

Master of Arts (Communication) Thesis

Cross-Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training in the
Communications Management and Recruitment and Retention of
International Students in Atlantic Canadian Universities

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Abstract

With the growing numbers of international students coming to study in Canada, cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training in Canadian universities is increasing in importance. Despite the range of research in cross-cultural training, there remains a gap in the research of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training in communications management for multinational institutions, namely universities, within Canada, and how this training—or lack thereof—could affect the recruitment and retention of international students in the Canadian post-secondary education system. Focusing on Atlantic Canada, this study explored what cross-cultural training is currently offered and what sort of training should be offered to communications, marketing and recruitment teams that work to recruit international students and to International Centre staff and International Advisors that support these students. Through electronic survey research, this study aimed to compare the services offered and to share the opinions of communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members; International Advisors and International Centre staff members; and international students at targeted universities on the services that Atlantic Canadian universities do and should offer. Overall, the participants of all three survey groups claimed that there is a need for cross-cultural training through continuing professional development for communications, marketing, and recruitment staff; International Advisors and International Centre staff; and also for staff from other departments across the universities as international students do interact with faculty and staff other than International Advisors and International Centre staff throughout their time studying in Atlantic Canada.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Tracy Moniz, for all of her guidance throughout this mission that was the development of my master's thesis. Her encouragement and support kept me focused and determined to complete this project that often felt like a never-ending, uphill battle. I also extend my thanks to the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Alla Kushniryk and Paula Barry for the expertise and advice they brought to our team. I would like to thank my "thesis buddy" Stephanie Reid for all of her moral support and friendship. Our "Thesis Progress Plan" nights actually made this project fun and enjoyable! I offer thanks to my friend Lindsay Cross for being my cheerleader and helping to keep me motivated to finish this journey. I would also like to acknowledge my partner, John Roy, who helped to keep me grounded and determined to finish this degree once and for all! Finally, I would like to acknowledge my parents who taught me the importance of higher education, inspired me to work towards my goals, and ensured that I never let a project go unfinished.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Overview: International Student Growth in Canada

For more than a decade, the number of international students seeking opportunities to study in Canada has increased substantially. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), in 2003, there were 159,426 international students studying in Canada. In 2013, international student enrolment grew to over 290,000, with more than half of these students studying at universities (CBIE, 2014). The remainder study at trade schools, other post-secondary institutions and secondary schools (CBIE, 2014). The CBIE states: “It is estimated that in 2014 the number of internationally mobile students worldwide surpassed the 5 million mark” (2015). In 2014, the number of international students studying in Canada grew to 336,497 (CBIE, 2015). From January to September 2014, Canada issued 103,999 study permits, an 11 per cent increase from the same period in 2013 (93,717 permits) and a 26 per cent increase for the same period in 2012 (84, 207 permits) (*More international students*, 2014). In the 2012/2013 academic year, international students made up about 11 per cent of the post-secondary student population in Canada (CBIE – *A World of Learning*, 2015). According to the 2015 CBIE report, “A World of Learning,” students from China make up one-third (33 per cent) of Canada’s international student population, followed by students from India (12 per cent), South Korea (5.8 per cent), France (5.7 per cent), and Saudi Arabia (4 per cent). Even though the number of Chinese students pursuing education in Canada continues to increase, growing by 16 per cent over the previous year, there has been a noticeable shift in the numbers of students coming to study in Canada from other nations, including Nigeria (displaying an increase of 25 per cent),

Vietnam (with an increase of 16 per cent), Brazil (increase of 15 per cent) and France showed aggressive growth over the previous year, increasing by 15 per cent. By contrast, the number of students moving to Atlantic Canada from the top 15 countries currently sending students to Canada has declined. Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Iran declined by 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively (*CBIE – A World of Learning*, 2015).

International students decide to study in Canada for various reasons, including gaining international experience to increase cross-cultural awareness, improving language skills, learning about international economics, and improving adaptation skills. Additionally, many international students choose to study in Canada to escape the economic and/or political instabilities in their home countries and/or the lack of opportunities to pursue high quality education in their home countries (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008). In September 2013, the CBIE surveyed over 1,500 international students from 29 universities, colleges and polytechnic schools across Canada. The survey results showed four main reasons why international students choose to study in Canada: “Canada’s academic reputation, Canada’s reputation as a safe country, the affordability of education in Canada, [and] opportunities to work after graduation and/or become a permanent resident” (*More International Students*, 2014). No matter the reason for studying abroad, gaining international educational experiences positively affects students’ cross-cultural communication abilities and future employability.

International student enrolment has steadily increased for Atlantic Canadian universities. According to reported findings by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, the number of international students attending universities in the Maritimes has more than doubled over the past decade. The number of full-time visa students has increased by 12 per cent to almost 11,000 last year in Atlantic Canada (*Immigration and Universities*, 2013). Research

commissioned by the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) shows that international students are willing to remain in Canada after graduation to help fill the region's skills gap. The following are a few highlights of the survey:

- 33 per cent of respondents ranked a desire to live in Canada after graduation as the single most important reason for their decision to attend a Canadian university
- 76 per cent of respondents were interested in applying for permanent residency through the federal government's Canadian Experience Class (CEC) immigration stream
- Academic factors were (in aggregate) the primary reasons international students cited for choosing to study at a Canadian university, with 49 per cent referencing the quality of teaching (*Immigration and Universities*, 2013)

International students, in turn, enrich Canadian society and university campuses with their diverse cultures, language and customs as well as enable economic growth. In addition, the growing demand for skill sets from other nations, which reflect diversity in culture, experiences, language and work ethic, is gaining interest from universities in the developed world. In addition, every year, international students contribute more than \$8 billion to the Canadian economy (*Canada Welcomes*, 2013) from expenditures such as tuition and living costs (*CBIE*, 2014). The universities that accept and register international students reap substantial financial benefits: "In most disciplines, international students studying in Canada are charged twice as much the domestic rates, thus providing additional revenues to the institutions" (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008, p. 191). In Atlantic Canada alone, the economic impact contributed by international students is approximately \$565 million annually (*Association of Atlantic*

Universities, 2015). Broadly, these factors have facilitated greater competition between universities and countries, particularly in English-speaking nations, namely Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, to attract international students to study at their institutions (Madgett & Bélanger, 2008).

The Internationalization of Education

Globalization fuels the internationalization of higher education in Canada. Globalization fosters “the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets” (Globalization, 2013). Internationalization represents the positive exchange of ideas and people and recognizes and respects differences between cultures (Guo & Chase, 2011). Many universities across Canada strive to internationalize their campuses by providing such support services as International Centres, International Advisors, and Buddy Programs such as the one offered by Mount Saint Vincent University (Buddy Program, 2013). There are also some existing professional development programs such as the Professional Development Program for International Teaching Assistants (PDITA) offered by the University of British Columbia (Guo & Chase, 2011) and academic programs such as Dalhousie University’s Intercultural Communication Certificate, which recognizes “academic learning, volunteer and work experience, and language skills specifically related to the effective use of communication in diverse cultural contexts” (Intercultural Communication Certificate, 2014). Marketing materials targeted at international students are often written in basic, easy-to-understand English and designed to be more visually appealing by highlighting Canadian scenery and images of the respective campus.

With the growing numbers of international students coming to study in Canada, cross-cultural awareness training in Canadian universities is increasing in importance. Cross-cultural training prepares communications professionals to recruit and retain international students. Different positions within a university environment work together in the grand communications scope to recruit and retain these students—from the brochures and presentations and the way collateral materials created by communications and marketing professionals deliver the ‘voice’ of the university, to the ways the recruitment officers present these brochures and deliver these presentations to prospective international students, to the support offered to international students once they arrive at their respective Atlantic Canadian universities. It is important for these different roles within the university environment to work together to ensure they effectively market and communicate with prospective international students in their recruitment practices and provide the necessary support and resources for them upon arrival.

The Research Gaps

Previous research has discussed cross-cultural training in international marketing and business, particularly for expatriate employees, arguing that those employees who receive cross-cultural training before they embark on international travel are better prepared to interact and conduct successful business transactions in other cultures. Scholarship also identifies the need for greater cross-cultural and diversity education in secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. Despite the range of research in cross-cultural training, there remains a gap in cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training in communications management for multinational institutions, namely universities, within Canada, and how this training—or lack thereof—could affect the recruitment and retention of international students in the Canadian education system.

In response to this research gap and with a focus on Atlantic Canada, the study that informs this thesis aims to explore what cross-cultural training is currently offered and what sort of training should be offered to communications, marketing and recruitment teams that work to recruit international students and to International Centre staff and International Advisors that support these students. It also aims to compare the services offered and to share the opinions of communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members; International Advisors and International Centre staff members; and international students at targeted universities on the services that Atlantic Canadian universities do and should offer.

The Researcher

My former professional and personal experiences inspired this study and prepared me to lead and conduct it. I am experienced in international travel and teaching the English language. I taught English in Japan for two years. I also worked as an Assistant Registrar and Marketing Assistant for five years at the International Language Institute in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and for one year as the International Affairs Coordinator at the International Centre at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick. These positions required that I work with international students from different countries with varying levels of English abilities and of different cultural backgrounds. As Chapter Three explains, this study involved survey research, and my professional experience helped me structure the survey questions so that they could be understood by participants who do not speak English as their first language as well as to interact appropriately with participants from various cultural backgrounds. I presently work in a communications position at a university; therefore, my professional communication skills proved appropriate as I contacted managers, recruiters and communications professionals at various universities to request that they complete the survey. My educational background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English Literature and a minor in French language as well as a Bachelor of Journalism degree. I understand how to ask questions and how to think critically and analytically. I received a certificate of completion for the Government of Canada's Course on Research Ethics: the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethic (TCPS 2 Tutorial) (see Appendix A).

