Title</b>
Evelyn	White	Female	2 Years	International Student Advisor II
Lisa	White	Female	2 Years	International Student Advisor I
Tanya	White	Female	2 Years	International Student Advisor I

Table 3.5

### *Demographics of Academic Advisors*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Title</b>
Paula	White	Female	34 Years	Senior Academic Advisor II
Daisy	White	Female	12 Years	Senior Academic Advisor II
Martha	White	Female	2 Years	Academic Advisor I

The racial/ethnic background was of seven white (Non-Hispanic) and two Hispanics who were born in the United States of America.

The researcher made several observations about each individual personality and jobs duties. Below is a brief description of each character with their additional professional roles as an advisor and personality traits.

**Lewis:** He is a very outgoing advisor. He loves to joke around and seems to have a fun attitude towards life. His nickname for this research is Jolly. For this reason, the office handed him the task to assist in training Admissions Counseling personnel.

**Tatiana:** She is a serious advisor. She is over 50 years of age and has grown children. She is very caring and sweet like an angel. She is a senior-level advisor and one of her primary functions is to represent the Office of Admissions in a public-speaking capacity both on and off campus.

**Grace:** She is the rock star of the Office of Admissions. Grace is fun and is the type of advisors who tells students how to be socially involved at the university. She develops working relationships with the International Student Services Office and the International Liaison.

**Evelyn:** Innovative is the best adjective to describe this advisor. She finds new ways to engage with students from various backgrounds. She assists office leadership in providing new services to international students, faculty, and staff.

**Lisa:** She is Giggles. Lisa is extremely outgoing and loves to be involved in student activities events. She provides advanced advising for international students on various standard issues impacting them, such as personal, financial needs, academic issues, programming, immigration, health insurance and health care, travel, taxes, and scholarships, grants, and loans that might be available.

**Tanya:** The best nickname for this person is hero. Tanya was born abroad and seems to have a personal understanding for tardiness. She assists with maintenance of international student records, databases, admissions-related processing, and other advising related administrative tasks.

**Paula:** She is the mommy of all advisors. She seems to treat her students like they were her children. Paula goes the extra mile and refers students on academic preparation, time management, test anxiety, and study skills as well as to other university resources.

**Daisy:** This advisor seems to receive many flowers from loved ones. She is the type of advisor who will do anything to see her students succeed. One of her primary roles is to interact with other university advisors regarding student success. She is in an office in one the university's advisor organization.

**Martha:** She is Ms. Logical. Martha is very caring about her students, and seems to always follow the rules. She is not willing to break the rules for a student. One of her primary duties is to meet with prospective transfer students.

## **Instrumentation**

All research studies involving human subjects are reviewed through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. The approval process took about three weeks. The researcher followed several simple steps. First, the application was submitted online using an online form. After the information was submitted, the IRB office reviewed the application and sent the IRB documents to the academic college committee for further review. Once the project was approved, the researcher received the green light to conduct his study.

All of the participants provided a wide range of ideas and strategies that perhaps would help many international transfer students in the future. There are recommendations from all three departments and nine advisors. A summary is found on chapter six.

## **Interview Protocol**

### Data Collection

The researcher conducted the study by asking open-ended questions to the participants about their unique expertise in their respective field of advising. Phone calls and emails were sent to the prospective participants asking whether they would be interested in participating in this study. Each participant was contacted by the researcher and a convenient location and time was determined for each interview. Before the interview was conducted, the researcher asked the participants to sign a consent form, and the researcher followed all IRB rules and regulations.

### Interview Questions

1. What has been your professional experience in advising international students transferring from a two-year institution to a land-grant university?
2. What obstacles do international students face in completing the admissions paperwork?
3. What concerns do you have regarding international transfer students on their admission application process?
4. How differently do you advise international students compared to in-state students? Can you walk me through these steps?
5. Why do you think international students decide to apply to a land-grant institution?
6. Why do you think international students decide to matriculate at this university?
7. What advising strategy do you use to reduce transfer shock among international students? What can this university do to reduce transfer shock among this group of students?
8. What advising strategy do you use to reduce culture shock? What can this university do to reduce culture shock among international students?
9. Once you know that one of the international students that you have been working with has been admitted, what do you do next?

10. Can you walk me through the steps that you use to engage and build academic relationships with international students? How is this process different than working with an in-state student?
11. What differences do you see between a community colleges and this university?
12. What knowledge did you gain from diversity trainings offered through this university?
13. What recruitment and retention programs and/or strategies do you recommend for international transfer students at this land grant institution?

The questions were strategically asked to gain responses by the advisors that in the future can help faculty and staff at two- and four-year institutions. Codes and themes were identified throughout while analyzing the data. The responders went above and beyond by responding more than asked by the researcher, therefore additional information and data were collected through this study. The researcher interpretations will be found on chapters four, five, and six.

### **Data Analysis: Coding and Theming Process**

According to Rubin, the goal of analysis is to understand core concepts and discover themes that describe the world examined (Rubin, 2005, p. 245). The procedures used in this study generated qualitative data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest that research involving qualitative data analysis is a four-stage process. First, organizing data

requires entering information into a database to enable a systematic analysis. Second, generating categories is “the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative, and fun” (p. 114) part of the analysis in qualitative research. The third part is to have a feel if the data are useful in illuminating the questions being explored (p. 116). Finally the fourth stage is analyzing and to challenging the data (p. 117).

The interviews took place at each advisor office. Data were collected during business work hours. The researcher conducted the data collection while paying attention to the participants’ behavior and responses. The interviews were recorded and the researcher took notes.

After interviewing all of nine advisors from this land-grant institution, the researcher listened to each recording two times prior to transcribing the data. The next step was a long process, and the researcher went line by line to make sure all of the responses made sense to him. The researcher read the data several times to help identify a framework that would guide the study. The next step was coding; the researcher read the transcriptions line by line and divided each response by questions asked through the interviews. Next the researcher identified recurrent themes; he noticed data patterns and identified respondent clusters.

The researcher used the traditional method of qualitative analysis. After interviewing the advisors, the researcher followed the steps below:

1. Transcribed the interviews in Microsoft Word.
2. Divided the responses by the sequence of the questions asked.



3. Divided the data into two columns (database style) on Microsoft Word by the categories of name of the participant and interview data.
4. Thoroughly read each line of text.
5. Coded the data.
6. Analyzed patterns when coding the text.
7. Identified themes and subthemes.

Qualitative research generates useful information because it expresses people's experience and opinions. In chapter IV, the researcher used an extensive amount of descriptive quotes gathered from the data for credibility purposes. The entire quoted text found on the next chapter explores a wide range of topics regarding each subject discussed in the interviews. The researcher decided to show these data in this way to provide a visual interpretation of the data.

Approximately 87 single-space pages of transcribed data were analyzed. The interviewer analyzed each interview by first transcribing it. The codes found in this study were defined by the collected data and the literature researched. All nine interviews were transcribed and coded.

Identification of themes is fundamental in qualitative research. Analyzing text involves several tasks: (1) discovering themes and subthemes, (2) winnowing themes to a manageable few (i.e., deciding which themes are important in the project), (3) building hierarchies of themes or code books, and (4) linking the identified themes into theoretical models (Ryan & Benard, 2003). Seidel (1998) developed a useful model to

explain the basic process of qualitative data analysis. The model consists of three parts: noticing, collecting, and thinking about interesting things. These parts are interlinked and cyclical. Seidel (1998) likens the process of analyzing qualitative data to solving a jigsaw puzzle. Noticing interesting things in the data and assigning codes to them, based on topic or theme, potentially breaks the data into fragments. Codes that have been applied to the data then act as sorting and collection devices. This was lengthy process, but required for this type of research.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions are recognized in the process of this study.

1. Advisors embrace their role in ensuring international student success.
2. Advisors are knowledgeable about immigration credentials needed for a student to enroll at the university.
3. Advisors have had multicultural training offered through the university.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the following considerations:

1. The interviewees were all from this land-grant institution and thus may not reflect the rest of the land-grant institutions in the United States.
2. The study did not include private universities.

## **Summary**

Research perhaps may be classified or understood in as one of the ways to find answers to important questions. Reliability is consistency of observation, labeling, or interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). The researcher also used the member check / validation method to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the data collected.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine how advisors at a land-grant institution advise international transfer students and to look at the advisors' strategies in advising these students. This chapter includes the analysis of the data collected during the course of the researcher's inquiry. The questions were strategically asked to gain responses by the advisors that in the future can help faculty and staff at two- and four-year institutions.

Codes and themes were identified through analyzing the data. The responders provided more information than was requested by the researcher; therefore additional data were collected for this study. This chapter outlines the themes and codes that were identified. The researcher's interpretations will be explored in the following chapter.

The study was guided by three research questions.

1. What are the advising strategies used by three groups of advisors at a land-grant university to advise international transfer students?
2. How do the three groups of university advisors approach and build relationships with prospective international transfer students who are transferring from a community college?

3. How do advisors assist international transfer students with "transfer shock" and "culture shock" during their university experience?

## **Results**

The advisors at this land-grant institution advise international transfer students through many different phases. Each advisor has a different role and job description. The responses by the participants were based on their day-to-day operation and how each advisor interacts with international transfer students transferring to a land-grant institution.

### **Interview Question 1**

*What has been your professional experience in advising international students when transferring from a two-year institution to a land-grant university?*

The researcher wanted to get an overall knowledge of the participants' experiences with international transfer students. Most of them said that they were familiar with and felt experienced in working with this group of students. They also felt that international transfer students are well prepared overall. According to most advisors, it is easier to work with an international student transferring from a community college located in the state where the university is than one who is transferring from out of state or internationally. The language barrier, questions about transferrable courses, and a lack of culture knowledge are the main points discussed by the participants in response this question.

Language barrier was a concern by admissions counselors and academic advisors. Lewis stated:

Sometimes when they come in, they have language barriers. They may not be able to ask the right questions or they may be asking the question in the wrong context. That's when it becomes difficult to deal with them because they might get upset or angry that you can't answer their question.

On the other hand, Martha believes that these students are more prepared than those who have just arrived in the country. She made the following comment:

As far as a two-year institution [is concerned], I believe that a student that [sic] attends a two-year institution is going to have a better basis and they're going to understand, have a better idea of what's going to happen when they get to a four-year land-grant university. So I think they have a better overall understanding of what's going to happen, what college life is like and those sorts of things, compared to a freshman.

Course transferability concerns were another major concern found by the researcher. Admissions counselors and academic advisors mentioned that dealing with course equivalency is a big issue when advising these students because they want to know immediately what is going to transfer over. According to Lewis, this is a difficult group to work with on this question. . He disclosed the following argument:

A lot of times it's difficult because they may have taken coursework at a university abroad and then they're coming to a two-year college here and so they're trying to figure out how that coursework is going to apply to us. A lot of times it doesn't apply to us. They get frustrated and we get frustrated.

Tatiana mentions that in her experience, it is easier for students to transfer from a two-year school in the southwest region of the United States than as an international student that arrives from a university outside the United States. States in the Southwest region offers common course numbers. For example, the state of Texas offers the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS). This program makes it easier for students from the state of Texas to know what courses are transferrable. The Texas Common Course Numbering System is a voluntary, cooperative effort among Texas community colleges and universities to facilitate transfer of freshman and sophomore level general academic coursework. TCCNS provides a shared, uniform set of course designations for students and their advisors to use in determining both course equivalency and degree applicability of transfer credit on a statewide basis. When students transfer between two participating TCCNS institutions, a course taken at the sending institution transfers as the course carrying the same TCCNS designation at the receiving institution.

Daisy outlines some of the challenges associated work with course transferability issues:

The biggest thing is analyzing their transfer credits. A lot of them will contact me by email and want to know more about the program. I'll send them degree plans, but a lot of our courses look so much different, with the course numbers and everything else, look very different from what they're used to. A lot of them will send their transcripts and say, 'Would you please see how my courses will transfer into your degree plan?' What's really hard is, with a lot of the schools that we have here, with students that transfer in, they're typically from an institution in this state, so those courses are easily transferable.”

The concern stated by academic advisors overall was the fact that when they work with international students who took courses abroad or out of state, it is hard to advise them on what courses to take at their current community college since it is unknown how courses transfer internationally. Daisy talked about her concern with this issue. She said:

Sometimes, they're on a different system than we are. Some of them are quarter system and the hours are totally off. It may be a five-hour course, where we're used to seeing it as a three-hour course. Working with the transcript analyst here, and then trying to see what their courses are. We can't really give them a straight answer on what will count here.

Academic advisors mentioned that the academic colleges and departments have the power to make course substitution. Therefore, the academic advisor works closely with the dean's office to see what courses can be substituted and applied to the student's



degree plan. Another concern cited by academic advisors is that it is frustrating for students to not know how many hours can be used towards their degree plan.

Both the admissions counselors and international advisors work closely with each student's documentation. Admissions counselors advise students on what documents are needed for a student to be a competitive applicant. On the other hand, the international advisors contact students as soon they are admitted, to get the immigration paperwork. Another concern mentioned by the Grace is that students are concerned about the TOEFL exam. At this university, some students can be exempted from taking the TOEFL. Grace explained clearly how these exams may be exempt.

I let them know since they are coming from a community college that they are eligible for the TOEFL waiver, and that's not anything that they need to do. They just need to submit official transcripts. I let them know that it is 30 transferable hours, and they have to have an equivalent to our English Composition course.

At this university, the TOEFL can be substituted by the following:

Applicants whose native language is not English are required to submit proof of English proficiency, which is satisfied by:

- A minimum TOEFL score of: 550 for paper-based testing (p-BT) or 80 internet-based testing (i-BT), or

- A minimum SAT Critical Reading (Verbal) score of 500,
- A minimum ACT English score of 21,
- A minimum IELTS score of 6.0 overall band, or

- Completing all four years in a high school within the U.S.
- Transfer from an accredited U.S. institution of higher education with at least 30 semester credit hours (including the equivalent to the university's English Composition equivalent course with a grade of 'C' or better).

Lisa explained how international student advisors work with student documentation and explained her interaction with international students:

They have a SEVIS record which, wherever they go, their SEVIS record goes with them. Our interaction would be actually receiving the SEVIS record from whatever community college it is that they're coming from, issuing an I-20 on behalf of our university, which would be their immigration document that they would keep. Ultimately, I would say, that has been my main interaction is just processing transfer-ins.

Advisors from the admissions office, international student services, and academic departments all play an important role when advising this group of students.

Recapitulating this question, it is obvious that language barriers, transferrable courses, and a lack of culture knowledge are the main points mentioned on this question.

### **Interview Questions 2 and 3**

Questions two and three are very similar; therefore, the researcher combined them. Question 2: *What obstacles do international students face to complete the admissions paperwork?* Question 3: *What concerns do you have regarding international transfer students on their admission application process?*

Finding information online can be challenging for both in-state and international students. Advisors from all three units expressed concerns about students' lack of information towards applying online and sending required documents. Two topics stood out from these two questions. The first one was bureaucracy and the second one was language barrier.

Bureaucracy is a system that has many complicated rules and ways of doing things. International transfer students go through a lengthy process in order to be enrolled at this institution. First, they need to complete an online application, and pay an application fee, which can be paid online or by check. International students do not qualify for fee waiver at this institution. The Office of Admissions then requests all of the student's transcripts, counting high school and higher education institutions. Official test scores are optional, depending on whether the student qualifies for a waiver. After the student is admitted to the university, then the International Student Services Office jumps in. Admitted international transfer students are required to follow the steps below:

- Complete the immigration information questionnaire.
- Provide proof of financial support.
- Transfer their SEVIS from their previous community college to this institution.
- Obtain health insurance and immunizations.
- Attend the International Student Orientation and check-in.
- Attend the New Student Conference.

Evelyn gave a great example of some of the steps that international transfer students need to take after admitted to the university. She stated:

There's just more for them to do, I think, because they have to transfer their immigration record as well as their admissions. Like, they have to get admitted and then work with us to transfer their immigration documents. So there are a lot of issues with timing to make sure that they get everything to us. Because once the old school transferred its records to us, they can't work there anymore on campus, they can't, basically, that school, let's say Blinn, doesn't have access to their records anymore, we do. So there's a lot more when it comes to the timing of when their record is transferred, getting us all the information we need to issue their I-20, or whatever form that we're issuing for them.

Lisa further explains the process. In her opinion, the challenge is working with two different sized institutions and how the offices at four-year institution and two-year institution functions differently. She stated the following:

In our office, we have a very strict process. We do the drop off system, as in you bring in your transfer in paperwork you drop it off at the front counter. It gets assigned to an advisor. From that point, then the advisor processes the transfer-in.

According to her, at other schools, specifically community colleges, the process is much more seamless. Students can walk into an office, talk to a staff at the office, get

what they need, and move along. At this land-grant institution, the university's international student services office uses a queue system: first come, first served.

Lisa talked about how different the two types of institutions are and how document processing may take longer at a four-year institution. She discussed the personal responsibility international students should have at a university. She explained:

I would say the big obstacle for them would be probably just that, the international student office is very different at a community college than it is here, based on size. We just have so many more students that we're trying to accommodate. Other than that, sometimes an obstacle also occurs when we need to communicate with the ISS advisor at Houston Community College or wherever it may be, say we're missing something on the application and we can't transfer them[the student] in until we speak with them[the transferring institution]. We really prefer the student to be the middleman, to say, "David, you're missing this on your form. You need to go back to Houston Community College and let them know you're missing this." They would just prefer us to just call Houston Community College, which would probably, in general, make things a lot easier. I think we do that to build that responsibility in the student, where your application is incomplete. It's your responsibility to get it taken care of before you get here.

The form for the SEVIS document requires students to provide a SEVIS code for their colleges. According to the international advisors, a student does not always know

what the code is and many times they rely on the international advisors to find out. Lisa later mentioned that she tells her students “Well, you can look it up, too.” Another concern stated by Tanya was the difficulties of submitting paperwork after the deadline, which grabbed full attention of the researcher. This issue may perhaps be a cultural norm in many countries. The International Student Services office is usually flexible with deadlines due to different cultures.

The main issue stated by Tanya was having international students submitting their financial statements. International students admitted to a degree program at this land-grant institution must obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20) to enter and/or remain in the U.S. with an F-1 visa. This requirement applies to international students coming from abroad and international students transferring from another U.S. institution. The financial statement is source proof of funding for each year needed to complete the degree program. Usually the requirement is the cost of attendance for the first year of attendance at a land-grant institution. This amount many times may be greater than \$42,000.

Academic advisors had the same concern. International transfer students have to go through many steps in order to fully enroll at this land-grant institution. Daisy goes into detail about how these students are advised by her:

I tell them where they need to go on the admissions website. They fill out the application there. I think it's just finding out whether their application is complete, and [making sure] that the schools receive everything they need to

receive as far as transcripts go, and everything else. I think it gets a little confusing for the international students because they try to work with me only, through the department. I'm like, 'I'm not admissions, so you're going to have to talk to admissions about that.' I think it ends up getting a little confusing to them because they're having to go to several different places to get their stuff done, versus just to me. I try to guide them to, 'Okay, this is who you need to contact. This is the email, or the website, to go on and do your application.' I think it gets a little confusing for them just because they have to go to several different places. You also have to tell them to contact ISS as well. It just throws something else in the mix.

The other topic that grabbed the researcher's attention was the language barrier. Tatiana said that international transfer students are concerned about the English proficiency exams. For admission, this university requires students to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Tatiana mentioned:

Probably the hurdle that has been the hardest with them is meeting the English proficiency requirements. Meaning, if they have not taken the equivalent for English Composition, or if they don't have a current TOEFL score, or something on hand. We also have kind of two levels of English proficiency, because we have the admissions English proficiency and then we have the IELTS test that [students] they have to take when they get here, and sometimes, it's on our

website, and I think sometimes that's confusing for students. They don't understand why they are two different numbers, and they don't understand which number they're supposed to hit in order to be eligible to come in as a transfer student, so kind of just walking them through that part is a little bit of a concern with that.

The language barrier is very clear on the statement made by Grace. For many of these students, not knowing English is stressful. She replied:

My concern is if they understand me correctly and they're able to question whether or not they understand me. So when they leave, I wonder if they actually got the information that I was trying to relate to them. But I give them my contact information. A lot of times I'll follow up with them to make sure that they're on track and they have everything that they need when applying.

Perhaps this experience might be of grand embarrassment for students as well. They may just want to proof that they are good enough to be admitted to this institution. Some even may see their meeting with an advisor as an admission interview.

#### **Interview Question 4**

*How differently do you advise international students compared to in-state students? Can you walk me through these steps?*

The researcher found that there was a mix of answers when he asked this question to his interviewees. The advisors from all units mentioned that they have to



give these students detailed instruction when advising them. Because of their lack of knowledge about the American culture, advisors thought that these students needed more handholding than American students. The language barrier was one of the codes found under this question. There were a total of 55 codes found just in this particular question. Handholding came into the researcher's mind when this question was answered.

Advisors from several units expressed this concern when interviewed. Tatiana stated:

I probably do a little bit more hand-holding, so to speak [with international transfer students]. I do a lot more going over things, over and over. If I don't feel like they understand it, we will say it again, and we will say maybe in a different way and as simply as possible, so that they can understand what it is that I want them to understand but you know, some of them are very proficient in English. Maybe they have been here for a while or they've traveled enough that they are very English proficient, and some have a really difficult time with it. It just kind of depends on who the student is.

Grace went into detail in what the university is looking for and explained the researcher her step by step process. She said:

If they're international [students], then a lot of times they'll have the foreign high school transcript, and so we'll go over them needing to submit a final official transcript. Sometimes they only get one, and so their worry is... are you 'going to give it back to me? This is the only copy that I have.' And so I let them know that if they have time, they can walk over to the admissions now. They can look

over it, make a copy, and give it back to them, or they can send it with a self-addressed envelope, and we'll mail it back to them. And so a lot of times that kind of helps them because they are applying sometimes to more than just us, and so they need that transcript. Then we'll go over the TOEFL requirement and how they have to be English proficient, and they can meet it through TOEFL or through the waiver, which are the 30 hours and the English 104. Then we'll go over the fee that they have to submit that as one of the credentials, and that's really all they need to have to complete admissions file.

Evelyn made a very logical point. She made a comparison between international students who came straight from their country to the United States and others who transferred from a community college. She said:

I think compared to our brand-new international students who are coming from outside the U.S., there's a level of at least some familiarity with the culture here. Especially if they're coming from two-year institution. They then have more familiarity with the U.S. higher education system than our other students do.

Lisa said: "That's a really good question, well, you definitely advise them differently." Later she goes on and explains the difference between the two. Apart from all the documents international transfer students submit, they must keep in mind about their behavior, their immigration life, and academics at this institution. International advisors teach international students about the different roles that advisors play at this institution. The main goal of an international advisor is to advise students on

immigration issues and how their behavior academically and socially can affect their immigration status. Lisa mentions: “We are not academic advisors” meaning that they don’t advice students on what courses to take and how long they have to graduate from this institution. Finally Lisa said that she likes working with international students. According to her, they are more appreciative than domestic students. They (students) genuinely appreciate all the work an advisor does for them.

On the other hand the academic advisor that was first interviewed had a different perspective. Paula said:

I don’t really think that I do it any differently from an in-state student. I am the kind of person that to me if they’re a student, they’re a student. I don’t see any difference between one or the other. They all get the same from me. I certainly welcome them, try to make them all feel very welcome and at home and I try to be very friendly and open. I’m not the kind of person really that sugar coats anything.

However, later Paula talked about how she tries to go out of her way to make international transfer students understand what she is saying. According to her, some of them brought translators with them to make them comfortable and she makes it a habit, as she is talking, to stop in certain points so that the interpreter can bring the student up to speed. Language barrier was talked about frequently under this question and mentioned by all three groups.

One of the concerns found by Paula was the cost of tuition for this group of students. She goes the extra mile to make them aware of how much the cost is. She shows the difference in tuition for out-of-state versus in-state. She goes into detail about the university's tuition waver and what the requirements are for it. Paula even gives out the name of the dean to the students she meets that makes the final scholarship decision for the college.

The following topic mentioned frequently is course transferability. The following academic advisor, which is Daisy say that domestic students are easier to advice because of course transferability. According to Daisy, this is true for transfer students transferring from overseas and the ones attending community colleges.

Tatiana talked about her frustration when international transfer students contact the advisors right before they try to transfer.

It seems like a lot of our international students don't contact us in advance. They take two years' worth of courses, and all of a sudden they're like, 'We want to transfer next semester.' We don't have any time to really work with them either. They contact us last minute, as they're working on their applications. With other students, they contact us right out of high school, when they first start community colleges or junior colleges, or pretty early on in their first or second semester there. We're able to kind of guide them into their course selection.

The last academic advisor that was interviewed said that she doesn't advise them differently. Her concern is course transferability. Martha said:

I don't think I advise them any different. We work with what's going to be able to transfer in and what's not. If they were thinking of applying as a freshman I would probably advise them to transfer in, as I was a transfer student myself. I don't think I treat them any different, other than letting them know that the admission process is going to be a little bit different. But they all got to complete the same courses and those sorts of things.

Concluding question four brought very useful information for future advisors. According to the data, international students need more handholding and universities and community colleges have to work together in trying to find a better way to keep international students informed of course transferability.

### **Interview Questions 5 and 6**

Question 5: *Why do you think international students decide to apply to a land-grant institution?* Question 6: *Why do you think international students decide to matriculate at this university?*

Research opportunities and the agricultural and engineering programs were the main reasons mentioned by the admissions counselors why international transfer students apply and matriculate at the university. The counselors also thought that they decide to matriculate because of the reputation of the academic programs offered and the foundation that this land-grant institution could perhaps set in the student's career.

The International Students Services Office had a slightly different view. Name branding, good rankings, and good education were the most repeated phrases given by

the international advisors when asked why international transfer students decide to apply to this institution. The students also like how friendly the campus is, research opportunities offered, and the university's rankings.

Finally, the academic advisors thought that international transfer students decide to apply to the university because of research opportunities offered in the academic college, the university branding, and the overall opportunities offered in student's organization, including assistance with locating internships and finding a career after college. Academic advisors focus on how friendly the campus is, the retention resources offered to student, and the research opportunities offered to undergraduate students.

### **Interview Question 7**

*What advising strategy do you use to reduce transfer shock among international students? What can this university do to reduce transfer shock among international students?*

The researcher gathered great amount of information when he asked this question to the group of advisors. Pre-transfer advising, orientation, and student retention resources were the most talked-about topics.

At this university, transfer admission decisions are made by each college and major; and the admission standards are based on the competitiveness of the applicant pool. Preference is generally given to applicants with the highest GPAs. The entire admissions application, including the essay, is considered to identify admissible

candidates. Many of the colleges base their decisions, in part, on the statement of purpose essay. Therefore, all applicants are required to complete this essay and are encouraged to thoroughly describe their educational goals. Transfer applicants are admitted to a specific major and are required to follow the curriculum of that major.

According to Tatiana, about 80% of the international students she meets with are interested in programs in the College of Engineering. Transferring to the College of Engineering at this institution is competitive. Tatiana said: “Our College of Engineering would like to see a grade of a B or higher in Calculus 1, 2, and 3 Chemistry 1 and 2 and Physics 1 and 2.” According to her, she emphasizes to her students the importance of doing well, she encourages her students to earn grades of B or better on all of those the prerequisites courses because when they get admitted into this institution it is going to be tough, therefore they should be aware of it.