My previous personal and professional experiences have allowed me the opportunity to live as an international person trying to navigate a new culture and as an employee at educational

institutions where I worked to welcome and support international students to Atlantic Canada. As someone with cross-cultural experience, I have an empathetic perspective of the types of support international students desire and the patience and assistance they expect from staff at universities. I realize that not all employees who work for universities in Canada have appropriate international experience or appropriate training to communicate with these students. As the number of international students arriving in Canada continues to rise, I have realized that universities need more staff members that are cross-culturally trained in order to decrease disagreements, misunderstandings, and frustrations among international students and university staff, and that university staff need the ability to communicate appropriately with and support international students.

The Research Questions

This research builds on past studies that suggest adding cross-cultural training to undergraduate public relations curriculum and improving cross-cultural training for communications and recruitment staff who engage in international student travel. This research also investigates what training and resources are provided (or should be provided) to the university employees who support international students after their arrival in Canada, how this training can affect intercultural relations within a university community, and what effect these relations have on the international student retention rates in Canadian universities.

Based on these past studies and on my prior experience working with international students, I have designed my study to ask the following research questions:

- RQ1: What cross-cultural and sensitivity training is currently offered and what sort of training should be offered to communications and recruitment teams that work to recruit international students to study in Canada?
- RQ2: What cross-cultural training is currently provided to International Centre staff and International Advisors at Canadian universities?
- RQ3: What types of support do these staff groups offer to international students?

To explore these questions, I analyzed data from electronic surveys conducted with the participation of individuals from three sample groups at four Atlantic Canadian universities: communications, marketing and recruitment staff; International Advisors and International Centre staff; and international students.

The Thesis Outline

This first chapter has introduced why this study is important and why I decided to conduct this research. Chapter Two provides a review of the relevant literature that explores the importance of cross-cultural training for multinational organizations and expatriate employees, the need for cross-cultural training in communications and marketing, and the value of providing cross-cultural training in educational institutions. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical framework and methodology used to structure this research study and gather the data. Chapter Four provides the research results. Chapter Five offers a discussion of the results based on a series of themes identified throughout the research study. Chapter Six synthesizes the main conclusions arrived through the research and in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Cross-cultural training in multinational corporations and on expatriate employees

As global marketing and communications become increasingly prevalent and accessible as a result of new media technology and social networking functions, organizations would be wise to improve their knowledge of differences in language use, appropriateness of behavior, and common business interactions with representatives of international organizations and of different cultural backgrounds. Expatriate employees and members of organizations who interact internationally must be aware of cultural differences in business and management transactions, and should also understand the importance of cultural awareness—an important factor to consider in international communications, marketing, and other interactions. Mazlaveckiene (2014) describes cultural awareness as “the foundation of communication” that “involves the ability of standing back from ourselves and becoming aware of our cultural values, beliefs and perceptions: Why do we do things in that way? How do we see the world? Why do we react in that particular way?” (p. 239).

There are limited studies on cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training in public relations and communications management. Gower (2006) looked at the crossroads that public relations research has arrived at. Gower’s (2006) review of “public relations literature suggested that, although the dominant theoretical paradigm of two-way symmetrical communication¹ remains strong, its underlying assumptions are under criticism from a variety of perspectives,

¹ Two-way symmetrical communication is one of the four theoretical approaches of public relations as identified by J.E. Grunig. The values implied by the two-way symmetrical model are collaboration, negotiation, and compromise (Gower, 2006, p. 178).

such as postmodernism, critical/cultural, and international” (p. 186). Gower suggested that scholars view these crossroads as opportunities for choices on how to approach new ideas, methodologies and theories in public relations research (Gower, 2006). These opportunities to approach new ideas and methodologies in public relations research, as noted by Gower (2006) could allow for further opportunities to improve methods of cross-cultural training in public relations. This training could be viewed as an important methodology that should be adopted by organizations and educators in public relations, recruitment, marketing and management.

Previous research on cross-cultural training in multinational corporations and on expatriate employees highlights the importance of this training for successful business interactions. Blodgett, Lu, Rose and Vitell (2001) studied the effect of ethical sensitivity towards stakeholders and found that ethical sensitivity to stakeholder interests is dependent on the stakeholder affected. For example, stakeholders in some cultures—in their study, Taiwan—are more sensitive to the interests of their company and a competitor, but less sensitive to the interests of a colleague. Littrell and Salas (2005) researched best practices of cross-cultural training in organizations and found that, in the preceding 25 years, researchers did an excellent job presenting the features of cross-cultural training, such as the various delivery mechanisms, and suggesting theoretical frameworks around how these types of training work. However, they found that the research had not been synthesized, leaving practitioners working in multinational corporations without clear recommendations on how to implement cross-cultural training in their organizations. Littrell and Salas’s (2005) review of prior research revealed that cross-cultural training research should focus on three areas: multicultural team training, adaptability, and culture and personality. These studies are valuable as they may offer insight to international

business consultants to be aware of cultural differences, to avoid embarrassment or insult, and to increase successful business transactions.

Zhang (2012) defined *expatriate* as “someone sent by organizations to manage or cooperate with others on international assignment for at least six months, including wide professional coverage of multinational corporations, transnational corporations, multinational organizations, and smaller companies involving different industry sectors” (p. 179). Zhang (2012) analyzed prior studies of cross-cultural training of expatriates of multinational organizations and the effectiveness of these types of training in developing globally competent employees. He noted the importance of the human factor when it comes to international business relations because these expatriates—the actual ‘people’ who represent the organizations—must be willing and able to function well across both national and cultural boundaries for organizations to succeed (Zhang, 2012). Zhang identified the “major cultural challenges facing the global workforce that create certain behavioral dilemmas for (a) individual paradoxes, (b) professionals in overseas work assignments, (c) domestic culturally diverse workgroups, (d) multinational workgroups, (e) leaders’ cross-border careers, and (f) senior expatriate leadership” (Zhang, 2012, p. 178-179). These challenges include: (a) sending business people overseas who are unprepared to deal with a new culture because of their engrained behaviors on how to react when confronted with other cultures or ethnic groups; (b) expatriate representatives returning early from their international assignments, often leading to major financial and business transaction losses and damage to international relationships, and (c) the fact that some individuals adjust more quickly and easily in cross-cultural settings than others (Zhang, 2012). Zhang (2012) claimed that, to be more cross-culturally aware, expatriate employees need to spend an appropriate amount of time in a host culture to identify inappropriate behavior and to

learn from host cultures. Here, Zhang refers to the need for *acculturation*, a term “generally used in reference to the process of change that occurs as a consequence of continuous, first-hand contact between two or more cultural groups” (Zhang, 2012, p. 181, citing Berry, 1999; Ward, 1996).

Okpara and Kabongo (2011) investigated the effect of different types of cross-cultural training on the four facets of adjustment for expatriates in non-Western countries. These four facets are: 1) cross-cultural adjustment, 2) cross-cultural training and cross-cultural adjustment, 3) psychological adjustment, and 4) prior international experience. The study found that cross-cultural training could help to predict expatriates’ adjustment levels in non-western countries. According to the authors, “general conventional cross-cultural training was found to have a significant positive effect on expatriate managers’ adjustment” (Okpara & Kabongo, 2011, p. 28). However, of these four facets, psychological adjustment had the least influence on cross-cultural training (Okpara & Kabongo, 2011). Experimental training focused on the host-country’s culture “is more likely to be effective because it will focus on different aspects of the host-country’s cultural dimensions” (Okpara & Kabongo, 2011, p. 28).

Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley and Riedel (2006) studied cross-cultural training research for expatriates in international business. They looked at different methods of cross-cultural training delivery such as attribution training, cultural awareness training, interaction training, language training, didactic training, and experiential training (Littrell et al., 2006). Providing training to business people who travel overseas or who work with international representatives can greatly improve the likelihood of successful business interactions and transactions, and can increase trust among multinational organizations. Research by Littrell et al. (2006) on the effectiveness of cross-cultural training provides “support for the belief that cross-cultural training improves

expatriate performance on foreign assignment” and that “general cross-cultural adjustment influences the success of the global assignment” (p. 372).

Littrell et al. (2006) analyzed research on cross-cultural training methods over the preceding 25 years. In relation to Okpara and Kabongo’s (2011) study, they found that researchers have traditionally classified delivery of cross-cultural training into two different approaches: didactic (information giving) and experiential activities (e.g.: Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley & Riedel, 2006, citing Kealey & Protheroe, 1996). However, more recent research has identified several approaches to cross-cultural training: attribution, culture awareness, interaction, language, didactic, and experiential² (Littrell et al., 2006, citing Befus, 1988; Bennett, 1986). Littrell et al. (2006) also concluded that cross-cultural training improves by delivering the training during time periods that most appropriately align with specific training activities. For example, in pre-departure training, didactic training should be conducted to teach the individual as much as possible about the foreign culture. Next, on arrival in the host country, the training program should include experiential training such as role-playing and the on-the-job training with host nationals. During repatriation training, didactic training should be offered “to inform the individual of organizational, economic, and political changes that occurred while on foreign assignment and experiential activities would provide the expatriate with the opportunity to relearn and practice the behaviors that are appropriate to the home country” (Littrell et al., 2006, p. 382).