The other matter that arose from this question was orientation. Within orientation there were four subcategories: T-Camp, the New Student Conference, international online orientation, and the International Student Conference. This university offers programs that are designed to reduce transfer shock not only for domestic and out-of-state students, but also for international students. These programs include the International Student Conference, T-Camp, Howdy Camp, and the New Transfer Student Conference. Transfer shock refers to the tendency of students transferring from one institution of higher education to another to experience a temporary dip in grade-point average during the first or second semester at the new institution (Hills, 1965). Culture

shock is a condition of disorientation affecting someone who is suddenly exposed to an unfamiliar culture or way of life or set of attitude. These issues cannot be ignored, and consequently, this land-grant university has created several programs to address these pervasive problems.

The International Student Conference is a program coordinated by the International Student Services. This program includes additional information that is not presented in the online orientations; new student conference is open to all international students. The conference offers concurrent sessions and a resource fair. All international students, including both incoming and continuing, are strongly encouraged to attend this event each fall and spring semester.

Transfer Camp is designed to foster a meaningful experience for incoming students. It creates an inclusive atmosphere that introduces campers to the many opportunities and traditions that exist at the university. Through this process, campers enhance their network by creating relationships that strengthen and define the true essence of the spirit within the student body. They meet other incoming transfer students and current students who transferred from a community college or university.

Howdy Camp is a student-run orientation program for new students planning to attend this university in the spring. This camp includes transfer students as well as freshmen students. It is held over a three-day period in January immediately before the spring semester begins. During this time, new students are introduced to the many traditions, indescribable spirit, and customs of the university. Speakers and special



interest programs are brought in to inform students of the endless activities and opportunities available to them at the university and community.

The International Online Orientation consists of several sections, some of which have a quiz at the end of the section. Students are required to review each section in the given order. Once the student have reviewed all sections and have passed all of the quizzes, they are asked to complete an acknowledgement of understanding page. On the acknowledgement of understanding webpage, they must have to review several important statements and enter their student ID to confirm that they understood the information presented.

The New Student Conference is mandatory for students. All students must officially check in for their New Student Conference. At check-in, students receive orientation materials, including a new student folder and official conference schedule. They also have the opportunity to clear any holds they may have on their accounts. Students go on campus tours, engage in resource tables to learn about different services for students on campus, and meet the dean of their college and their academic advisors.

According to Tatiana, she does not work with international transfer students once they are admitted to the university. She refers her transfer students to T-Camp, so they may become more familiar with campus and the transfer process and so they can meet other prospective and current students. She later states that the university should be doing more than transfer camp for international students. She then comes up with an idea

of perhaps creating an international transfer camp where international student can meet other international students and connect with them.

Evelyn told the researcher that she thinks that the international student services office is not doing enough with orientation. She said: “Yeah, and that's a great question, and I think it's something that we can do better with, because I think that right now as an office, we don't do a whole lot with that.” When interviewing the second advisor from the International Student Services Office she said that her office tries to reduce transfer shock by creating programs where students can be mentored by other students, staff, or faculty. Glass and Harrington (2002) believe that four-year institutions should continue to seek effective ways of reaching out to these students, perhaps through counseling, tutoring, and mentoring in an effort to help them adjust more effectively to the academic and social life of the school. Later Evelyn talked about the international student conference in detail:

At the International Student Conference, we have some sessions on anything from university traditions, so when they hear someone doing a wildcat, they understand what that is. We have sessions on classroom culture, which is a big one I would think, coming from a community college to here, where one of our advisors addresses the differences in group work here or how assignments will differ. I would say that, really, our programs that we put on are really big for what we do to try to help that, to try to ease the transition.

The second international advisor interviewed goes on and repeats one more time and said that the university is not doing enough to reduce transfer shock among international students. She said:

I think we need to focus a little more on transfers, for sure, because they miss out on that whole freshman year experience and then there's not as much mentorship that happens on campus later on in their career, which would be the same with international transfers. They're coming in two years later and maybe they're missing that initial mentorship that happens on campus, which I think here is a place where mentorship happens a lot, the organizations or departments or wherever it may happen.

The third international advisor interviewed has the same concerns. She said: "I personally feel they might not get as much introduction to the university as other freshman students do." The researcher took notes during this interview and noticed right then that all three international advisors were concerned that there might not be enough resources available for international transfer students.

Tanya said:

The freshman comes in and they have camp and they have all kinds of student conferences and different activities that introduce them to the university. I know there's transfer student camp as well, but it might not be as involved as the freshman get. The freshman experience is probably a little better, I think. Maybe [we should] look[ing] at the transfer

programs that we do have here at the university and seeing if we can extend it.

The International Advisor 3, Tanya, is concerned not only about the orientation, but the struggle that these students go through, but she does not give students advice and direct them to other departments.

Personally, here at our office, if we see that students are really struggling, then we would try to talk to them and see if there are any student organizations that they can get involved with or even counseling if they're struggling with time management or personal issues. In terms of me just giving advice, I'd probably refer to the student somewhere else.

Paula appreciates the concept about transfer camp, but she was very clear when she said: "I know they're open to transfer camp, T-camp is what I'm trying to think of, and I know but it still I think a little disconcerting to throw them into the lion's den all at once." This academic advisor believes that transfer camps are just too much at once.

The way Daisy sees it is a way of welcoming these students into the university. She mentioned that her priority is to make these students feel like they can come in and ask questions and feel comfortable receiving advice services. She puts herself in the student's place by saying: "I could never imagine going to another country to go to school, so I try to really reach out to those students and just let them know, any kind of questions, or help that they need, to come to us and we can put them in contact with the right people, and help them out as much as we can."

Martha answered this question in a different way. She mentioned: “I kind of feel like if they've been to a junior college - and I realize junior college and a land grant university, a four-year university, are very different.” She tries to let the international transfer students know that the university is there for them, and they can stop by, they are welcome to stop by every day if they want to, the advisors are there from eight a.m. to five p.m. and they are welcome to make appointments. She said that they are a very friendly department for the most part. She said: “I really think we’re very inviting.”

Martha was a transfer student as well and has been on a transfer student spot before. She said:

Well as a transfer student myself, though I wasn't an international student, I think that the university offers a lot of great opportunities that some students take advantage of – I don't think enough students take advantage of them, I do believe that. And I encourage them, I send out emails to our students in our department. But becoming part of something, being involved in something, knowing that you're not just a number, I think is really helpful to reduce transfer shock, and know that somebody's there to help you. I was kind of in that, when I came in and I survived.

The last topic found by the researcher from this question was student retention resources. According to Daisy, international students should take advantage of the Academic Success Center and tutoring programs at the institution. She thinks it is important to let international transfer students know that those resources are available to

them. Going back to what Tanya mentioned: “Personally, here at our office, if we see that students are really struggling, then we would try to talk to them and see if there are any student organizations that they can get involved with or even counseling if they're struggling with time management or personal issues. In terms of me just giving advice, I'd probably refer to the student somewhere else”. Obviously there are resources available for these students, but perhaps they are not taking advantage of them.

Tatiana explained about the services offered to students at her institution. She highly encourages students to use them since they are paying for them. Here is what she said:

We give them tutor information and contact information to all those help places at their new student conferences and tell them... I'll tell the story that one of our faculty members used in situations like this and he said ‘It's like you go to Outback Steak House and you order a nice New York Strip steak and you tell them how you want it cooked. They cook it to perfection and they bring it out to your table and sit it in front of you and you look at it and then wave your hand for the check, you take your check, you walk out and pay for it and leave that beautiful steak sitting there.’ You're paying to get help. Your tuition and fees go to subsidize the services that are here for you. If you don't use them it's like leaving that perfect steak uneaten. You pay for it but you're not using it.

This is example could perhaps be used in many situations when dealing with both domestic and international students. Higher education institutions have fees

for a reason. The reason is to help students. All students should take advantage of those resources.

### **Interview Question 8**

*What advising strategy do you use to reduce culture shock? What can this university do to reduce culture shock among international students?*

Respect was the subject that came out of the first part of the question. Interviewees also mentioned approachability and social sensitivity. Tatiana mentioned that she doesn't know what else she can do; it is impossible to be totally aware of everybody's cultural differences, according to her, it is a big world. She shouted: "I just try to be as sensitive as possible."

One of the examples that she gives is when she had a Muslim student from a Middle Eastern country went into her office for an advising appointment. The student refused to shake Tatiana's hand because in the student culture, a man does not shake woman's hand. Tatiana explained:

Instead of just looking at them shocked or anything, just kind of it's just a matter of, okay; I have to be respectful of that. That's how their culture works, and so if they come back, I can just give them the best information I can give them and hope for the best ....

Grace, another admissions counselor, emphasized the importance of listening, saying:

Well, when I'm advising, I kind of just like to listen a lot because a lot of times you don't want to offend their culture. You don't want to sound like you're not interested or trying to cut them off, so a lot of times it's just listening on my part to try to understand it all. But we don't really advise them much having to do with the whole culture shock. We do go, or I do go over how this university is really traditional friendly and family-oriented, and a lot of times they can relate to that.

Evelyn gives a great example of how she has been sensitive and understanding. She said: "When they first arrive in a place, it's like everything is overwhelming, especially if it's not your native language, and a lot of these students have been taking English; have been learning English for a long time, but not in a social context." Perhaps not in a social context is the key phrase. Later, Evelyn mentioned that culture shock goes beyond the first year.

Lisa mentioned that her advising strategy is to be approachable and understanding with them. She mentioned:

I think in any culture shock situation, knowing that there are people who genuinely care about you and your well-being, even if I'm not going to go to all extremes to do things for them, I think that hopefully, my interactions with the students result in them feeling like they can approach me if they were in a situation that they couldn't talk to somebody else about.



She also refers students to Student Counseling Services, which she said is a great resource. She later mentioned: “But our students generally are not going to walk into student counseling services due to cultural reasons.” Tatiana is not a registered counselor and understands that many international students are not comfortable going to the university’s counseling services for stereotype reasons. Instead, she tries to analyze and see if the student needs counseling. She said:

They sometimes come in for an appointment about something small that has nothing to do with their actual issue that’s happening and then through that, we can kind of recognize, hey, why don’t we walk over to student counseling services together. We would highly recommend that you talk to someone.

This is an example where advisors are trying to make students understand about services offered to them.

Paula recommends students be proactive. During the interview, she said that she tries to encourage students to talk to people and especially their classmates. She said: “Sometimes they may be kind of shy but they may walk up and introduce themselves to somebody that’s just as shy as they are, they need to know that they’re not going to be turned away.” She later said that she thinks if the students asked for directions or help, they would get help. They should not be afraid to ask. Paula later explained a little about her enjoyment in working with international transfer students:

I'm afraid to fly so I live vicariously through international students when they come and talk to me. I ask them about their country, what is it like? What does it look like? "Do you have pictures? What does your family do?"

According to her, this is a way that she can travel and not have to get on an airplane. "I tell students at these student conferences, not everybody's going to be like you, get to know somebody that's different, that looks different, that acts different from you and I would encourage the international students to do the same; talk to somebody that doesn't look like you or act like you." This is the approach she asks her incoming international and domestic transfer students to take.

Martha then talked about her strategy and stresses the importance of having students talk directly to academic advisors. Here is what she said:

Just encourage them to come in and talk with us if they're having problems, if they don't come talk; I always tell them, 'look, if you've got issues then how are we supposed to know you're having issues if you just sit back and let it happen?' Pretty much an open-door policy and letting them know what we have to offer. I send them emails letting them know about different opportunities around the university and those sorts of things, is my approach. With a small amount of students I haven't really noticed anything, necessarily, that has caused a major transfer shock among our international students.

The next part of the question addresses what this university could do in order to reduce transfer shock. Transfer shock refers to the tendency of students transferring from

one institution of higher education to another to experience a temporary dip in grade-point average during the first or second semester at the new institution (Hills, 1965). The theme that came out of this question was use of campus resources. The subthemes that stood out to the researcher were student success center, transitional camps, and the student counseling center.

The Academic Success center mission at the university is the following:

A truly great university provides the means for its students to graduate in a reasonable amount of time and without a mountain of debt. The Academic Success Center's mission is to help all Aggies enhance their academic performance. The Academic Success Center is collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. The holistic approach helps students identify roadblocks to academic success and ensures that all students have access to comprehensive resources.

This unit at this land-grant institution offers academic coaching, supplemental instruction, success initiative, transfer student programs, tutoring/workshops, and courses to help students succeed in college. The Transfer Student Program's main goal is to support students' success in college and to introduce them to activities, resources, and ways to engage within the university, in hopes of getting transfer students up to speed as quickly as possible, and to create social experiences for them so they have the opportunity to get to know other transfer students.

Transitional camps exist to successfully transition new students into the university's student body and the overall university. This program is for incoming

transfer students. Also called the transfer's first tradition, program participants learn about the history and traditions of the university from current students and get to meet other incoming transfer students. Speakers and special interest programs are brought in to inform students of the many activities and opportunities available to them at this institution.

Student Counseling Services is included in student's fee and is offered to every student at the institution. Through counseling, the goal is to help students achieve as much success as possible at this land-grant institution. The office provides short-term counseling and crisis intervention services to the largest number of students possible within the limits of its resources. Student Counseling Services counseling staff incorporate into practice awareness, respect, and valuing of cultural differences. According to their website they offer a wide variety of counseling service, which are the following:

- Career Counseling and Testing Services.
- Crisis Intervention.
- Learning Disability and ADD/ADHD Screenings.
- Personal Counseling.
- Psychiatric Services.
- Self-Help, Outreach, and Consultation.

- Stress Management & Biofeedback Training.

- Testing Services.

### **Interview Question 9**

*Once you know that one of the international students you have been working with is admitted, what do you do next?*

Here the researcher wanted to get an idea of the process that the advisors goes through after they know an student whom they have been working has been admitted to the university.