² Attribution refers to enabling the expatriate to explain host national behavior from the host culture point of view. Culture awareness implies understanding one’s own culture to appreciate cultural differences. Interaction includes on-the-job training. Language training involves facilitating intercultural adjustment. Didactic training provides the expatriate with factual information (i.e. briefings, formal training activities). Experiential training allows the expatriate to learn how to learn through exercises such as role plays, simulations, and intercultural workshops (Littrell et al., 2006, p. 369-370).

Prior to their involvement in the (2006) Littrell et al. study, Littrell and Salas (2005) reviewed best practices, guidelines, and research needs of cross-cultural training (CCT). This 2005 study offered seven guidelines for improving the design of cross-cultural training programs:

Guideline 1: CCT should be customized to match the expatriate's needs. Guideline 2: CCT should not stand alone. Guideline 3: Training rigor should be tailored to the cultural toughness of the destination country. Guideline 4: Multinational corporations (MNCs) should develop a global mindset. Guideline 5: Organizations must use a skill-based approach when designing CCT. Guideline 6: MNCs should apply and use strategies based on the science of training in designing CCT programs. Guideline 7: Scenario-based training should be implemented. (Littrell & Salas, 2005, pp. 318 – 321)

Lenartowicz, Johnson and Konopaske (2014) researched the importance of acknowledging the difference between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is factual or declarative knowledge that is “codifiable and easily articulated” (p. 1698). This type of knowledge transfer or basic information is delivered through methods including lectures, written materials, environmental briefings, books, videos, computer training programs, self-assignments and case studies (Lenartowicz et al., 2014). This type of training has limited effectiveness in transferring cultural knowledge because it does not focus on the transfer of tacit knowledge (Lenartowicz et al., 2014).

Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, is not clearly articulated or defined. It is based on “actions, ideals, values and emotions, and it is rooted in a person's experience; it can be informal, personal and context-specific, so that an individual must engage in the process of using

tacit knowledge in order to understand what it is” (Lenartowicz et al., 2014, p.1698).

Lenartowicz et al. (2014) nominated experiential learning as the best medium for transfer of tacit knowledge. This method of cross-cultural training includes role-plays, simulations, interactive language training, and field trips, and it engages participants in learning activities and integration of other cultures (Lenartowicz et al., 2014). Other methods of tacit learning include classroom language training conducted with a native speaker (where students can note the instructor’s intonation, gestures, body language, etc.), watching films about another culture where the narrator is actually native to that language and culture, and allowing returning expatriates to integrate their acquired cross-culture knowledge through overseas experience into the organization (Lenartowicz et al., 2014).

The value of providing cross-cultural training to educators and in educational institutions

To successfully integrate cross-cultural awareness into professions, cross-cultural training should ideally be part of secondary and post-secondary education and curricula. Further to experiential training, Kambutu and Nganga (2008) explored “the effectiveness of planned international experiences in promoting cultural awareness, understanding and appreciation among American educators” (p. 939). Participants of this study were immersed in foreign cultures for two to three weeks. Results demonstrated the value of this experience, with participants gaining necessary cultural competencies to function in unfamiliar cultural practices: “When people are immersed, they experience cultural dissonance, an essential step in the process of building cultural awareness. Immersing people in foreign cultures, physically distant from familiar ones, denies them the luxury of going back to the familiar” (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008, p. 949). This study supports the value of educational institutions providing international cultural immersion opportunities to educators “because these experiences are capable of transforming

participants into culturally responsive agents of social change” (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008, p. 949).

Mazlaveckiene’s (2014) research focused on the development of cultural awareness in students studying foreign languages at five universities in Lithuania. To assess the students’ level of cultural awareness, the researcher administered a survey focused on the students’ knowledge and understanding of the forms of culture (defined as elite, ethnic, mass/popular, and subcultures),³ specific cultural characteristics of the native and target language, and the students’ involvement in cultural activities, along with their culture and linguistic literacy and experience. The survey revealed the participants’ knowledge of the different forms of culture to be mediocre. Only about one-fifth of these foreign language students demonstrated an understanding of the cultural forms by providing examples of cultural phenomena specific to countries whose languages they study. One-third of the participants provided examples related to these individual cultural forms, but could not relate them to the country-specific context (Mazlaveckiene, 2014). About half of the survey respondents attributed experiential learning activities, such as “travelling and meeting people of different cultures as the most decisive in developing their cultural experience and ability to cope with various (inter)cultural situations” (Mazlaveckiene, 2014, p. 246).

Bantyé and Inčiūrienė (2012) argue that even in such a globalized world (brought on by advances in telecommunications, mass transportation, technology and changes in global politics), cultural differences still exist. Despite the internationalization of educational institutions, cultural

³ Elite (high) culture often refers to aristocracy or the upper social class. Ethnic (folk) culture embraces folklore, customs, myths, celebrations, behavioral conventions, patterns of interaction, and musical or visual history. Mass (popular) culture is based on stereotypes of mass consciousness. Subcultures involve independently functioning groups “which choose different stylistic forms to express their individuality and distinctness” (Mazlaveckiene, 2014, p. 240).

differences cannot be ignored and must be acknowledged (Bantyé & Inčiūrienė, 2012). The researchers refer to culture as “a distinctive human means of adapting to circumstances and conveying this skill and knowledge to subsequent generations” (Bantyé & Inčiūrienė, 2012, p. 180). They define such a means of understanding with ten categories: sense of self and space, communication and language, dress and appearance, food and feeding habits, time and time consciousness, relationships, values and norms, beliefs and attitudes, mental process and learning, and work habits and practices (Bantyé & Inčiūrienė, 2012).

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who starts talking to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the conditions and circumstances under which various messages are sent and interpreted. Actually, culture is the foundation of communication. In an intercultural context, communication does not necessarily mean successful understanding. Still, intercultural communication can be defined as the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control when people with different cultural backgrounds meet, communicate and participate in activities such as studying, working and researching. (Bantyé & Inčiūrienė, 2012, p. 179)

Bantyé and Inčiūrienė (2012) identified a fundamental problem between teachers and students of different cultural backgrounds—the lack of understanding when they study, work and communicate. This, in turn, leads to misunderstandings that result from insufficient awareness of the other’s different cultural backgrounds. The study focused on an international school in Lithuania. As a first step to increase a person’s cultural awareness, this international school introduced study programs that provide information about the country, culture and society and that welcomed lecturers to present on intercultural communication and introduce the concept of

culture. The latter “helps students gain new insights and learn ways of communicating with individuals from different cultures” (Banty  & In i rien , 2012, p. 182). The results of their study, which surveyed students at the international school, found that students studying internationally think that studying a country’s language is beneficial because, not only does it increase the ability to communicate, but it also contributes to learning about the new culture itself (Banty  & In i rien , 2012). The majority of participants consider real life experiences (i.e. communication with local people, cultural evenings, trying traditional meals, learning traditional songs and dances, and sightseeing) as more beneficial to learn about adapting to a new culture rather than learning about it through lectures on intercultural communication (Banty  & In i rien , 2012). Getting out and experiencing the local society is more beneficial than simply hearing about it in a presentation.

Teachers educated in international and cultural awareness will be better prepared to educate and influence their students’ cultural awareness. Taylor (2001) acknowledged the need to create a course dedicated to international public relations: “One of the best ways to ensure that future public relations practitioners are comfortable and competent in dealing with international publics is to incorporate the discussion of international public relations into undergraduate education” (Taylor, 2001, p. 86). This study offers advice to educators on how to lead these discussions with students: “The best advice for interested professors is this: be well-informed about current world events that influence international organizations. If you are enthusiastic about current events and world affairs, your students will be too” (Taylor, 2001, p. 84).

To better prepare these future university students to be more cross-culturally aware, the promotion of diversity and cultural awareness should begin at the primary and secondary school levels. For students to receive appropriate guidance in diversity, teachers should be prepared to

teach culturally diverse classes. Johnston, Carson, Richardson, Donald, Plews, and Kim (2009), as teacher educators at the University of Alberta, recognized the “changing face of Canada’s population” (p. 2). They noted that, although public schools in most of the country’s urban centres have experienced “demographic changes with increasing numbers of students who are recent immigrants, first- and second-generation Canadians, and students with Aboriginal ancestry, Canada’s teaching population was predominantly white, with a majority of teachers of European heritage” (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 2). Johnston et al. surveyed students in teacher education programs on track to be secondary school teachers. Many respondents reported “feeling unprepared to teach in classrooms with students from a wide range of ethnocultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds” (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 2). The recognition of this issue in teacher preparation led Johnston et al. to devise an action research project designed to address difference and identity issues with student teachers preparing to teach in culturally diverse secondary schools. This action research project “brought together university researchers, community and cultural institutions, professional associations, school boards, and government and civil organizations to design a *Diversity Institute* for integration into the teacher preparation program at the University of Alberta” (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 1). The objectives of this action research project aimed to help student teachers:

- understand the question of teaching for cultural difference within the wider framework of teacher identity formation;
- develop the institutional expertise of the University of Alberta’s Faculty of Education to create programs and institute policies promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding among student teachers; and

- develop sustainable, cooperative links between the university, schools, civil society organizations, and professional bodies able to respond to the changing needs of Canada's diverse school populations. (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 4)

After researching, planning, reflecting, and conducting a series of workshops, the researchers found that, although a few of the participants of this institute “were able to develop new understandings of themselves and others and to effect changes in their pedagogical practices, many remained at a shallow level of awareness about the complexities of diversity and difference” (Johnston et al., 2009, p. 1). Even though the results of this project did not fully meet its objectives, it would be unreasonable to expect a drastic change in student teachers’ preparedness and awareness about the complexities of diversity in the classroom and to alter their pedagogical practices. However, this action research project allowed for greater reflection on teacher education programs and on how diversity could form a greater part of the programs’ pedagogies, and this, in turn, may help student teachers engage more deeply with diversity and cultural awareness (Johnston et al., 2009). This research is important to the development of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training because it could motivate future managers and professionals to seek cross-cultural and international opportunities.

Cross-cultural awareness in marketing and communications

The literature presents cross-cultural awareness as an important factor in international business relations. Communications and marketing are an important component of international business; therefore, cross-cultural training in these fields should be implemented just as much as they are in business interactions. Guang and Trotter (2012) highlighted communication as “one of the most important functions to master in order for any business to be successful in today’s

increasingly competitive markets, particularly for firms doing business internationally” (p. 6456). Their paper identified key issues resulting from cultural differences between communicators: globalization versus localization, international free trade versus restrictions on this type of free trade (as a result of local culture), brand effectiveness for exported products, business relationships, international marketing, and consumer behavior (Guang & Trotter, 2012). Guang and Trotter (2012) noted that if “these issues were to be solved, then potentially large paybacks can be realized” (p. 6463).

As technology, communications, and travel continue to fuel globalization, cross-culturalization will continue to be a part of this process (Guang & Trotter, 2012). As gaps in distance close, people communicate with others around the world far easier than in past decades, making the world ‘smaller.’ Still, “the cultural differences between nations, regions and ethnic groups, far from extinguished, are becoming stronger” (Lillis & Tian, 2010, as cited in Guang & Trotter, 2012, p. 6457). Guang and Trotter (2012) added that international business communication requires managers to be aware of national, local, and ethnic cultural differences to succeed in global markets. International business communicators must understand that values, norms, and characteristics of cultures are often embedded in advertising messages and that different cultures value and recognize these to greater or lesser degrees. Business communicators should understand the cultural values in advertising to succeed internationally (Guang & Trotter, 2012).

Considering international marketing and advertising, Hansen, Singh, Weilbaker and Guesalaga (2011) sought to advance an understanding of effective cross-cultural selling. Their research focused on how salespersons could benefit by altering their behaviors based on the cultural background of the customer and how having a high cultural intelligence could benefit

them when functioning and managing in culturally diverse settings (Hansen, Singh, Weilbaker & Guesalaga, 2011, citing Earley, 2002, & Ang, 2003).

In marketing and advertising, it is important that staff understand the language and appropriate cultural values to avoid causing insult or injury to a cultural group. For example, Seastrom (1996) cites an example of how the misuse of vocabulary in an advertising campaign risked globally damaging the reputation of a resort in Mexico. An international pharmaceutical company's advertisement stated: "*Jeff brought a little something back from his trip to Mexico and the Caribbean. Hepatitis A.*" The resort staff took offense to this advertisement and felt that it left tourists with a negative stereotype of the health risks of travelling to Mexico. The pharmaceutical company responded to the resort's complaints with a letter of apology, pulled their previous campaign, and replaced it with an advertisement that made no mention of Mexico (Seastrom, 1996). This article has implications for cross-cultural awareness in marketing and communications in an educational setting. Members of a communications team looking to recruit and retain international students to Canada must also be careful to ensure that their marketing and recruitment materials do not contain language or images that may insult their international target audiences.

To fully appreciate the need to be cross-culturally aware before engaging in cross-cultural communications and marketing, it is important to first understand what *culture* actually is. Guang and Trotter (2012) considered this in a business context, stating: "The impact of culture on business is obvious. To study these impacts, we need to study culture itself first" (p. 6458). I agree. My research investigates the level of cross-cultural awareness among communications, marketing and recruitment staff at Atlantic Canadian universities and how this impacts their interactions with international students.

Taylor (2000) looked at the work of Geert Hofstede who created one of the most popular definitions of culture: “The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. Culture, in this sense, included systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture” (Taylor, 2000, citing Hofstede, 1984). Taylor (2000) commented on Hofstede’s four principle dimensions of culture: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and individualism-collectivism. He wrote: “Although all four dimensions offer insight into culture and public relations, the uncertainty avoidance and power distance dimensions are most applicable for studying public response to crisis” (Taylor, 2000, p. 280). Blodgett, Lu, Rose, and Vitell (2001) also commented on Hofstede’s cultural framework:

Culture is a comprehensive and implicit window through which we view the world.

Although several frameworks have been proposed for assessing the differences in cultural values, Hofstede’s (1984) cultural framework of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity has been widely embraced in marketing and the social sciences in general. (Blodgett et al., 2001, p. 192)

Communications staff often represent the *voice* of an institution, making appropriate training and awareness of cultural differences that they may experience with their related publics all the more important. Cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training should not only be made available to expatriate representatives of organizations involved with international affairs, but employees involved with the recruitment and retention of and communications with international students in Canada should also receive this type of training. The ways these professionals interact with international students, both before and after they officially become students at these institutions, could likely affect the success of the institutions’ international student recruitment

and retention rates. If students are not satisfied with the services and support offered to them by their universities, they may choose to study elsewhere, and the university could end up facing failures in maintaining student retention rates.

Black's (2010) research team conducted focus groups with thousands of students in Canada and the United States and found that these students had specific perceptions of institutional promises.

Some articulate these promises as expectations while others view them as guarantees.

Regardless of how they articulate the promise, students universally see themselves as educational consumers with certain rights and privileges. When promises are kept, student commitment and loyalty to an institution grows. Conversely, when perceived covenants are broken, student dissatisfaction, attrition, and negative word-of-mouth become natural consequences. (Black, 2010, p. 117)

Recruitment, communications and marketing teams should also be aware of cultural differences among prospective international students and the hardships, obstacles, conflicts, and barriers they may face after arriving in Canada. According to Steele (2010), the increase in international student recruitment has created social and financial benefits for Canada's education institutions; however, it has also "contributed to new strains on student support services, amplified faculty complaints about student academic preparedness, and perhaps set the stage for incidents of racial tension and conflict on campuses and in surrounding communities" (p. 29). Cross-cultural training should be encouraged and instilled throughout all departments of a university to work to avoid such incidents.

Arthur (1997) acknowledged the research of Thomas and Althen (1989) which notes that some international students are selected to study abroad based on their superior academic

qualifications; however, some international students travel abroad to study based on family influences, government sponsoring agencies, and local or political conditions in their home countries. Arthur's (1997) research stated:

Traditional notions about international students representing "the cream of the crop" in terms of academic abilities may hold true in some cases, whereas other students will be less motivated and unprepared for the rigors of studying in a foreign environment.

Unrealistic academic expectations combined with difficulties coping with academic loads and differences in instructional practices can be the basis of severe stressors for international students. (Arthur, 1997, p. 261)

An international student's relationship with a university begins with their first glance at its brochure, their first visit to its website, or their first discussion with a recruiter. The marketing towards and the recruitment of the student should not stop there. Once a university accepts the student and once the student registers at the university, the university staff must continue to support the student and make the student feel welcome if the university hopes to retain them. International students especially need to know that they are appreciated and welcome at the university. In many cases, they pay higher tuition as international students than they would in their home countries. As Altbach and Knight (2007) noted that most of the world's more than two million international students are self-funded: "They and their families pay for their own academic work. Students are therefore the largest source of funds for international education – not governments, academic institutions, or philanthropies" (p. 294). Additionally, international students have traveled from their home countries to a country that is likely new to them and English may not be their first language, so this could make their academic as well as their social experiences as an international student all the more challenging. University staff should

acknowledge this, and their professional development offerings and support services should address this.

Companies that provide cross-cultural training to their employees that are preparing to work in another country typically prepare them for cross-cultural awareness in that particular country; however, university staff must be prepared to work with students from 50 to 100 countries. It is important for university staff that work with international students to focus on cultural self-awareness and true appreciation of culture. Hammer's Intercultural Development Inventory is a tool often used to develop this awareness. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a 50-item questionnaire that is used by individuals and organizations across academic disciplines as well as a wide range of organizations and industries (Hammer, 2012). This questionnaire can be used to assess an individual's level of intercultural competence. After completing the questionnaire, an IDI Individual Profile Report is prepared for that individual, who, for example, could be a student participating in a study abroad experience, a faculty member, an international recruiter, or an International Advisor, providing them with awareness of their own levels of intercultural competence (Hammer, 2012).

The IDI questionnaire includes contexting questions that allow respondents to describe their intercultural experiences in terms of (a) their cross-cultural goals, (b) the challenges they face navigating cultural differences, (c) critical (intercultural) incidents they encounter around cultural differences during their study abroad sojourn, and (d) ways they navigate those cultural differences. Responses to these questions provide a cultural grounding for relating IDI profile scores to the actual experiences of the individual. (Hammer, 2012, p. 117)

In addition to the Individual Profile Report, the IDI results also prepare an Intercultural Development Plan customized to each individual which provides detailed guidance for the individual for further development for his or her intercultural competence. This system can also help organizations and groups identify their intercultural competence as a whole, and recognize the ways they deal with cross-cultural differences and commonalities (Hammer, 2012). If used widely, the IDI could be a key tool for organizations and institutions in recognizing their cross-cultural awareness levels and identifying the need for cross-cultural training and resources.