Starting with an admission counselor, the advisors usually ask students to check their status online. After that, if they have any questions, There are several steps international transfer students have to take in order to accept the admission offer and get their VISA taken care of. The International Student Office takes care of the visa documents. Grace said: “I don't know all the details about them getting their visa, but I know who to direct them to, and so, just to see if there's anything else that they need help with to be able to get them here and get them all settled in, but I don't really have a lot of communication once they're admitted”.

The International Student Services Office is the department that assists international transfer students with additional documents that is needed in order to matriculate at this institution. Lisa said:

At that point, we definitely collect all the documentation that is needed to actually do the transfer in, so we have a specific form that they have to fill out.

Usually, we do need to see their admission letter, as well and then from there, we start issuing immigration documents, so we work on issuing the I-20, get it to them and then they can come.

The next step is meeting with an academic advisor. Paula mentioned:

Generally the next time that we actually visit is at the student conferences. We have been putting forth extra effort to send welcome letters to freshmen but as we discussed the other day, I'm also sending letters to transfer students that don't get admitted, I guess we're just going to have to work at trying to find ways to send letters of welcome to our transfer students as well".

This department is trying to be innovative and as transparent as possible for its students. Daisy said:

Just making sure that they stay on track with what they need to do with making deadlines. See if they need anything, as far as before they get here.

Martha has an open door policy in her department, meaning that students can stop by at any time to ask questions. She said:

Any further questions, and they're pretty good about contacting us, we make sure that those questions are answered. If I don't know the answer I either point them in that direction, or I try to find it out for them, one or the other. We just

essentially have an open-door policy, whatever they need help with; we must maintain that contact and whatnot.

At this institution, once the student is admitted, the admissions office just hands the student over to the next department, which is the International Student Office. Once all holds are clear, the international student speaks with an academic advisor. The reason why this question was asked is because the researcher wanted to get an idea of the process that an international student goes through in order to be fully enrolled at this institution.

### **Interview Question 10**

*Can you walk me through the steps that you use to engage and build academic relationships with international students? How is this process different than working with an in-state student?*

Pre-transfer advising and appreciative were two topics that stood out in response to this question. Appreciative was found on the second part of the question asked by the researcher and pre-transfer advising was asked on the first part. Every advisor explains in detailed steps about their duties on this matter.

Pre-Transfer Advising is a service that advises students before they start the transfer process. Students meet with an advisor to discuss the coursework they have taken, and the admission and coursework requirements of the new institution.

When meeting with a student who has not taken courses in the United States, Lewis usually tells international students that their best option would be to start at a community college. These students know that the classes that they take will transfer over to the university. He mentioned:

I usually talk to them about prerequisites and talk to them about what you need in order to be admitted to one of our programs. A lot of them are not familiar with a two-year school. In some countries they have no idea what a community college is.

Tatiana goes beyond her job duty. She explains to the student how the course numbering system works. She said: “Okay, this is the number that you're going to be taking at Blinn College, and then, this is the number that will correspond to this institution, so when you get here, this will be what the number is, okay? So these are the classes you have to take to correspond with those numbers.” She also tries to find out what tutoring services are available to the student at their two-year institution. There have been times that she contacted the International Advising Office at their college to see what programs are available for them. She said:

Most of the international students that I meet with, not all of them but most of them, are very good students. They usually excel, they do well, and they want to do well. They are very motivated. I don't know necessarily that grades are always a big issue. Once in a while, they can be.



The next set of advisors is the international student services advisors. According to all ISS advisors, they don't advise international student on academic topics.

One of the international student services advisors, Evelyn said: "I think we're trying to build good relationships with the academic advisors, so we'd have some idea of at least who to reach out to, and we refer them to the academic advisors, because there's very limited information I know about the academic process, and every department is very different.

Lisa also mentioned that she does not build academic relationships with international students because that is not her office specialty area. She said:

To be honest, we're not knowledgeable about anything that happens in the academic department, so a term I use very often is, 'You should talk to your academic advisor about that,' and kind of punt them over to their department. We really don't, I would say beyond small talk when they come into our department saying, 'How are your classes going,' or 'Is your dissertation coming along?' Small talk I would say, nothing that involves me actually knowing anything about their academic career.

Next, Tanya mentioned that she develops a relationship with the students she advises, but it is not academic relationship. It's only about immigration, personal issues, or financial struggles. When an international advisor asks for academic guidance, she walks them through the process of determining who to contact.

According to Paula and Daisy, they all advice their students in the same way. They want to build an academic relationship with them. Paula said:

I'm an advisor, yes, I'm here to ask questions but I'm a person too, and I have interest in you as a whole not just trying to get you in and out as quickly as we can to try to establish some kind of report with them. I think that's important to do for all students.

Daisy with the same mentality, answered the question slightly different, but with the same concept.

It's building that relationship with them to let them know that I'm here to help them as far as academics go. I'm going to do whatever I can to help them with the courses they have taken, and the courses they need to take in order to achieve what they're here for. Some students have a specific interest, so just making sure that I know what their future goals are. Mainly I try to get them set up with the right, appropriate, courses for that. Also trying to go through the step of really trying to make sure that they're taking what they need. Getting those courses that they did transfer in, trying to get those substituted to count somewhere in the degree plan. As far as the difference between advising them and an in-state student, I don't really see a big difference because I'm proactive with every student that I come in contact with.

Continuing to the second part of the question, the overall difference is that advisors noticed that international students are more appreciative of the assistance. Some

of these students find that the United States is the land of opportunity where the government spends a large amount of resources in education. Others are coming from a whole different environment where perhaps they are thankful for any help provided to them.

Lewis explained how these students are unaware of the resources that are available and were not offered at their previous institution.

A lot of them are actually more appreciative when you give them that advice or when you tell them go talk to this person.' Or go do this, go do that, advice on classes. A lot of times they may not have had somebody that has given them any of that advice. We may be the first person that they worked with. They really appreciate the fact that you've taken time to give them suggestions, give them tips on what to do. A lot of times they may be just brand new to the country, they don't know anybody, they don't know how it works. If you take the time to explain to them, I think, they're a little bit more appreciative than somebody that's a domestic transfer student. They may take that stuff for granted.

### **Interview Question 11**

*What differences do you see between a community colleges and this university?*

The reason why the researcher asked this question was mainly to understand the advisors' point of view toward community colleges and universities. Community colleges serve as an egalitarian system for expanding educational opportunities for those who historically have been ignored on post-secondary campuses. As mentioned by

Lewis: “I think a lot of times, whether it's an international student or just a domestic transfer student, I don't think they're, a lot of times, prepared for the way it is going to be around here.” The advisors mentioned that community colleges are a good start for many international students. The two subjects that arose during these conversations were class size and academic standards.

Class size was mentioned frequently. Lewis mentioned what he means by it:

They may not know that you can talk to the professor; you can talk to the graduate assistant. Those people are there to help you out. Versus at a community college, in a small setting, that person may come to you and say, 'are you struggling? We can help you.' Versus here, you're in a room of 300. Unless you do something about it, then no one's going to help you out.

Tatiana said:

Well, at the community college, obviously, they're going to be smaller. At the community college, it's probably a little easier for [students] to navigate than once they get here, and just the scope of it. This is a really large university. We're spread out. That's going to be a change for them.

Grace also explained about how not every course transfers from a community college to a land grant institution. She mentioned:

And so if they don't come to the university and they haven't spoken to an university advisor, then they're taking courses that may or may not apply towards

their degree plan , and they'll come in with maybe 30 hours, and they won't have the courses that are required to apply. And so that kind of sets them back because they've been working really hard on those 28 to 30 hours, and they still don't have the courses that are required to transfer.

Evelyn was the only advisor that knew exactly the mission of community colleges and why they exist.

There's a difference, community colleges were established for a different reason. And so they do mostly two-year programs, to get an AA.

She is the only advisor who explained the mission of a community college. Later she spoke about Research One institutions, where faculty members must balance between teaching and research, comparing them to community colleges, where the focus is on teaching and not as much on research.

Two-year community college receives funding from county, state, and federal governments. It is less expensive for a student to attend a community college. Lisa mentions: "Community college, the credit hours tend to be cheaper, sort of allows them to do some of the stuff they need to do and be financially better off, which is important for students, to be financially secure when they graduate." It is the same way for international students although they pay international tuition. The cost of attendance at a community college is much lower than a land-grant institution.

According to Tanya, the operations at a four-year institution are much different. Everything is very overwhelming for students. She mentioned:

They really struggle with figuring out what they need to do, where they need to go, I think the biggest difference is the size. A lot of the community colleges are very small and the international student advisors might be more accessible and they might actually do more than just immigration. Some community colleges probably have the international student advisor do academic advising as well. Here at this university, there are so many different offices and different places that the students need to go to.

The next groups interviewed were the academic advisors; where they also talked about the class sizes and grade standards. Paula said:

Size of the classes which again I feel like is kind of a drawback to international students as well as students from any small community or small town Texas or Louisiana or pick a place, that is very daunting to come from a place where your largest class might have had 60 kids in it and you walked in to a room and there's 350 kids in it. I think the class size is a huge difference. I think the grading standards are different then what they're used to so when they take that first round of tests and they make a C or a D or god forbid an F and they've been used to making all A's and B's in a community college it's like holy Hannah, what have I gotten myself into? I think that's different.

She mentions that because the classes are larger at four-year institutions, the students may not feel that there is not a connection with their professors. Tatiana said: “I think with the university, they get a lot more opportunities, of course.” She said that there is much more opportunities for international transfer students to get involved in the life of the institution. There are more services and organizations that they can be part of. She added: “I really feel like a university provides them with more of a one-on-one advising, versus community colleges.” Grace answered a little differently, she said that the advising happening at two-year institutions are perhaps too general as at four-year institutions, there are departments and within those units those advisors have different advising roles.

### **Interview Question 12**

*What knowledge did you gain from diversity trainings offered through this university?*

The subjects that arose from this question were respect and patience. From the answers given by the participants, it seems that training is offered to staff in the office of admissions and the international student services. The training program is called Community of Respect and was initially developed at this land-grant institution and has become a nationally recognized diversity program designed to give individuals with a greater cultural awareness and capability. This training also helps advisors deal with understanding other Americans. It is not mandatory for faculty and staff at this institution in this state.

Lewis explained the training in detail about his experience and what information one may gain when participating in this training.

There was one training where we were in a room, they just put you in a room and they start doing clicking sounds and tell you to move based on the clicks. You don't know what's going on. You see a circle of people and it is weird. You don't know what's going on. In the end, you figure out what's happening and what's going on. That really opens your eyes to diversity. That training was about communication and hierarchy of people and how they treat women and how they treat men in certain cultures. At first, we didn't know what was going on because we were standing in a circle, there was this group of people in the middle, then these people would come and get you just making clicking noises. We were thinking 'what's going on?' You had to follow their commands and all that. In the end it really... The training was to show us how other cultures communicate, how they view men and women, the differences between the two. That really helps because here in the U.S., it's really become more equality between men and women. In other countries, that's not the case. Women are still view a little bit differently than men in some cultures, which I think is a big thing here in the U.S. too.

According to Tatiana, what she gained from diversity training was an increased awareness of other cultures and the importance of it in this advising profession.



According to her, everybody is going to have different opinions and different ideas on how something should be done, and people need to be respectful of that. She said:

You may disagree with how somebody is doing something and that's okay, but you have to be respectful of that person regardless of whether their views on how something is handled are different. Diversity is what helps us grow and helps us learn new things and think of things in different perspectives, so you can find better ways to do things, so I think that's helpful to be able to do that.

Evelyn mentioned that she only participated in one training, which was the same one offered to staff in the Admissions Office. For her, the training reinforced her knowledge about diversity in higher education. Lisa and Tanya never attended diversity training at this institution, though they both feel that they needed to seek more training. Lisa mentioned: "Sometimes it's hard to think who could teach us better on this campus about diversity than what we deal with on a daily basis, so, good or bad."

Next, two of the academic advisors mentioned that they have never participated in diversity training before. The only one who has completed this training was Daisy. She discusses her opinions in this matter:

Mainly just know how to interact with students of different cultures. We should know that they're going through a shock when they are coming in. Knowing that, coming in, they're going to be introduced to a whole different culture, language, everything. Being sensitive to the needs of them is important. Their culture is different, so they may approach things a bit differently that we're not used to.

Being aware that there's going to be different ways that students do things.

Sometimes there are students that come in that maybe they...to me, they sound like they're coming off as upset, but maybe that's just the way that things are done. It's not that they're upset with me, it's something else. Get down to their level, try to find out what the underlying factor is, and then we work on that issue. I think with the whole diversity, it's just understanding culture, and trying to understand that they are going through that culture and language barrier.

To conclude, this university is concentrating its training resources in other areas. University employees should understand diversity, and how they can help create a more diverse workplace. Depending on how universities present and rationalize it, there should be mandatory diversity training.

### **Interview Question 13**

*What recruitment and retention programs and/or strategies do you recommend for international transfer students at this land-grant institution?*

The advisors from those different units tossed many ideas around in response to this question. Since this question was directed to two different topics, the researcher divided its analysis into two sections.

The first topic was recruitment. This land-grant institution actively seeks to recruit a student body of qualified, high-achieving, and motivated women and men who embrace individuals from varied backgrounds.

According Tatiana, there are several recruitment programs already in place. She mentions: “We have transfer information sessions that international students can come to. There are recruiters that go out into all of the junior colleges, and so, they'll be there certain times during the month and so they can meet with them as well.”

Grace believes that the university should be doing more. She said:

We need to have more programs that will kind of help them connect, help them feel more at home once they're transferring, as well as maybe we could do something before they've actually attended a community college. For example, if they're wanting to come here, and they know they want to come here, they're not sure what community college they need to attend, maybe we could do something for international transfer students that haven't applied yet to a community college to kind of help them through that process.

Evelyn said she strongly believes in partnerships between the Admissions Office and the International Student Office to jointly recruit international transfer student. She admitted: “I feel like right now it's all kind of we're not doing enough.” Daisy believes that as recruitment goes, her department could do a better job in going to community colleges and recruiting/advising international transfer students. She said: “As far as international transfer recruitment, I don't know that we could actually recruit those that are internationally because it's hard to recruit internationally.” She suggested following up with them and send them a degree plan would mean very much to them. She said:

Just say, 'Hey, I wanted to know if you have any questions after receiving the information and the degree plans.'

Martha has a different view in how to recruit these students. She said: "Scholarships, I mean, are probably very appealing." Concluding, advisors from a three units have different views of recruitment.

The second topic that this question addresses is retention. Internationalization at most institutions occurs within an "adhocracy" (Rudzki, 1998). The international student organization may be a comfort zone for this group of students. Perhaps it is a place where students can meet other individuals like them and feel like they are at home.

Lewis talked about his opinions and the effectiveness of these organizations:

I know a lot of the countries have the different clubs. You may have organizations where they have students from India. They have the Middle Eastern association. They have the students from Mexico. There are different organizations. I think that maybe somebody from the university maybe going to talk to those groups about things we have in place for retention would be a good idea too. If we have somebody go from the tutoring center, if they go talk to the Indian student association and say, "Hey, we have this available to you guys. If you're struggling, somebody from the academic success center, go talk to the students at the beginning of the year just to let them know that we're out there and that we have all these things available to help them succeed."

On the other hand, Tatiana recommended that international students should take advantage of the Academic Success Center and tutoring programs. Evelyn does not think that the institution is doing sufficient work to retain international students. She mentioned: “I think we need to identify what these students need, what their specialized needs are so that we can be doing a better job when it comes to retention. And I feel like right now it's all kind of we're not doing enough.”

Lisa strongly believes that transitioning camps are places where students can have an easier transition. She recommends extended orientation in general, a place where these international students can build a relationship with other students, where their peers can mentor them. This orientation would expose students to the resources on campus that maybe they weren't exposed to previously. Orientation and student involvement are her two suggestions.

The academic advisors have a different mindset. Paula said:

One of the things that this department is dealing, beginning this semester is making a phone call to all of our transfer students just to see how they're doing . It's been a few weeks in the class after the first round of tests and the advisors here have split up our list of new transfer students and we'll call them to say 'hey, how things going? Got any problems? Did you need help? If you want to talk to somebody about classes to take in the spring you should scheduling an appointment now.'

On the other hand, Daisy also sees the importance of following up with students. Her concern is not only with international students, but also with domestic students.

Following up with them I think it will mean a lot to that student. Just reaching out and following up with them, maybe a couple weeks later, or a month later. Just say, 'Hey, I wanted to know if you have any questions after receiving the information and the degree plans.'

She believes that retention should fall under the aegis of the academic college, not the university administration. Her other idea is to have current students reach out to those students as well.

### **Chapter Summary**

The 13 questions asked in the qualitative format were meant to determine and understand how advisors at this land-grant institution are advising international transfer students transferring from a community college. The goal was to understand how advisors are advising this group of students and how to improve the advising process at this land-grant institution. At the same time, the researcher wanted to have an understanding and suggest what topics should be added to, deleted from, or modified in the advising process.

While analyzing the data, three themes arose. Those themes were bureaucracy, advising, and culture. Coding was time consuming, but the researcher was able to gather information that may be useful for advisors in the future. Participants used their personal

stories and experiences when interviewed. Coding such as “good questions” was found by several participants. Chapter V discusses these themes in more detail.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The researcher conducted an intrinsic case study that would allow other land-grant intuitions to follow the recommendations of the researcher. Case studies have been used for years and the approach is highly appropriate for this dissertation. The focus of the case study was the procedures that university advisors use to advice international students at a land-grant institution in the Southwest region of the United States. Below are the research questions of this study.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the advising strategies used by three groups of advisors at a land-grant university to advise international transitioning students?
2. How do the three groups of university advisors approach and build relationships with prospective international transfer students transferring from a community college?
3. How do advisors assist international transfer students with "transfer shock" and "culture shock" during their university experiences?

Three themes arose from all 13 question asked. The researcher carefully analyzed each response. The themes that the researcher came up with were bureaucracy, advising, and culture.



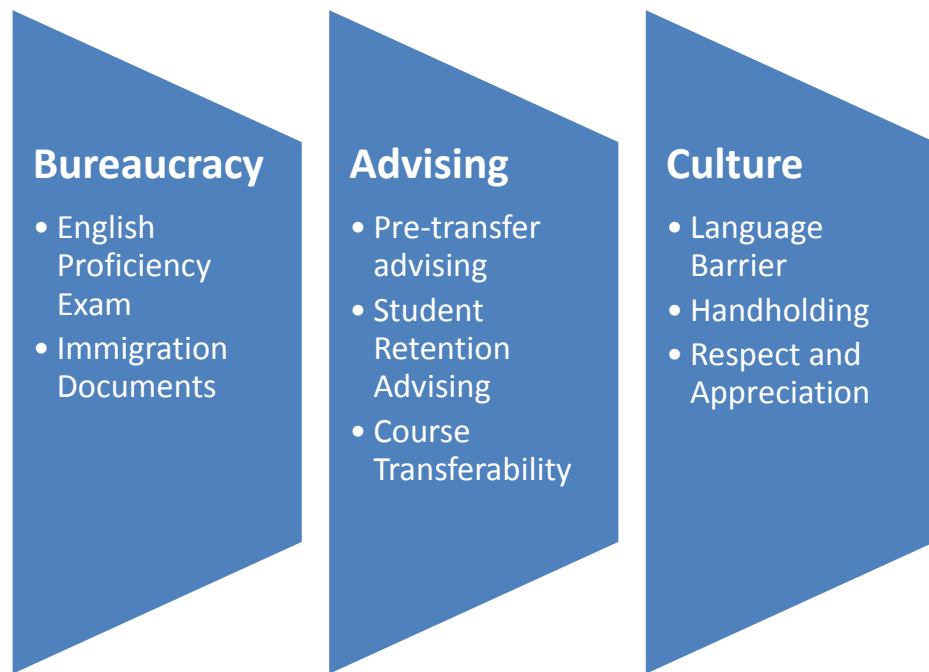


Figure 2. Research Question Themes

Under the bureaucracy theme, English proficiency exam and immigration documents were the subthemes. In the topic of advising, pre-transfer advising, student retention advising and course transferability were the subthemes that arose from the coding process. Culture was the last theme. The researcher found the following subthemes within the topic of culture: language barrier, handholding, and, respect and appreciation. The figure above is a visual demonstration of the themes.

### **Bureaucracy**

On questions two and three the researcher wanted to understand the obstacles that international students face when they complete their admissions credentials. To this

end, the researcher asked the advisors what concerns they have regarding international transfer students on their admission application process.

According to the responses, finding information on the university's website is a challenge for all students applying to this university. Advisors from all three units expressed concerns about students' lack of information towards applying online or sending required documents. This is where the bureaucracy theme appeared.

Bureaucracies are huge stumbling blocks for these students. Johnson and Libecap (1994) thought bureaucracy is important if it serves for a good reason, but criticize bureaucracies that become too complex, inefficient, or inflexible. An international transfer student goes through a long process in order to apply to this land-grant institution. In addition to applying online, these students must have their transcripts translated if they are transferring from a country where English is not the official language. International students also must pay a higher application fee and some must take the English proficiency exams. All transfer students must write a statement of purpose.

The International Student Services Office jumps in right after the student is admitted to the university. Once students are admitted, they must complete the immigration information questionnaire and provide proof of financial support. Next, these students have to contact their community college to transfer their SEVIS from their previous institution to this university. Finally, students must show proof of health insurance and immunizations, and attend mandatory orientations.

Evelyn noted that there are many more steps that international students need follow in order to be enrolled. As mentioned in chapter IV by Lisa Evelyn's concern is that these students must work with two different types of institutions and the immigration to get documents turned in and processed. Every office and unit operates differently in processing documents. Tanya mentioned that her office has been flexible on deadlines in order to accommodate international students for these reasons. Having a hard deadline is difficult, because these students are depending on many parties to process their documents.

Academic advisors had the same concerns. International transfer students have to go through many steps in order to fully enroll at the land-grant institution. Academic advisors try their best to be knowledgeable about admissions, international paperwork, and additional documents necessary in order to complete course substitutions; however, there are times where academic advisor gets stuck. Daisy explained how sometimes she does not have an answer for every question asked. She mentions: "I'm not admissions, so you're going to have to talk to admissions about that." Bureaucracy was a top concern expressed by all advisors during the interviews.

The two subthemes that arose from this theme were the English proficiency exam and immigration documents. If an applicant is not from a country where English is not the primary language of instruction, students must provide results of an English language proficiency examination as part of their application. This exam can also be substituted if

the student took the English Composition course at a community college and passed with grade of “C” or better.

Tatiana mentioned that if an international student is coming from a community college, they may qualify for the TOEFL waiver. She lets them know that the student must have approximately thirty transferable hours, and they have to have passed with a “C” or better and an equivalent credit to the university’s English Composition course.

Immigration documents are another subtheme discussed. Advisors from all three units expressed their concerns about advising students in submitting international documents. There are different types of student visas but the one most used by international students is the F1 visa. Evelyn said: “A lot of times they might be on a dependent visa category, like an H4 category.” Lisa explained in detail the whole process of transferring immigration documents from a community to this institution:

Generically, our interaction has been actually doing the transfer in process for international students. They have a SEVIS record, which wherever they go, their SEVIS record goes with them. Our interaction would be actually receiving the SEVIS record from whatever community college it is that they’re coming from, issuing an I-20 on behalf of our university, which would be their immigration document that they would keep. Ultimately, I would say, that has been my main interaction is just processing transfer-ins.

Evelyn explained more about the process and what perhaps goes through the student’s mind when transitioning from a community college to this land-grant

institution. She mentioned that there's just more for them to do, because they have to transfer their immigration record as well as all documents required by the Admissions Office. However, her main concern was to transfer the student's SEVIS. Another concern mentioned by her was student employment issues. She said:

Because once the old school transfer their record to us, they can't work there anymore on campus, they can't, basically, that school, let's say Blinn, doesn't have access to their records anymore, we do. So there's a lot more when it comes to the timing of when their record is transferred, getting us all the information we need to issue their I-20, or whatever form that we're issuing for them.

International advisors mentioned that international students have several more steps to follow than domestic students. Another concern mentioned by international advisors is that sometimes these students don't realize they need to work with the international student services office as soon as they are admitted. Evelyn said that some students wait until it is four days before classes begin, and they have not done anything to complete the mandatory documents. She said: "Well, if that expires, then their document is done, so sometimes there's the lack of, mostly lack of communication." She then said "Done," meaning it is expired. The student must go back to his or her country.

Lisa explained in detail about how international advisers help international students with submitting immigration documents and remaining legally enrolled at an institution in the United States. A major difference between her departments and others on campus is that her office must handle immigration concerns. According to Lisa, the

academic departments don't know the in and out of immigration laws. Nor do the students. She said: "A lot of them have no idea that they have an I-20 or have to be enrolled in 12 hours every semester or whatever it may be, so that's really different, because we have to advise based on immigration."

Evelyn explained about the bureaucracy that kicks in after the student is admitted. According to her, the international student services office sends an email and a hardcopy letter to transfer students, letting them know about the international student conference. The letter also outlines in detail what the student needs to do in order to apply for the visa and how to be a legal student in the United States. She said:

What we need to know, what their immigration background is, or the F1 student, J1 student, H4, like what's their category, where they've been studying and then when their record is going to be released to our university, and then finances and that kind of thing, we do that. They have to show one year of funding. So it's getting all that information, and then we issue the document.

Tanya clarifies what goes through before the student can set up an appointment with her. She also explained her involvement with the new student department and how they work hand in hand with them:

We have a new student center and they usually email the students telling them what their next steps are. If they need their immigration documents transferred to this university, they're given the list of things that they need to submit to our office in order to get their documents processed. When I get the documents, I

usually just ... if I have everything, they're usually only given to the advisors when they're ready for processing. When I complete them, then I give them back to the new student center and they email the student telling them that the documents are ready. I don't really have a lot of interaction, unless I have an appointment with a student. If I have an appointment with the student prior to issuing the documents, then I will handle the case until the end. I'll process the documents; I'll email the student and tell them it's ready. There's a lot more communication. If they have questions, I'll directly communicate to them or answer their questions.

Nevertheless, it is a lengthy process that these students are going through at this land-grant institution. It is a combination of paperwork required by both the university and the United States federal immigration department.

### **Advising**

The next theme that arose from this study was advising. Within this theme there were three subthemes. This topic was mentioned by the interviewees in every question asked by the researcher. An international transfer student who goes through this process may feel overwhelmed by working with more than one advisor.

Transitioning to a university is special and perhaps a difficult time for international students. Having just left different advising methods used by community colleges, these students may find themselves lost and need a considerable amount of

assistance. Perhaps these students need high quality advice since this is one of the more difficult transitions that have experienced in their academic life.

International transfer students overall are familiar with a formal academic setting before transferring to four-year university, but when they are at the community college, they learn that the process may be more laid back that they were expecting compared to a university. Starting at a two-year institution may be a good start for these students.

Within the advising theme, two subthemes arose: pPre-transfer advising and student retention advising. When the researcher asked how some of the advisors advice and guide international transfer students, he gathered mixed information. As mentioned by Lisa:

That's a really good question. Well, you definitely advise them differently.

There's no question to me that there is a big difference. Now, what the difference is, I have to think on. I think one thing, for sure, with international students, you have to take into consideration, and I tell the students this a lot, I'll say, 'As an international student, you have your immigration life and you have your academic life. A lot of times, those two things match up in the sense of you have to be enrolled full-time for certain things and it's the same, nine hours here, nine hours there. But, a lot of times, it doesn't match up in terms of sometimes your academic department will require something that is not important to us and we could care less really what that rule is, but we say, well, according to your advisor, you need to follow that rule.