The next chapter outlines the data collection strategies used to investigate the research questions informing this study: What cross-cultural and sensitivity training is currently offered and what training should be offered to communications and recruitment teams that work to recruit international students to study in Canada? What cross-cultural training is currently provided to International Centre staff and International Advisors at Canadian universities and what types of support do these staff offer to international students?

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Theoretical Lens

To address my research questions, I have drawn on Creswell's (2013) definition of critical theory as a theoretical lens, which states: "Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (p. 65, citing Fay, 1987). This theory is relevant to my research. In cross-cultural communications, providing individuals who work with people from different cultures with the training and appropriate resources for improved cross-cultural awareness may empower them with the ability to establish greater relationships and trust. My research study explored what training is offered and what training should be offered to international student support staff and communicators at Canadian universities and what support is available for international students. My research further explored the impact that this sort of training has on the recruitment and retention of international students and how these university staff can use cross-cultural training to their benefit to establish greater relationships and trust with students. In the end, critical theory perspectives unfolded in my research as I collected opinions from individuals of various classes and cultural backgrounds, who come from varying economic structures.

Methodology

I collected data during the fall 2015 academic term, after receiving ethics approval from Mount Saint Vincent University's Research Ethics Board (file # 2015-002). I used survey research as the methodology to gather participants' responses. My research aimed to compare the services offered and share the opinions of staff and students at the targeted universities. I used mixed methods research in designing my data collection process. Creswell (2013) describes the mixed methods research design as one which "involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study. Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses, while quantitative data typically includes closed-ended responses such as found on questionnaires or psychological instruments" (p. 14). The surveys that I designed to collect data from survey participants included open-ended questions (qualitative) as well as multiple-choice and Likert-type scale questions (quantitative). Appendices H, I, and J contain the three surveys developed and distributed, each to a different target group of participants.

More specifically, I used a type of mixed method design known as Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design where "a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, analyses them separately, and then compares the results to see if the findings confirm or disconfirm each other" (Creswell, 2013, p. 219). This comparison appears in Chapter Four: Results.

Research Design

Sampling

To build the sample of participants, I used a clustering procedure where “the researcher first identifies clusters (groups or organizations), obtains names of individuals within those clusters, and then samples within them” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). I compiled a list of names and email addresses for relevant staff members at ten universities across Canada. The sample population comprised three groups: 1) communications, marketing and recruitment staff at Canadian universities; 2) International Advisors and International Centre staff at Canadian universities; and 3) international students studying at Canadian universities. Originally, I planned to include one university from each of the ten provinces (excluding the territories). I chose to exclude the territories because less than one per cent of the international student population in Canada resides there, with only two international students identified as studying in the Yukon, six international students in the Northwest Territories, and only one in Nunavut (CBIE, 2014). I selected the universities that appeared on the *Times Higher Education’s* list of *The 100 most international universities in the world 2015*. Canadian universities on this list include: University of British Columbia, McGill University (Quebec), University of Alberta, Dalhousie University (Nova Scotia) and University of Toronto (Ontario). I then sampled one university from each of the remaining provinces: Mount Allison University (New Brunswick), University of Prince Edward Island, Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of Saskatchewan, and University of Winnipeg. I chose the University of Prince Edward Island and Memorial University of Newfoundland as they are the only universities found in those provinces (and they are located in the capital cities of those provinces). I chose the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Winnipeg because they are located in the capital cities of each of their provinces. I chose Mount

Allison University because of my experience working in their International Centre and my resulting awareness of the many international programs and services offered to their students.

Data Collection

I distributed three individual surveys electronically—one to each sample group, as defined above. In the body of each email, I introduced myself, explained the purpose and context of the research study, and provided a link to the Letter of Informed Consent which, once accepted, directed participants directly to the survey (see Appendices B, C, D, E, F and G for introductory email messages and letters of informed consent). I emailed one survey to communications (including marketing) and recruitment staff at my target universities (see Appendix H) seeking information about international student recruitment practices, support services offered to international students, and cross-cultural training provided to university staff. I emailed the second and third surveys to International Centres (where available) and International Advisors at each of my targeted universities (see Appendices I and J). One survey targeted support staff at International Centres and/or International Advisors for information on what training the advisors and staffs receive and what avenues of support and services exist for international students. The third survey went to this group, with a request that they in turn forward the appropriate survey to the appropriate international student email lists (where available). The questions targeted to the international students sought opinions on the services provided by their universities, the services they would like to see provided, their experiences at these Canadian universities and whether these experiences have lived up to their expectations. I aimed to obtain responses from between 20 and 30 university staff members and at least 40 international university students.

I administered the survey online using LimeSurvey, a software approved by Mount Saint Vincent University. This software calculates survey responses electronically and displays the responses in graphs and tables (which I have used to display data in this paper). Participants had the option to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. This information appeared in the respective letters of informed consent (see Appendices C, E and G).

To maximize response rates, I sent surveys to my sample groups across Canada three times over the fall 2015 term. I also emailed reminders to respond. At the end of each survey, I offered respondents the option to enter their name into a draw to win a \$50 Indigo/Chapters gift card prize (there were three gift cards to be won; one gift card per survey group). The participants were guaranteed that their survey responses would still remain anonymous in the thesis even if they provided their contact details to enter the draw.

After completing the data collection, I found that participant response rates from university staff and students from universities outside of the Atlantic provinces were extremely low and, in some cases, nil. Some university staff members who I contacted did not reply to my follow-up emails requesting their participation in completing and administering the survey. Some staff members replied, but declined my request to complete and forward the surveys to other staff or students at their respective institutions. This precluded me from offering a cross-Canadian perspective on my research questions and, as such, I limited my sample population and focused on universities in Atlantic Canada only: Dalhousie University (Nova Scotia), Mount Allison University (New Brunswick), Memorial University of Newfoundland, and University of Prince Edward Island.

Responses

In total, ten individuals responded to the survey targeting communications, marketing and recruitment staff: four from Dalhousie University (representing an institutional response rate of 28 per cent) and two from each of Mount Allison University (25 per cent response rate), the University of Prince Edward Island (22 per cent response rate), and Memorial University of Newfoundland (15 per cent response rate). Seven individuals responded to the survey targeting International Advisors and International Centre staff: two individuals from each of Dalhousie University (40 per cent response rate), Mount Allison University (67 per cent response rate), and the University of Prince Edward Island (40 per cent response rate) and one individual from Memorial University of Newfoundland (25 per cent response rate). Of the survey sent to international students, 128 responded: 67 students from the University of Prince Edward Island (nine per cent institutional response rate and 52 per cent of survey respondents), 27 students from Memorial University of Newfoundland (one per cent institutional response rate and 21 per cent of survey respondents), 20 students from Dalhousie University (one per cent institutional response rate and 16 per cent survey respondents) and 14 students from Mount Allison University (six per cent institutional response rate and 11 per cent of survey respondents). Complete details on sample size and number of respondents can be found in Appendix K.

All respondents remained anonymous, and the survey participation posed minimal risk, as defined by the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics: "...research in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research."

The next chapter presents the results of the survey responses received from the three participant groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

I collected data through three surveys, each targeting one of three groups at four universities in Atlantic Canada (Dalhousie University, Memorial University of Newfoundland, University of Prince Edward Island and Mount Allison University). These target groups were: communications, marketing, and recruitment staff (10 individuals responded to this survey; N=10); International Advisors and International Centre staff (N=7); and international students (N=128). For each survey, not all participants responded to every question. The questions in these surveys asked participants about their knowledge of available cross-cultural training and resources at their respective universities; about the training and resources they would like to see offered, and about the strengths and weaknesses of cross-cultural awareness at their universities.

A Survey of Communications, Marketing, and Recruitment professionals at Atlantic Canadian Universities

Of the 10 participants who responded to the survey for communications, marketing, and recruitment professionals at Atlantic Canadian universities, the title roles identified were: two communication managers, one recruitment officer, one Director of Recruitment, one marketing officer, two Directors of Marketing, and three participants responded with “other” and noted their titles as Academic Advisor, International Student Recruitment Officer, and Senior Marketing Advisor. Seven of the participants identified as female and three identified as male. Their responses to the question “how long have you been employed by this university” ranged from less than one year to more than five years, but less than 10 years.

The following data displays the participants' survey responses, including their opinions and details on the support and services offered by their respective universities (that they are aware of). Please note that some participants' responses to open-ended questions have been edited for grammar, syntax, and clarity.

Knowledge of available training and resources

Statement: My university provides cross-cultural and sensitivity training to communications, marketing, or recruitment staff through...

Respondents of this question (N=10) were asked to check all options that apply. Four of the respondents indicated that their university does not offer this training. Two of the remaining respondents indicated that their universities provide this type of training through interactive training (ie: role plays, simulations, etc.) and one respondent indicated their university provides experiential training (ie: integration of cultures, second language use, travel, etc.). The remaining two respondents of this question offered comments stating: "I am sure they provide it university wide, but I have not been offered this in my business unit" and "Not to [the] marketing department but I know the recruitment/Student Affairs folks are aware of the differences...For example, our Director of Student Affairs is very knowledgeable about the international projects and in fact, oversees the International Centre as well."

Question: Have you, as a Canadian university staff member, ever experienced misunderstandings with a student from another country or cultural background? Please explain.

Eight of the 10 respondents to this question answered yes. Examples of misunderstandings include: language barriers, communication breakdown errors,

misunderstandings through phone calls and emails, and around admissions.

Statement: My university offers the following services to international students (please check all that apply or that you are aware of).

Results provided by respondents of this question (N=10) reveal that international advising, English language training/support, integration into university/campus/local communities and academic support were the most common services available across the universities, with each of those options being selected by six of the 10 participants. See Figure 1 in Appendix L for all responses provided for this question.

Question: How would you rate the cross-cultural awareness of the communications and international recruitment staff at your university? Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very aware) to 5 (very aware).

Of the seven respondents to this question, three rated the cross-cultural awareness of the communications, marketing and international recruitment staff at their universities at a three, implying a mediocre level of cross-cultural awareness within those departments. This represents 43 per cent of respondents and the most common response to this question. At the opposite end of the scale, two respondents rated cross-cultural awareness in these departments at a five, implying high cross-cultural awareness. Of the remaining respondents, one provided a rating of two and the other rated cross-cultural awareness at a four. I found these responses interesting as nearly half of the respondents to this survey indicated that their universities do not offer them cross-cultural training; yet they consider themselves to be moderately cross-culturally aware.

Question: What resources has your university put in place for staff to internationalize your campus community? Please select all that apply.

Results revealed that most universities surveyed have International Centres as a resource to internationalize the campus community, with seven of the 10 respondents indicating so. See Figure 2 in Appendix L for all responses provided for this question.

Statement: My university offers literature and materials for communications, marketing and recruitment staff to inform them of cultural differences, customs and language needs of students from other countries.

Respondents of this question had the option of selecting “Yes,” “No,” or “I don’t know.” Five of the respondents (N=10) of this question indicated that their universities do not offer literature and materials for communications, marketing and recruitment staff to inform them of the cultural differences, customs, and language needs of international students. Two participants responded with “I don’t know.” The remaining three respondents provided the following contextualizing comments: (1) “Nothing official is produced by the university and provided to employees. Some resources have been shared internally, but not through a formal training mechanism or program,” (2) “If so, I have not seen it,” and (3) “No, however that doesn’t mean that the International Office doesn’t offer this and I am just not aware of that.” The remaining two respondents selected “I don’t know” in response to this statement. Half of the respondents indicated that their universities do not provide these materials, and the other half indicated that they aren’t aware of, or haven’t seen any existing materials. This implies that communications, marketing and recruitment staff have not been actively seeking out resources and literature to

inform them of cultural differences, customs, and language needs of students from other countries.

Statement: My university offers curriculum on cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural development or sensitivity training to all undergraduate and graduate students.

Respondents to this statement had the option of selecting “Yes,” or “No” and could also provide additional comments. Of the 10 respondents to this statement, three indicated that their universities do offer cross-cultural awareness/development or sensitivity training to their students, and three respondents indicated that their universities do not offer this training. The remaining four participants provided comments, responding that they did not know if their university offered these sorts of curricula. A follow-up question asked participants what cross-cultural training or curriculum they would like to see added to their university’s offerings. Responses included: “Training in the form of experiential workshop” and “Focus on both international students from a variety of countries and backgrounds, but also a focus on Indigenous students. Both Internationalization and Indigenization have been highlighted as cross-cutting themes for all of campus in the recent University Strategic Planning Process. Now we need to see actual training programs that will support this notion.”

Desired training and resources

Question: As a communications, marketing, or recruitment professional, what courses in international or cross-cultural awareness training would you like to have received when you were a university or college student?

Three of the 10 participants responded with the following:

- “Having more forums that bring Canadian and International students together in conversation. More bridging of general orientation events and international student orientation events would have been great to start these conversations and opportunities to develop student to student relationships very early into the university experience.”
- “Ways to offer support. An understanding of what international students would like to learn about from us.”
- “Not sure – I didn’t take anything in this vein. Presently, I’m in a Master’s program and my upcoming course has a cross-cultural communication component.”

Question: What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to communications, marketing, or recruitment staff at your university?

Respondents (N=7) received for this question indicated that communications, marketing, and recruitment staff would like to have access to: formal sessions with experts in the field or with staff from their universities’ International Centre/Office; training to ensure their communications are not alienating, confusing, or offensive cross-culturally; and information on market-specific trends in different nations and cultures; and resources from national organizations that support international student mobility. See Table 2 in Appendix L for participants’ complete responses. When asked to outline any further cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training that they would like to see offered at their universities, one participant responded with: “Social media training that is country specific (what social media platforms are popular/most effective, and what is appropriate business communication for universities to prospective students and families?).”

Strengths and weaknesses

Question: Please describe your university's strengths and/or weaknesses in providing appropriate knowledge and training for communications, marketing and recruitment staff who work to welcome international students.

Seven of the 10 participants of this survey responded to this question. Overall, the overarching strengths and weaknesses they identified were that the communications, marketing, and recruitment staff receive limited to no cross-cultural training. They state that the staff in the International Centres and International Relations offices are better equipped with appropriate knowledge and experience for cross-cultural awareness. See Table 3 in Appendix L for participants' complete responses.

A Survey of International Advisors and International Centre Staff at Atlantic Canadian Universities

Of the seven participants who responded to the survey for International Advisors and International Centre staff at Atlantic Canadian Universities, the title roles identified were as follows: International Centre staff (2), International Centre Manager (1), International Partnerships Coordinator (1), and International Advisor (3). Six of the participants identified as female and one identified as male. In response to the question “how long have you been employed by this university?”, one staff member responded with less than five years, four responded with more than five years but less than 10 years, one responded with more than 10 years but less than 15 years, and one responded with more than 15 years. Five of the seven participants indicated that they are certified as a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant, and the remaining two participants responded “no” to this question.

The following data displays the participants’ responses, including their opinions and details on the support and services offered by their universities (that they are aware of). Please note, some of the participants’ responses to open-ended questions have been edited for grammar, syntax, and clarity.

Knowledge of available training and resources

Statement: My university provides cross-cultural and sensitivity training to staff that support international students through (Please check all that apply)...

All seven participants of this survey responded to this question. Four of the participants indicated that their university does not provide this sort of training to staff in their universities that work directly with international students. The remaining participants indicated that their universities provide multicultural team training; cultural awareness training; and didactic, interactive, and experiential training opportunities. None of the respondents indicated that their universities provide them with language training or immersion programming, which was surprising to me as those are two of the main forms of tacit knowledge training. However, in responses that appear later in the study, some of the staff that work in International Centres or offices claim that they already had experience living in other cultures, which better prepared them to work with international students.

Statement: My university offers the following services to international students (please check all that apply)...

Based on the seven responses received, services available to international students appeared to be similar at all four of the universities targeted. International advising; integration into the university/campus/local communities; and academic support were the services most selected (each being selected by six respondents). See Figure 3 in Appendix L for all responses provided for this question. “Other” comments in response to this question included: academic support programs, Writing Resource Centre, Wellness Centre, international orientation, mentorship program, and “Graduation Preparation Series to prepare for working in Canada.”

Question: What resources has your university put in place to internationalize your campus community?

The most common resources put in place to internationalize campus communities, as indicated by the seven respondents, were cross-cultural training and exchange program opportunities. Experiential training opportunities were the resource with the lowest selection rate (only one staff member indicated that experiential training opportunities have been put in place to internationalize their campus). However, exchange program opportunities could be considered a form of experiential training. See Figure 4 in Appendix L for all responses provided for this question.

Desired training and resources

Statement: My university offers literature and materials for university staff to inform them of cultural differences, customs, and language needs of students from other countries.

Five of the seven participants in this survey revealed that their university does not offer this type of informative literature and other materials. The remaining two participants did not respond to this question. Based on the responses to this question received by the International Advisors and International Centre staff members, and based on the responses received by the communications, marketing and recruitment staff to the similar question in their survey, it is clear that these staff members at the targeted universities in Atlantic Canada do not have regular access to resources to refer to for help with developing their cross-cultural awareness skills.

Statement: My university offers curriculum on cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural development or sensitivity training to undergraduate and graduate students.

Six of the seven survey participants responded to this question; with five of them revealing that their university does not offer curriculum on cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural development, or sensitivity training to undergraduate or graduate students. The one participant that responded yes provided the following comment: “We offer these workshops periodically, although not every year.” When asked to provide details on the cross-cultural training and/or curriculum they would like to see added to their universities offerings, the four participants that responded no to the previous question provided very diverse suggestions for curricula on cross-cultural awareness, development, and sensitivity training. Curricula they would like to see offered include the following:

- “A mandatory first year course in Global Issues. We did have one a few years ago but the students complained about it and having to take it!”
- “We offer it but it is very informal. It is very much integrated into our EAP [English for Academic Purposes] program and some lower level academic classes – we are working to improve this all the time.”
- “I would like to be able to offer Socio-cultural Competency Training (SCT) to students. I would also like to offer the Intercultural Development Inventory test⁴ to students once they return from an international experience or for international students, once they have completed their four years at [this university]”.