Therefore, she said with enthusiasm that in the International Student Services Office, the advisors have to advise about immigration law. Her concern was that the academic advisors and admissions advisors are not aware of immigration credentials. Many of these advisors have no idea that a student must have an I-20 or must be enrolled full time.

Lisa mentioned that every advisor has a different role, where each office has a focus and specialty on how students are advised:

Likewise, we are not academic advisors, either. I am not going to ever tell a student ‘oh, you need to enroll in this course,’ because that’s not our specialty area. I would say that is a big difference, for sure, in terms of domestic and international. We don’t deal with a lot of parents here, which some would say, ‘oh, that’s a blessing,’ but most students who come over, specifically undergraduate transfers would be one of those populations that they’re going to be taking care of whatever the situation is on their own.

Overall, the advisors believed that international students are very appreciative, compared to domestic students. According to the advisors, international transfer students overall genuinely appreciate everything that advisors do for them.

Some interviewees, however, said that they don’t advise international students differently than Americans. Like mentioned by Paula, she said that she does not advise international students any differently than domestic students. She said:

I certainly welcome them, try to make them all feel very welcome and at home and I try to be very friendly and open. I'm not the kind of person really that sugar coats anything. I try to give them bad news... all students bad news in as pleasant a way as I possibly can.

Academic and admissions advisors were concerned about students' goals after graduation. This land-grant institution offers a large variety of undergraduate programs. Perhaps what the major they want to pursue is not housed in the College of Agriculture, for example, therefore the advisors try to find them a major that suits their interest.

The cost of college attendance was another concern among all advisors. They all mentioned about how they want to make these students aware of the cost for domestic and international students and out-of-state and in-state students. All of the advisors were familiar with the tuition waver and its requirements. At this university, students who receive a \$1000 competitive scholarship automatically qualify to pay in-state tuition. Paula said: "I usually try to get them to make a visit with the associate dean that is in charge of scholarships to visit with him face-to-face so that he gets a one-on-one time with them so that when their name comes across his desk he has a memory of meeting them and visiting with them." The other interesting idea mentioned by Paula is providing the Dean's office with a resume so that the committee could see that the student has been active, what their grades are and skills and knowledge they can bring to the classrooms.

### Pre-transfer Advising

One subtheme that arose from advising was pre-transfer advising. The pre-transfer advising process is intended to offer support to prospective transfer students transferring from universities or community colleges. After interviewing the staff, the researcher noticed that most advisors help students to determine how previous coursework will apply. However, the advisors who are more active in this role are the admissions and academic advisors. International students are encouraged to speak with these people to assess their readiness to transfer and to estimate the time to degree completion. An obstacle mentioned by the interviewees is many international transfer students do not understand the admissions process.

One issue noticed by the researcher is that sometimes international students ask the same questions over and over again because they do not understand the language or because the admission process is too complex. The other point that the advisors emphasized was to discuss with students their realistic chances of being admitted to their program of choice.

Paula's concern is that some students don't quite understand questions asked on the admissions application. She thinks that the questions are a stumbling block not only for international students but also for some domestic students as well. The problem mentioned by most advisors is that these students don't always seek help from advisors at the university level. Paula mentioned "I don't think that as a whole they typically

contact academic advisors as much as they probably should.” These advisors are there for a reason and they do want to help these students at an early stage.

Most students struggle with the essay portion of the application. As a result, the advisors spend a great deal of time explaining what the university is looking for in an international transfer student. The university wants a statement of purpose. This essay allows the student to tell the college about their educational goals and interest. Paula mentioned:

We certainly would be more than willing to give them information particular in this college where we would rather see career interest in an essay rather than a life experience and maybe a family background. We’re more interested in career interests. If there was a way to help them to understand that yes, it’s great talking to perspective students, advisors which I think this university does a terrific job and a yeoman’s job as perspective students, liaisons for the whole university if they could understand once they have decided on a specific major to visit with that advisor as well.

An issue mentioned by advisors in the academic colleges and in the International Student Services Office is that these students get overwhelmed with advising resources. Many community colleges have smaller, more centralized advising centers, but the university has prospective student centers, which are located in different parts of the state. These Prospective Student Centers (PSCs) is where students can learn more about academic programs, financial aid, housing, and student services at this university.

Advisors answer questions, organize events, and help all future students with every step of the application process. However, in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the advisors want to meet students in person and advise them prior to transferring. , One concern mentioned by admission advisors is that many international students do not understand why sometimes they have to start off taking developmental courses or lower level courses.

### Student Retention Advising

An important subtheme is student retention advising. This is a complex and challenging matter at this campus. The scope of institutional retention strategies varies by size of institutions and goals that college and universities have in place. Retention efforts require the support of all units at an institution. An institution must provide some type of ongoing orientation to campus resources and services at an early age. Advisors must provide an environment in which there is acceptance of diversity, inclusion, and respect for international students.

The advisors provided a wide range of feedback on this topic. This university has an excellent retention rate. In fact, it has the highest retention rate in the state. According to the advisors, the university has many advantages in this arena. Overall, the domestic students are friendly and willing to help accommodate new international students. The university has a center called the Student Success Center, which encourages student success at the university. It is convenient located in the center of the university and offers free programs and services designed to maximize students' involvement in their

own education and development. At this center, the students meet professional and peer tutors including graduate assistants, peer assistants, and student coaches who work collaboratively with international students and teach them how to succeed in college. According to the advisors, the center does a good job in educating international transfer students to become more active at the university. The academic coaches teach students how to manage their time wisely and how to make contributions back to the university.

The Career Center offers services for all students at the campus: workshops and seminars to help students with career searches, resume writing, interviewing skills, and locating internships and jobs. In addition, every academic college in the university has a career coordinator that puts together programs and events for students in their particular college. These coordinators provide information, advice, and guidance to help students make realistic choices about their future goals. The staff mainly concentrates on helping students build CVs, identify skill gaps, search for jobs, and file applications.

The Disabilities Office at this institution helps students with learning difficulties, or physical health disabilities. The staff in this department support students in accessing financial help from social services provided by the state, federal government, and nonprofit organizations. The coordinators also help academic departments deal with disabled students. According to Lisa, she advises prospective disabled students and their families on accessibility concerns. The International Student Services Office also works collaboratively with the members of the Disability Office when dealing with a student in need of physical or mental help.

The international advisors also serve life coaches for these students. There are times that some international students deal with psychological problems due to cultural shock or not feeling accepted at the university. These problems can interfere with the student's ability to perform well in college. According to the advisors, many of these international students are unaware of the services available to them or are afraid to use the student counseling office resources.

The Student Counseling Office offers a wide range of services to maximize the student potential for success. Services such as short-term individual counseling, crisis intervention, and consultation are offered. In addition, this department offers educational workshops and classroom presentations to interested groups who request them. There are student workers and professional staff, who are licensed by the state to provide assistance to students who are dealing with academic skills concerns, situational crises, adjustment problems, or emotional difficulties.

These programs and resources are very helpful for any students. Lisa explains how these students may feel:

I'm not here by myself; I'm 3,000 miles away from my home country. I'm 500 miles away from the people that I knew for two years while I was attending a small school but there's people here that are willing to help, me that I'm not just on an island by myself.

Moving forward, this university is working hard to make sure that international transfer students succeed. According to the advisors, the retention resources mentioned, is helping this university keep their retention rate high.

On the academic level, the college is also providing services to students. The goal of the departments according to academic advisors is to show that although this is a large university, it can still feel small by adopting each student as a family member.

Daisy said with confidence:

It's a big university, and there's a lot to offer. A lot of the students that seek us out, and they find out what we have to offer, and our hands-on courses, and just the things that they can get involved in here . It's just a good opportunity for them. Once they reach out and contact their departments, and we're able and willing to help them out, and they see how personable that we can be to them that we're here to help them any way that we can, and there's services available to them. I feel like that helps in their decision-making process.

The retention resources offered at this university have shown positive outcomes by being the number one in the state. International students have social and educational barriers that they have to overcome when transferring to a land-grant institution. Orientation programs such as transfer camps and international student conference can help ease the transition to this university. As mentioned in chapter four, these programs contain academic strategies, social support, and information about campus life and how to also succeed in college. In the previous chapter, the advisors also recommended



students to become a member of student organizations. The academic advisors in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences believe that student retention should fall under the academic college and not the university administration.

Finally, the advisors talked about the importance of monitoring students for early warning signs of psychological issues or academic problems. The International Students Office tries to have walk-in advising appointments and also programs such as International Week and International Buffet, which help promote cultural diversity. This way, both international and domestic students can broaden their knowledge about global education and feel more welcome. International students can also showcase their cultures for American students.

#### Course Transferability

Many advises brought up the issue of course transferability. The state and federal governments are spending a good amount of resources educating students about the benefits of attending community colleges. However, the transition from a community college to a land-grant institution may be difficult. Course transferability is an issue that many students are facing when they transfer to another institution. According to the data collected for this study, this university offers tools online where students can see exactly how their courses transfer. Advisors at both community colleges and universities are also available to help students choose their classes wisely.

This university Admissions Office offers an articulation agreement that makes it easy for students to see what is needed to transfer from a community college to this

university. It shows what classes and grades students need to transfer. Picking a major early is extremely important while going through this process so students can take the prerequisites that they need prior to enrolling.

Advisors in the academic colleges prefer to meet students interested in transferring as soon as possible. The earlier they meet a student and advise them, the more money students will probably save by not taking the courses that do not transfer. Daisy believes that this issue is a big concern among international transfer students. She said:

The main concern is just not knowing about their transfer courses. I think that's one of the biggest concerns. I know, as a transfer student myself that you kind of want to know all the time and money you've invested in the courses you've taken, where they're going to count before you get here. They make the decision, and that's a huge jump, to come in and go to a different university, and maybe your credits will not even work here. You get here, and maybe only six hours work, and you've taken a lot more than that. I think that's just a big challenge. Not knowing, until they get here and get started in the degree plan, what's even going to work? I think that's one of the biggest concerns I have just for the students themselves. Knowing that they want as many of their credits to count, but it's not in my hands.

Staying focused in college is a difficult task for some of these students. Students have too many distractions and there are times that education is not their number one

priority. At this institution, since the transfer admission decisions are made in the college and department level, student must contact the academic advisor in advance and stay in touch with that person. As mentioned by Daisy:

It seems like a lot of our international students don't contact us in advance. They take two years' worth of courses, and all of a sudden they're like, "We want to transfer next semester." We don't have any time to really work with them either. They contact us last minute, as they're working on their applications. With other students, they contact us right out of high school, when they first start community colleges or junior colleges, or pretty early on in their first or second semester there. We're able to kind of guide them into their course selection. It's different advising, just because I can tell those students what they need to take, versus international students, where I can't really guide them in that process.

This university offers assistance through the Office of Admission and the academic colleges. On top of personal help and guidance, this land-grant institution also offers tools to help students in the transfer process. The transfer equivalency website contains a searchable database of course equivalencies for universities in the United States. Students may either select search by sending institution or by the course number offered at the university. The evaluation of courses on this web tool is an easy guide for students to have an idea of what is going to transfer. Official transcript evaluations are only done once students apply through the online application.

## **Culture**

In a globalized world where there is frequent mobility between individuals of different nations it is essential to recognize and understand the concept of culture shock. It happens in every country of the world. The advisors interviewed for this study mentioned culture frequently. Although these international transfer students have been in the United States for more than one year, they still experience cultural shock when transitioning to a four-year institution. Culture shock is not a disease, but is a reaction to stress caused by a new and unfamiliar environment. This topic is very important and perhaps forgotten by many advisors.

## **Language Barrier**

Language is the most frequently reported barrier to adjusting to U.S. university life, followed by financial difficulties and problems adapting to the culture (Tas, 2013). The issue of language barrier was brought out many times by the advisors. Being able to communicate efficiently in English is essential to accomplishing success both in school and in real life. According to the interviewees, when many of these students came in to their office to be advised, they felt that the language barrier was their number one challenge. First, some of these students have problems understanding how the educational system work in the United States and second is communicating with advisors to know and understand the transfer process.

Many community colleges nowadays offer English as Second Language programs that helps students learn English and understand the local culture. However,

there are times that communication does not come across as easily. Phone, online chat, and email conversations are not always the most reliable ways to communicate. Tatiana said:

Well, obviously, probably the biggest hurdle that we have is just some kind of language barriers that can, even though they're English proficient, sometimes getting a point across to them can be a bit of a challenge. I think I probably handle that by wording it in as many different ways as I can. If I'm meeting with them face to face, it's a whole lot easier, because I can get a sense of whether they're understanding truly what I'm saying, as opposed to if we're trying to communicate over the phone, or if we're trying to communicate even through email, because sometimes, things can get lost in that, in the translation so to speak, so probably, that's one of the bigger hurdles.

Even when advisors meet students in person, they may have doubts as to whether the message was received. Grace has hesitation at times whether or not some these transfer students understands the admission process. Grace said:

My concern is if they understand me correctly and they're able to question whether or not they understand me. So when they leave, I wonder if they actually got the information that I was trying to relate to them. But I give them my contact information. A lot of times I'll follow up with them to make sure that they're on track and they have everything that they need when applying.

Learning a new language may be difficult. Understand the transfer admission process can be even more challenging.