⁴ The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is 50-item questionnaire which “assesses intercultural competence – the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.” See <https://idiinventory.com/products/the-intercultural-development-inventory-idi/> for further details.

- “Our curriculum should incorporate broader perspectives. In other words, perspectives from non-European countries should be included in our curriculum. Teaching and research are [a] major component of a university. I would like to see faculty and staff be trained on that front.”

Question: What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to international student support staff at their respective universities?

All seven survey respondents offered a variety of responses to this open-ended question.

These include:

- Mandatory cultural sensitivity training for all staff
- Train the trainer in cultural awareness
- Faculty and academic staff participation in cross-cultural training
- Training on DELIVERING cross-cultural training
- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) training
- Sociocultural Competency Training (SCT)
- Awareness of other cultures and understanding of basic communications and behavioral patterns of students from particular cultures
- Training on non-judgmental behaviors and equity treatment of international students

Question: What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to the staff involved with international student recruitment at your university? Please explain.

Based on responses received to this question (N=5); the International Advisors and International Centre staff would like the international student recruitment staff to receive training that will help them understand their target international markets' cultures and customs, and to be better prepared in cross-cultural communication. The responses provided for this question include:

- “Specific situational case studies that are practical and frequent; best practice strategies.”
- “Train the trainer – cultural awareness training.”
- “I think it would be helpful for our recruiters to understand cross-cultural communication strategies (i.e. how to be a clear communicator). It may be beneficial to have specific training for recruiters going to certain countries (i.e. cultural training for Japan).”
- “Cultural norms and behavioral patterns of other cultures and peoples. Understanding of the power dynamics of other cultures.”

Subsequently, participants had an opportunity to outline any further cross-cultural and sensitivity training that they would like to see offered to the staff who support international students at their university. Their responses seemed to point to a central theme – that cross-cultural awareness should be an ongoing part of professional development, and should be provided university-wide, across all departments. Their comments included:

- “That we become accredited as a centre for cultural awareness training. We hope to have one staff member trained in the next year and then offer sensitivity training.”

- “Experiential training, cross-cultural awareness training for ALL departments and faculties – we are working on this at the present time.”
- “Training on the development of cross-cultural training.”
- “On-going professional development opportunities on cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training will be desired. This is not a one-time thing. It has to be continuing.”

Strengths and weaknesses

Question: Please describe your university’s strengths and/or weaknesses in providing appropriate knowledge and training for staff who work to welcome international students.

Of the seven survey respondents, six answered this question. A common theme identified among the strengths was that university staff in other departments seem to view the staff that work for the International Relations office or the International Centres as the primary resources for support for international students and for faculty and staff that need support with communicating with international students. This is surprising as more than half of the respondents to this survey (International Advisors and International Centre staff) indicated in an earlier question that their universities did not offer them any formal cross-cultural training. The common weakness identified seems to be that overall, across the university campuses, faculty and staff are not sufficiently cross-culturally aware or sensitive; however, they have expressed the need for this type of training that could potentially be introduced to their professional development practices. See Table 4 in Appendix L for all responses provided for this question.

Question: How would you rate international students' cultural adjustments at your university?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very adjusted) to 5 (strongly adjusted).

Of the seven survey participants, six responded to this question. Overall, respondents indicate a perception among staff of a fairly strong level of cultural adjustment on the part of international students at their respective universities across Atlantic Canada: Of the six respondents, five rated international students' level of cultural adjustment at a four, and the remaining respondent offered a rating of three.

Question: How would you rate the cross-cultural awareness of staff who support international students at your university? Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very aware) to 5 (very aware).

Of the seven survey participants, six responded to this question (N=6). Half of the respondents indicated that the cross-cultural awareness of staff who support international students at their university is mediocre (rating it a three on a scale of one to five).

Question: Have you, as a staff member at a Canadian university, ever experienced misunderstandings with a student from another country or cultural background?

Six of the seven survey participants responded to this question. One participant responded "no," and five indicated that they had experienced such misunderstandings. Language barriers and cultural differences appeared to be a main challenge noted by participants. Further comments from the participants contextualizing these claims were as follows:

- "...Not understanding intentions or how to best comfort students regarding negative outcomes."
- "It happens all the time."

- “These misunderstandings often happen when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds. Language abilities often play a role as well with some ESL students.”
- “Lots of times. Mostly language based misunderstandings though.”

Question: “Have you ever experienced uncertainty avoidance (feeling uncomfortable in unstructured situations) with students of other nationalities?”

Six of the seven participants of this survey responded to this question. Three participants answered “yes” and three responded “no.” One comment received from a respondent suggested discomfort around the possibility of unintentional miscommunication or action. The specific comment received was, “Not knowing if the student is being polite or in fact understanding the instructions we are giving.”

Question: Have you ever addressed any issues with students who were having a difficult time with cross-cultural adjustment?

Six participants responded to this question, all indicating “yes.” The survey asked those answering affirmatively to then provide examples of these types of issues (leaving out any information that would identify any student). Their responses all seemed to address the fact that international students have difficulty adjusting with their peers from Canada. They seem to have a difficult time assimilating or expressing themselves out of nervousness or cultural differences. These are the some of the types of challenges that international students face, that could potentially affect their decisions to continue studying at the Canadian university where they are

registered, and if they decide to leave, the university's international student recruitment rate could decrease. The respondents offered the following comments:

- “[These students say that they have] difficulty working in groups. Students have a difficult time [and are] hesitant to express opinions and views in classes. I have talked to them separate from the domestic groups.”
- “Giving them the freedom to offer input in the classroom is key to success but it is a foreign concept to most.”
- “Students often feel lonely and out of place in their new surroundings and we often talk them through it and get them involved in more activities.”
- “A student from Brazil once explained that students found her communication style loud and abrupt but that was just her cultural background.”
- “[Students have issues] identifying and understanding appropriate sexual conduct [as well as] identifying and understanding drinking alcoholic beverages and socializing in residence.”

A Survey of International Students Studying at Atlantic Canadian Universities

Of the 128 participants who responded to the survey for international students studying at Atlantic Canadian universities, 44 participants identified as male, 80 identified as female, two identified as “other” and two did not provide a response to this question. The age of participants broke down as follows: 18 years old (nine participants), 19 years old (14 participants), 20 years old (18 participants), 21 years old (eight participants), 22 years old (five participants), 23 years old (15 participants), 24 years old (nine participants), and 25 years old or more (49 participants). One participant did not provide an age. When asked how long have they been in Canada, responses ranged from 57 participants indicating that they have lived in Canada for less than one year, 47 have lived in Canada more than one year but less than three years, 17 have lived in Canada for more than three years but less than five, and five participants indicated that they have lived in Canada for more than five years. Two of the participants did not respond to this question.

The following data displays the participants’ responses, including their opinions and details on the support and services offered by their universities (that they are aware of). Please note, some of the participants’ responses to open-ended questions have been edited for grammar, syntax, and clarity.

Question: What year of study are you in?

Twenty-five of the 128 participants of this survey indicated that they were in undergraduate year one. Seventeen respondents indicated they were in undergraduate year two; 24 indicated undergraduate year three; 14 indicated undergraduate year four; 31 indicated that

they were in a Master's program; 15 indicated they were in a PhD program; and two did not indicate which year of study they were in.

Question: What country are you from?

Of the 128 survey participants, 125 individuals indicated which country they are from. The top three countries identified were the United States with 22 respondents (representing 18 per cent of all respondents), China with 18 students (representing 14 per cent), and Nigeria with 12 respondents (representing 10 per cent). The remaining identified nations can be found in Appendix L, Table five.

Question: What is your major area of study?

The top faculties identified by the 125 of the 128 participants that responded to this question were Arts with 27 respondents (22 per cent), Sciences with 29 respondents (23 per cent), and Business/Commerce/Management with 27 respondents (22 per cent). Computer Science and Health Professions both made up six per cent of the total number of respondents; Medicine made up five per cent; and "Other" responses, making up 17 per cent of the total number of respondents, included: education, engineering, international business, internetworking, international relations, and veterinary medicine.

Question: Why did you decide to study at a university in Canada? Please choose all answers that apply to you?

International students identified a desire to gain international experience (91 selections) and Canada's strong academic reputation (81 selections) as their top two reasons for studying at a Canadian university. Other reasons appear alongside these in Figure 5 in Appendix L.

Question: Why did you decide to study at this Canadian university?

International students identified reputation (66 selections), affordable fees (63 selections), and small town/country side location (52 selections) as the top reasons for their deciding to study at their respective universities. Other reasons appear alongside these in Figure 6 in Appendix L.

Some of the themes found in participants' "other" responses included culture, travel, course/program offerings, cost, reputation, efforts/assistance from staff and location. Table 6, in Appendix L details the responses within each of these themes.

Knowledge of available training or resources

Question: Does your university offer any of the following special programs or services for international students?

International student survey respondents frequently identified international advising (with 98 selections), English language training/support (86 selections), academic support (85 selections), and volunteer work opportunities (75 selections) as special programs or services offered to international students at their universities. Culture shock support received the lowest number of student selections. Further comments provided by international students included the MASSIE (Mount Allison Semester Studies in English) program, mentorship programs, a Wellness Centre, and counselling services. See Figure 7 in Appendix L for complete details of responses provided by participants for this question.

Question: What did you know about this university before you left your home country?

Twenty of the 107 international students who responded to this open-ended question answered with “nothing” or “very little.” These 20 students moved from Egypt, Colombia, Libya, China, Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Ecuador, and Nigeria.