### Handholding

Handholding was the following subtheme that came in under culture. Advisors think it is important to pinpoint the final goal and outcome of each student's education. Through the process, advisors try their best to not waste the students' time in any way. Tatiana talks about her experience when dealing with this group of students:

I probably do a little bit more hand-holding, so to speak. I do a lot more going over things, over and over. If I don't feel like they understand it, we will say it again, and we will say maybe in a different way and as simply as possible, so that they can understand what it is that they ... You know, some of them are very proficient in English. Maybe they've been here for a while or they've traveled enough that they are very English proficient, and some have a really difficult time with it. It just kind of depends on who the student is. Sometimes, they'll bring somebody with them that maybe has a little better grasp on the language as well that can kind of help act as an interpreter if they're not understanding something but the person who's with them understands. Probably, the things that I do different, like I said, I just probably go a little bit slower. I probably spend more time going back over things if I get the sense that they're not understanding what I've just told them, because I want them to have the best shot they can at

being able to be admitted, and so, I don't want them to have some little technical difficulty trip them up that they're not able to get here.

International transfer students, however, do a great job in contacting and networking well with advisors at this land-grant institution. They usually stay in touch with their advisors and are not afraid to ask questions.

### Respect and Appreciation

Respect and appreciation is a sub-theme that arose from these questions about culture. The sub-theme shows both the way advisors treat and advise international transfer students and how appreciative and respectful most international transfer students are. The door to any culture is through respect. When working with international transfer students, advisors must be sensitive to what is acceptable and not acceptable in the students' cultures.

According to the data from this study, most advisors are respectful and understanding when they deal with international students. Daisy put herself in the place of an international student by mentioning the following:

Just welcoming them into our office and making them feel like they can come in and ask us questions and feel comfortable coming in and getting advice. I could never imagine going to another country to go to school, so I try to really reach out to those students and just let them know, any kind of questions, or help that they need to come to us and we can put them in contact with the right people, and help them out as much as we can.

Martha also explains in what happened in the academic department. She explains how she treats them and why:

I kind of feel like if they've been to a junior college - and I realize junior college and a land-grant university, a four-year university is very different. I would say that we try to let them know we're here for them, and they can stop by, they're welcome to stop by every day if they want to, we're here 8 to 5 type deal, they're welcome to make appointments. We have a very friendly department for the most part. I really think that's very inviting. We've got roughly 130 something – 131, 135 – students, and I let them know about that.

To be culturally competent, advisors need to have an understanding of their own world views and those of the students they are working with. One must avoid stereotypes toward students from certain countries. The researcher noticed that advisors had a good amount of knowledge about cultural competence. Cultural competence means to really listen to the students and know how to better serve them. Lisa explained in detail her thoughts on this topic:

I think in any culture shock situation, knowing that there are people who genuinely care about you and your well-being, even if I'm not going to go to all extremes to do things for them, I think that hopefully, my interactions with the students result in them feeling like they can approach me if they were in a situation that they couldn't talk to somebody else about.



Paula, on the other hand, explains her point of view and how she lives and travels through these students' experience:

I don't fly so I live vicariously through international students when they come and talk to me. I ask them about their country, what is it like? What does it look like? Do you have pictures? What does your family do? That way I can travel and I don't have to freak myself out and get on an airplane. I tell students at these student conference, not everybody's going to be like you, get to know somebody that's different, that looks different, that acts different from you and I would encourage the international students to do the same; talk to somebody that doesn't look like you or act like.

In general, international students are more respectful and appreciative than domestic students. A large number of them are coming from a country where the educational level is lower and the opportunities are fewer than in the United States of America. Therefore when they see the opportunity in front of them they show appreciation. Lewis explains the difference in what he sees in international students and domestic students:

A lot of them are actually more appreciative when you give them advice or when you tell them "go talk to this person."

The International Student Services Office advisors also have the same beliefs. Lisa said that the international transfer students care so much that they usually excel in

their academic classes. “Most of the international students that I meet with, not all of them but most of them, are very good students, they usually excel.”

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Overview of the Study**

Educational institutions are debating whether diversity and international multiculturalism improves environment educational experience in higher education. In the United States, the term “diversity” is most often applied to concerns about the composition of the student body (Hurtado & Dey, 1997). The overall transfer population is not new to the college experience. These students are veterans, nontraditional students, international students, and others who have been successful academically prior to transferring.

International transfer students in the United States continue to be an important part of the college population, and they consume a significant amount of time and effort of advisors at both community colleges and universities. This group of students is unique, and they bring unusual educational experiences and new ideas to the table. This study identified many of the topics related to this population and provided extensive ideas of services that can be used in the future. Because the international student and transfer student populations are growing, this study may be very useful by many employees in higher education.

This research study was organized into six chapters. Chapter I included an Introduction of the study, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of

the study, the definition and key terms, and the theoretical framework. Chapter II included a review of the literature. Chapter III included a discussion of the methodology used in the study. Chapter IV presented the data analysis and results of the study. In Chapter V, the researcher discussed the different themes that arose in the research. Finally, Chapter VI will include summary, conclusions, implications, and suggested future research.

The National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) has estimated that international students contribute more than a \$20 billion to the economy in the United States, based on the college tuition and annual cost of living. The analysis uses enrollment figures from the IIE's 2011 report, and was conducted at Indiana University's Bloomington's Office of International Services (IEE, 2011). By these numbers, it is clear that international students are helping the economy in the United States.

Globalization has been a hot topic among scholars for many years now. According to Galateanu (2012), we live in so-called "era of globalization." We talk about it more and more, but still there is no universal definition assigned to this accepted phenomenon. This brings the question to what are American institutions are doing to globalize their campuses? Many institutions have study abroad programs where American students go abroad and experience another culture first-hand, but North Americans may not be very welcoming toward the international student population enrolled at their institution. Another approach to increasing diversity would be to

encourage an international experience on American campuses, by bringing in international students and helping them feel at home away from home.

Although the literature points to the effect of transfer shock and transitioning issues for American students, not much has been done for those students from another country who are coming to the United States. To address this issue, this study explored transfer and culture shock advising once students transfer to a land-grant university and explore what can be done to smooth this transition.

The researcher was interested in understanding the mission and vision of advisors when working with international transfer students. The intent of this study was to provide information and knowledge to community college and land-grant institution personnel about factors that could influence transitioning success of international students and to analyze advising methods and processes among the three groups of advisors. Through in-depth, focused interviews, informants from the Office of Admissions, International Student Services Office, and academic departments provided interpretations about how they advise international students on transitioning to a land-grant institution in the southwest region of the country.

### **Review of Literature**

The review of literature proved the importance of international student advising and highlighted some of the obstacles that transfer students face in higher education. Chapter II provided information on international students in the United States, transfer

student issues, history of advising, the importance of it in a higher education setting, and the appreciative advising model.

Many international students see the United States as the land of opportunities (Tas, 2013). This is the reason students from all over the world select to come to the United States. With a total of 1,232 community colleges in the United States, this indeed makes a land of educational opportunities (AACC, 2014). The cost of attending community colleges is less than the cost of attending a four-year university (AACC, 2014), which is why many people choose to start there. The issue is that four-year institutions provide minimal support for transfer students, even though such students continue to demonstrate heightened adjustment difficulties (Eggleton & Laanan, 2001). Transfer shock is common among international students transferring to a four-year institution (Thurmond, 2007). Studies have looked at domestic transfer students, but very little on international transfer students. Laanan (2001), like Johnson and Sandhu, mentions that when community college students transfer to four-year institution, they face challenges that are psychological, academic, and environmental. Perhaps, international transfer students face a combination of transfer shock and culture shock. International students often arrive in the United States confused, exhausted, and lost. A phenomenon called acculturative stress happens to some of these students, which means that the students experience problems arising from the acculturation process that leads to negative emotional states such as anxiety and depression (William & Berry, 1991).

The methods used for this research included 13 semi-structured questions. The researcher used purposive sampling that was based on gender, ethnicity, and job duties. Interviews were transcribed with codes and themes assigned to the participants' responses. The researcher used member check or informant feedback for respondent validation. This technique helps improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the data collected; Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that it is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility.

The researcher conducted this research with appreciative advising in mind. Appreciative advising is based on numerous theories but is most deeply rooted in positive psychology and appreciative inquiry (Bloom, 2008). The core of the appreciative advising framework is its six phases: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle.

According to Bloom, the six phases are better described below:

Disarm - The disarm phase involves making a positive first impression with students and allaying any fear or suspicion they might have of meeting with the advisor.

Discover - The discover phase is spent continuing to build rapport with students and learning about the students' strengths, skills, and abilities through using effective and positive open-ended questions that encourage narratives.

Dream - The dream phase involves uncovering students' hopes and dreams for their futures.

Design - The design phase is spent co-creating a plan to make their hopes and dreams come true.

Deliver - The deliver phase is the implementation phase where students carry out their plans and their advisors support them as they encounter roadblocks.

Don't Settle - This phase involves challenging students to achieve their full potential and supporting them along their journey (Bloom, 2008).

### **Participants**

This was a qualitative research where the researcher was the instrument. The data are the opinions and behaviors that the advisors experience in working with international transfer students. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher asked deep questions and interpreted the answers after listening to the responses several times. All of the questions were based on the advisors' experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and input. The researcher also transcribed the recordings. He considered non-verbal expressions as well and took written notes of the expressions.

There were a total of nine participants in the study with different backgrounds. Advisors came from three different offices. They were three from the Office of Admissions, three from the International Student Services Office, and three from an academic college. The admissions office concentrate on recruitment, admissions advising and career counseling. The International Student Services Office has a focus on immigration documents and retention programs.



The participants were from different ethnic background, gender, age, education, and time of employment. In order to protect the respondents' confidentiality, the researcher decided not to use their real names to make this a "clean" data set. The racial/ethnic background was of seven white (Non-Hispanic) and two Hispanics who were born in the United States of America. The researcher made several observations about each individual personality and jobs duties.

### **Discussion of Results and Recommendations**

The researcher began making contacts with participants in December of 2013. The participants were all advisors from three different departments at this institution: the Office of Admissions, the International Student Services Office, and the academic colleges. Purposive sampling was used based on the ethnicity, gender, and experience of these advisors. Each one of the advisors had a unique personality. Some were more cultured, and some were more nurturing when advising international transfer students.

There were a total of 13 questions asked. The researcher used qualitative methods in this study in order to collect the data. The responses by the participants were based on their day-to-day job duties and how each advisor interacts with international transfer students transferring from a two-year institution.

On the first question (What has been your professional experience in advising international students transferring from a two-year institution to a land-grant university?) the researcher was able to get a professional background of each advisor where he found out about their advising roles. This is where also the personalities of each advisor came

out. Question number one enabled the researcher to know and understand how much time each advisor spent with international students.

On Questions numbers two and three, the researcher wanted to have an understanding of the admissions process. What documents were required and what is not working smoothly. This is where the bureaucracy theme arose. International transfer students have to go through so much paperwork in order to enroll at this land-grant institution. Question four (How different do you advise them compared to an in-state student? Can you walk me through these steps?) is where the researcher wanted to have an idea about the advisors true feeling when working with international students. He wanted to know if advisors treated them differently than American students. The researcher found a mix of answers. This question came down to personality traits of each advisor and if they thought if an international student should receive more attention than a domestic student. Questions five and six (Why do you think they decide to apply to a land-grant institution? Why do you think they decide to matriculate at this university?) is where the researcher wanted to have an idea why international students are choosing to apply to this particular institution and from there have an idea on their choice of major. According to the responses, international transfer students were interested in majors in the STEM area, since this university is well known for its STEM programs.

For questions seven through 13, the researcher wanted to understand what this university (faculty and staff) is doing in regards to retention initiatives. Questions six

and seven are where the researcher received a great amount of information. The questions asked were the following:

7. *What advising strategy do you use to reduce transfer shock among international students? What can this university do to reduce transfer shock among this group of students?*

8. *What advising strategy do you use to reduce culture shock? What can this university do to reduce culture shock among international students?*

Pre-transfer advising, orientation, and student retention resources were the most talked-about topics that emerged from these questions. The code that arose from this question was orientation. Within orientation there were four subcategories: T-Camp, New Student Conference, International Online Orientation, and International Student Conference. This university offers programs designed to reduce transfer shock not only for domestic and out-of-state students, but also to international students. These programs include the International Student Conference, T-Camp, Howdy Camp and the New Transfer Student Conference. Transfer shock refers to the tendency of students transferring from one institution of higher education to another to experience a temporary dip in grade-point average during the first or second semester at the new institution (Hills, 1965). A culture shock is a condition of disorientation affecting someone who is suddenly exposed to an unfamiliar culture or way of life or set of attitudes ("Culture Shock," 1955). For both transfer shock and culture shock; advisors talked about the importance of being friendly and being available for students. Also the

three groups of advisor mentioned that students should take advantage of these university resources; programs such as the Academic Success Center, Career Center, and Student Counseling Services.

Question ten (Can you walk me through the steps that you use to engage and build academic relationship with international students? What difference do you see comparing to an in-state student?) was a follow up where the researcher gathered additional information on how these advisors work together with international students. A mix of responses was received. The admissions and academic advisors were the main ones working on academic subjects. The International Student Service office mainly concentrated its efforts on immigration documents and activities for current international students.

Question eleven (What differences do you see between a community colleges and this university?) is where the researcher explored how the advisors at this land-grant institution see a two-year institution. The interesting fact is that only one advisor mentioned the mission of a community college. She, however, mentioned that she worked at a community college prior to working at this institution.

The following question (What knowledge did you gain from diversity training offered through this university?) Of the nine advisors, only one attended diversity training offered at this institution. Diversity trainings should be mandatory at four-year institutions so the advisors can have a better understanding in how to work with international students.

The last question is where the researcher wanted to understand from the advisors what the university could do to improve the life of international transfer students at community colleges. He asked: *What recruitment and retention programs and/or strategies do you recommend for international transfer students at this land grant institution?* Most advisors mentioned that the university should be doing more in terms of international student recruitment and retention. Creating a partnership was a great idea mentioned by many advisors. International Student Services advisors said that there should be a partnership between the Admissions Office and the International Student Services Office to jointly recruit international transfer students. This is an excellent idea because the international advisors are the experts on immigration documents and they could work as team with admissions recruiters. As for the academic colleges, they also attend a hand full of recruitment activities; however they do not focus on international recruitment. As far as retention, all interviewees agreed that transitioning camps were a good tool. There should be an International Transfer Camp for international transfer students with the purpose of bringing together international students so they could learn more about the university.

### **Bureaucracy Theme**

The World Wide Web is where students go to find out more about different colleges. Before students apply to college, they research colleges and universities, looking for the best fit. Students are also completing admission process by completing the applications, writing essays, sending transcripts, and paying application fees.

According to the interviews, finding information on the university's website is a challenge for all students applying to this university. Bureaucracy is without a doubt an obstacle for these students. Johnson and Libecap (1994) are critical of when bureaucracy becomes too complex, inefficient, or inflexible. An international transfer student goes through a long process in order to apply to this land-grant institution. In addition to searching for instruction on how to apply for this institution, international transfer students have to go through many steps in order to fully enroll at this land grant institution. For admission they must apply online, write a statement of purpose essay, pay a higher application fee than a domestic student, and send in high school and college transcripts where if they are from a foreign country where a different language other than English is spoken, the documents must be translated to English. After admitted, the student must prove that they are able to maintain themselves financially in the United States. The SEVIS document must be transferred to the university and the student must contact the U.S. Department of the State to renew their student visa.

As a result of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Provide a transfer-friendly website with a checklist where it is easier to understand what documents need to be completed for admission purposes.
- Have a cross training session between the Admissions Office and International Student Services where admissions advisors would have knowledge on what documents are needed once the student is admitted.

- On the university transfer publication include information regarding visa types and how to transfer the SEVIS documents.

### **Advising Theme**

Advising international transfer students is more complex than advising domestic students. This theme was mentioned by the interviewees in every question asked by the researcher. Several advisors mentioned that they felt overwhelmed with all the questions that are asked repeatedly by the international students. Transitioning to a university is a difficult phase for the student. Having just left different advising methods used by community colleges, these students find themselves lost and needs a considerable amount of assistance. It takes patience to understand students when there is a language barrier. Some of the advisors that were interviewed said that they don't advice international students differently than domestic students. This is a mistake; they have to understand that these students need more attention. There are barriers that prevent them to understand the process. Language barrier is the most important. This topic was brought out many times by the advisors. Being able to communicate efficiently in English is essential to accomplishing success both in school and in real life in the United States.

As for the transitioning process, participants mentioned the importance of pre-transfer advising and retention advising. Pre-transfer advising occurs more in the office of admissions and the academic colleges. The International Student Services Office jumps in usually when the student is admitted. However, International Student Services

advisors wear two hats: they provide transitioning programs and they also take care of immigration documents and advise students on this topic. The ISS has also created social programs where international students may meet other current students.

Recommendations:

- Team building activities should take place with academic colleges, International Student Services and the Admissions Office should meet at least once a year where all advisors could be in the same page.
- Make appreciative advising training mandatory for all advisors.
- Advisors should be pro-active, follow up with their students and not wait for them to contact the advisor.

### **Culture Theme**

International students come from a wide variety of culture and backgrounds. Language barrier, handholding, respect, and appreciation were the four sub-themes that came up under the culture topic. Although international transfer students usually transfer with more than 24 credit hours, some still experience language barriers and challenges with communication. Advisors must understand that they have to be patient and have a good heart. Learning a new language is difficult for many individuals. Understanding the transfer admission process can be even more challenging; therefore, some international students need handholding. Advisors from all of the three units mentioned that some students desired more assistance than the typical American student. International transfer students often experience cultural shock and have barriers that require more attention.



According to the advisors, international students are more respectful and appreciative than American students. The researcher noticed that advisors overall had a good amount of knowledge about cultural competence. Cultural competence means to really listen to the students and know how to better serve them.

#### Recommendations:

- Make diversity training mandatory for every advisor.
- Encourage additional discussion with all three units on how to improve international academic relationship with international students.
- Encourage advisors be welcoming and patient. Many of the international transfer students are unfamiliar with the educational system in the United States. Advisors should be curious about the student's background and show interest in their stories.

### **Overall Recommendations**

Appreciative inquiry and appreciative advising are respected methods for engaging students overall, for helping them modify behaviors, and for improving their skills and capabilities to academic success. These theories are part of the conceptual framework for this study. Appreciative advising is based on numerous theories, but is most deeply rooted in positive psychology and appreciative inquiry (Bloom, 2008). As mentioned on Chapter II, the core of the appreciative advising methodology has six phases: disarm, discover, dream, design, deliver, and don't settle (Bloom, 2008). The six phases are described as it relates to international transfer student advising.

Below are some of the researchers' recommendations that advisors from admissions, international student services and academic department should consider when advising international transfer students transitioning to a Land-grant institution:

**Disarm Phase** - The disarm phase involves making a positive first impression with students and allaying any fear or suspicion they might have of meeting with the advisor. The recommendations are:

- Break the ice when meeting students for the first time. Ask students how their day is going so far.
- Don't make cultural assumptions.
- Ask international students questions such as what do they think about the campus. What are they looking for at a university? What careers do they have in mind?

**Discover Phase** - The discover phase is spent continuing to build rapport with students and learning about the students' strengths, skills, and abilities through effective and positive open-ended questions that encourage narratives. Specific recommendations are:

- After breaking the ice, ask the student what major they are interested in pursuing. Why are they choosing that or those majors? Ask the students about their grades and coursework that they have completed.
- Ask the students about their GPA. Ask for a transcript or university identification number and look up the student's file if he or she has applied.

- If students are already enrolled, go over any questions they may have. Tell the students about academic programs offered to them.
- Check for understanding, see if the student understand your message and ask for an explanation in their own words.
- Ask students about their academic accomplishments. Make them feel proud of them.

**Dream Phase** - The dream phase involves uncovering students' hopes and dreams for their futures.

- After looking at their GPA and coursework, be honest and tell the student their chances of being admitted to the university.
- Make them a transfer plan where the advisor would take into consideration the students' course work and GPA.
- Provide mentoring, academic help, social opportunities, and other programs to help the student maintain their confidence and fill in the gaps academically as needed.

**Design Phase** - Help students devise concrete, incremental, and achievable goals.

- Give students the tools necessary to succeed.
- Educate the student on transfer resources found online and explain in a way that the student understand.
- Discuss resources tools available at both the two- and four-year institutions.
- Set up goals and give the student deadlines.

- Help students find where the student can pursue better exam skills.
- Find out if their college offers help with study habits.
- Writing skills is a roadblock for many; tell students about college writing centers.

**Deliver Phase** - The Deliver phase is the implementation phase where students carry out their plan and the advisor's role is to support them as they encounter roadblocks.

- Being realistic is the key for student success. In this phase, break the good or bad news to the student.
- Be honest and direct. Discuss admissions requirements and immigration paperwork with students. Make sure they understand that cost of attendance is significantly more than at a two-year institution.
- Help students find resources that teach exam-taking skills.
- Tell students about resources for learning about study habits.
- Student Success Centers are popping up at many institutions today; encourage students to get tutoring when it would be helpful.
- Become a mentor and encourage student to discuss personal relationships and social life with an advisor.
- Encourage students to contact you with any problems or concerns.
- Review what was discussed in the meeting.

**Don't Settle Phase** -The Don't Settle phase, involves challenging students to achieve their full potential and supporting them along their journey

- Help students select academic programs that will challenge them and bring them joy.
- Challenge the students to meet their professors in person.
- Encourage the student to be involved in student activities once admitted.
- Always follow up with the students regularly until graduation.

#### **New Addition to Appreciative Advising – Diversity Phase**

The researcher recommends adding one more phase to the appreciative advising model already discussed. Since this study expresses the importance of diversity, those individuals involved in advising international transfer students should add a diversity phase after the disarm phase.

Diversity is an important component in higher education. In the diversity phase, the advisor should ask the students about their cultural background; making them feel at ease where trust may be built between the student and the advisor.

- Ask the students how they are adjusting to the university.
- Ask if the students have found other students from their country, state, or hometown.

- Instead of asking about the student ethnicity outright, notice the students' accent, for example. Complement the student and use it as a way to enter a discussion about their ethnic background.
- Build trust and make students feel welcome.

This new section would enhance the communication between the two parties and would promote personal growth and cultural knowledge for a healthier relationship between the advisor and the student.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by three research questions, which are listed below.

- 1. What are the advising strategies used by three groups advisors at a land-grant university to advise international transitioning students?***

### **Office of Admissions**

Advisors in the Office of Admissions are usually the first ones who international transfer students meet. According to this study, the admissions advisors focus on providing information that pertains to both admissions and academic advising, such as courses and GPA needed to transfer in general and for certain majors. Their strategies involve being affirmative and ensuring that students who leave the office understand what was said to them. Advisors mentioned that they often repeat their answers several times until they felt that the student understood.

### *International Student Services*

The International Student Services Office advisors concentrate on providing students with information on immigration documents and student retention based on social activities for international students. These advisors are also familiar with other services available for students on campus. While they don't advise students on academic matters, they do ask about their academics and if they are struggling in any area academically or personally. These advisors are not familiar with academic advising; they educate the international student on the resources available to them on campus.

### *Academic Departments*

The academic departments focus on advising the student on the academic arena. At this particular academic college, academic advisors also try to meet with the student before the student applies to the university in order to make sure the student is the right path academically and will have all the required coursework at the time of application. They work with students until the student graduate.

## ***2. How do the three groups of university advisors approach and build relationships with prospective international transfer students transferring from community colleges?***

Most of the advisors said that they were familiar and felt experienced working with international transfer students. They also felt that international transfer students are well prepared overall for the university experience. According to most advisors, it is easier to work with an international student transferring from a community

college located in the state where the university is than it is to work with one transferring from out of state or internationally.

#### Office of Admissions

The Admission Office advisors do both on- and off-campus recruitment. These advisors approach these students either in a recruitment event or when they schedule a meeting with an admissions advisor in the prospective student center. They start building relationships with these students by educating them on career opportunities within certain majors. They also explain about student traditions on campus and go over admission information.

#### International Student Services

Usually ISS advisors are approached by international students only once the student is admitted to the university. Students are required to complete a mandatory online orientation prior meeting in person with the international advisor. During the in-person meeting, the advisor talks with the student about immigration, culture, and student resources available at the university. The students then work with their international advisors until they graduate.

#### Academic Departments

Some of the academic advisors mentioned that they participated in student recruitment events, thereby serving as recruiters and academic advisors as well. They are knowledgeable about simple admissions procedures. According to this study, these



advisors assist students in setting academic plans and they monitor student progress toward educational/career goals.

**3. *How do advisors assist international transfer students with "transfer shock" and "culture shock" during their university experience?***

Pre-transfer advising, orientation, and student retention resources were the most talked-about topics that emerged when the researcher asked about the advising strategies used to reduce transfer shock among international students. As for transfer shock, some departments advise students to complete most of their math and science courses at a community college.

The other program that helps student with this matter is orientation activities. Programs such as T-Camp, the New Student Conference, the International Online Orientation, and the International Student Conference were mentioned several times during the discussions. Advisors also recommended that students use the student retention resources offered at the institution. Specifically, the advisors suggested that international students take advantage of the academic success center, tutoring programs, student counseling office, career services, and the rest of success programs offered at the institution. It is important to let international transfer students know about all of the resources are available to them.

Some of the advisors mentioned the importance of being respectful to the students' cultures. One advisor said, "I just try to be as sensitive as possible."

Another advisor said, “I simply being a good listener.” The other strategy used was the importance of being approachable and understanding with them.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Most admissions advisors agreed that the university is doing a good job in recruiting international transfer students. The fact that the university is a land-grant institution, it is important in student decisions. There are more than 100 majors for students to choose from and this institution has the highest retention rate in the state.

Although this institution is doing a good job in recruiting and retaining students, higher education faculty and staff must do a better job in reaching out and advising international transfer students. Many advisors occasionally feel uncomfortable working with international students due to language barriers and cultural differences.

Administrators, advisors, and higher education faculty need to understand that most of these students have a whole different view of the world than typical American students. These students often arrive in the United States confused, exhausted, and lost. These students often experience acculturative stress, which occurs when individuals experience problems arising from the acculturation process that leads to negative emotional states such as anxiety and depression (William & Berry, 1991). The admissions advisors believe that universities have to emphasize resources available to these students. The university should address these potential problems proactively.

University and college advisors need to be friends and role models who support and encourage students in personal growth. Transitioning from a two-year institution to a

university is an important time of the life of any student because this is when most of them are making decisions about their lives that will affect their future. According to King, advisors are in a key position to assist students with the transfer process (King, 1993).

Advising international transfer students is more than just a matter of advising domestic students. They need to consider issues such as language barrier, culture shock, and immigration documentation. The information gathered for this study will be useful and will perhaps increase international and global awareness about helping international transfer students at four-year institutions. International students can inspire critical educational knowledge helping students learn to connect effectively with people of diverse cultures. They strengthen societies in numerous ways and diversify classrooms. It permits students from different cultural backgrounds to learn more about other countries and cultures without leaving the country. Everyone gain knowledge and experiences from discussing their theories and ideas on different topics in the classroom.

### **Implications for Future Research**

There are several research opportunities that were identified in this study that could lead to a better understanding of the international transfer advising process. This research would enable the advisors to be better prepared, more effective, and more efficient.

- Conduct additional qualitative studies that involve input from international transfer students.

- Conduct a quantitative study further exploring the themes and codes found in this study.
- Determine what portion of the advisors' time is spent in advising international transfer students.
- Perform a quantitative study on matriculation of international transfer students from universities versus community colleges.
- Conduct a longitudinal study by country of origin to determine whether there should be a difference in advising procedures based on where a student comes from.
- Perform a study similar to the current one to validate the methods used.
- Applying the methods used in this study to look at advising for domestic students.
- Applying the methods used in this study to look at international transfer students at private universities.

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