This question generated a variety of responses from the other 87 respondents out of the 107, with recurring comments including:

- Programs/courses offered
- Reputation
- Ranking
- Services offered
- Small city/great location
- Fewer people compared to home country
- Cost
- Friendly people
- Partner of their home university

Table 7 in Appendix L provides comments from international students revealing what they knew about their specific Canadian universities before they left their specific home countries.

Question: Did you meet with any staff from this university in your home country? If yes, what did they do to help you decide to study at this university?

Ninety-nine of the respondents to this question (N=116) answered “no” to this question. Fifteen responded with “yes” and two did not provide a response. The supporting comments from the students who answered “yes” reveal that the participants that met with recruiters and faculty members in their home countries found these university representatives to be very helpful and provided them with great information about the program offerings and application processes. Particular recognition was given to university staff members that regularly responded to emails and showed genuine interest in the student – fostering their decision to decide to study at their university. The following quote from a student at Memorial University of Newfoundland supports this theme:

“[He provided me with] constant help and support. He always replied to my queries and emails even though he was travelling around the world. [He] helped me in my registration and to get into residence. He was present. We never chased the university registrar to get information. If the recruiter wasn't there, I don't think that I would have been able to make it that far.”

Additional supporting comments from international students appear in Table 8 in Appendix L.

Desired training and resources

Question: What additional programs or services would you like to be offered for international students at your university?

Some of the more common responses included:

- More opportunities to make friends/social interaction
- Settlement assistance/life after university in Canada
- Networking opportunities
- Faculty meetings with international students
- How to understand Canadian culture – do's and don'ts
- More international events
- More support for graduate students
- Visa assistance
- Job opportunities
- Financial assistance/scholarships
- More prayer rooms for Muslim students
- More guidance with health insurance, assistance dealing with the Canadian medical system
- Excursions that introduce us to other parts of Canada

Other responses to this question can be found in Table 9 in Appendix L.

Question: Are there any services or information that you would like to see Canadian university staff offer to international students who are considering studying in Canada?

Of the 75 responses from international students received for this question, the responses included the following:

- Provide a clearer image of Canada (e.g.: lifestyle, climate, economy, etc.)
- More details on costs (e.g.: potential hidden costs at university, cost of living for a year, etc.)
- Basic structure of courses so they'll know what to expect
- Connect with current students to seek guidance and advice before they leave their home country
- Visa assistance
- Better explanation of international student health insurance
- Explanation of grading system
- Help with adaptation to new culture
- More scholarships for international students
- Language usage training/learning tools
- Programs that explain Canadian laws and what is socially acceptable and what is not
- Information on host community's culture, local events and activities

Other responses to this question can be found in Table 10 in Appendix L.

Question: How prepared did you feel about coming to study in Canada? Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very prepared) to 5 (very prepared).

Of the 113 international students who responded to this question, most felt prepared, with only a negligible number of students stating that they did not feel prepared to study in Canada. Forty-four per cent of the respondents (n=50) gave a rating of four out of five and 19 per cent of the respondents (n=22) gave a rating of five. Twenty-five per cent (n=28) gave a rating of three; 10 per cent (n=11) gave a rating of two; and two per cent (n=2) gave a rating of one.

Question: What cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training would you like to see offered to [Atlantic] Canadian universities' communications, marketing and international recruitment staff?

Recurring responses from international students included:

- Training on gestures, cultural behaviors and communication styles of people from other countries
- Awareness of stereotypes, racism, ability, and gender
- Knowledge of university cultures and systems in other countries
- Awareness of diets of other cultures

More detailed responses can be found in Table 11, Appendix L.

Strengths and weaknesses

Question: Since arriving in Canada, have your experiences matched what you expected before you left your home country? Please rate on a scale of 1 (my experiences have not met my expectations) to 5 (my experiences have very much met my expectations).

The majority of the 113 international students who responded to this question indicated that their experiences met their expectations (with a rating of 4 on a scale of 1 to 5). Forty-two of the respondents gave a rating of four and 21 respondents gave a rating of five. Thirty-five respondents gave their experiences matching their expectations a rating of three out of five; eight gave a rating of two and seven gave a rating of one.

Question: When you first contacted or met the staff from the Canadian university, how would you rate his or her knowledge about your home country? Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly unknowledgeable) to 5 (strongly knowledgeable).

There were no great differences in international students' responses (N=113) to this question. Twenty-one per cent of the respondents rated the Canadian university staff to be strongly knowledgeable about their home countries, and 12 per cent rated them as strongly unknowledgeable. Overall, international students' ratings of the Canadian universities' staff members' knowledge of the students' home countries seemed to be mediocre, with 35 respondents giving a rating of three on a scale of one to five; 21 respondents giving a rating of two; and 19 giving a rating of four.

Question: How much cross-cultural information or training do you think is important for Canadian university staff members to have when recruiting international students? Please rate on a scale of 1 (little information) to 5 (a lot of information).

Most international students who responded to this survey (N=113) indicated that Canadian university staff members should have a lot of cross-cultural knowledge or training when recruiting international students. Forty-three respondents gave a rating of five; 29 gave a rating of four; 33 gave a rating of three; eight gave a rating of one; and zero gave a rating of one.

Question: Are you satisfied with Canada's international student recruitment system? Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied).

Almost half (n=55) of the international student participants (N=113) indicated that they are satisfied (rating of 3 on a scale of 1 to 5) with Canada's international student recruitment system. Sixteen respondents gave a rating of five; 28 gave a rating of four; eight gave a rating of two; five gave a rating of one; and one did not provide a rating. This implies that, despite the communications, marketing and recruitment staff members' lack of formal cross-cultural training, international students' seem to be overall satisfied with Canada's international student recruitment system.

Question: Do you think any changes should be made to the Canadian international university student recruitment process? Please rate on a scale of 1 (do not think that changes should be made) to 5 (strongly think that changes should be made).

Almost half of the 115 international students who responded to this question (n=47) provided a rating of 3 (on a scale of 1 to 5) on whether or not they think changes should be made

to the international student recruitment processes at Canadian universities. Thirteen respondents gave a rating of five; 23 gave a rating of four; 16 gave a rating of two; and 14 gave a rating of one.

Question: Did an education agent help you with your application and preparation for coming to Canada?

Less than half of the international students who responded to this question (N=113) stated that an education agent helped them with their applications and preparations for coming to Canada.

Question: If you answered yes to [the previous question], how satisfied were you with the help from your agent? Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied).

About half of the 113 respondents to this question did not provide an answer (as they had indicated that they did not receive help from an agent in the previous question). Of the students who did receive assistance from agents, 14 gave a rating of five – expressing that they were strongly satisfied; 15 gave a rating of four; 19 gave a rating of three; six gave a rating of two; and eight gave a rating of one.

Statement: Please list your favorite things about studying in Canada.

Common answers among the 93 international students who responded to this question included:

- Nice, friendly people
- Safe environment
- Friendly and supportive faculty/staff
- Beautiful scenery
- Small university
- Small city
- Great food
- Many resources available to help you
- Affordable tuition
- Economically stable
- Many opportunities to explore
- Engaging activities
- Great education system
- Advanced technology
- Near the ocean
- Opportunities to meet people from other cultures

Other responses to this question, specific to universities, appear in Table 12 in Appendix L.

Summary

Overall, these results reveal that communications, marketing, and recruitment staff do not consider themselves sufficiently cross-culturally trained. International Advisors and International Centre staff members are considered the university staff members that are best prepared to support international students, even though they have not received formal cross-cultural training. International students consider International Advisors and International Centre staff to be very helpful; but they note that university staff members in other departments are not sufficiently cross-culturally aware and need appropriate training. Overall, the participants of all three survey groups claim that there is a need for cross-cultural training through continuing professional development for communications, marketing, and recruitment staff; International Advisors and International Centre staff; as well as staff from other departments across the universities as international students do interact with faculty and staff other than International Advisors and International Centre staff. These results will be discussed further in the next chapter where I analyze these results and state further implications of this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study investigated the practices in place by communications, marketing, recruitment, and support staff to recruit and retain international students in Atlantic Canadian universities. Through surveying three key groups—communications, marketing and recruitment staff; International Advisors and International Centre staff; and international students—this study found that the responses of both professional groups report that their cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity levels are not very high and that this could be improved with increased cross-cultural training resources, opportunities and experiences. The communications, marketing, and recruitment staff group's knowledge of available resources and training for cross-cultural awareness was very limited, proving that cross-cultural training is lacking in these fields. These results were consistent with past studies that supported the need for cross-cultural training in multinational organizations and networks; educational institutions; and in marketing and communications functions. Additionally, the findings supported past research that cross-cultural awareness should be a part of public relations programs' curricula.

The results of my research also contributed new findings to this subject matter. The major findings of this research revealed: (1) that cross-cultural training should be offered to communications and recruitment teams that engage in international student recruitment to help increase recruitment and retention of international students, (2) that university staff with cross-cultural training and experience are better able to communicate and interact with international students, (3) that university staff who receive cross-cultural training can help to decrease the misunderstandings between Atlantic Canadian university staff and students and international students, and (4) that international students feel that university communications, marketing,

recruitment and support staff should be cross-culturally trained to be able to effectively communicate with and support international students. These findings will be discussed in this chapter.

Cross-cultural training should be offered to communications and recruitment teams that work to recruit international students as a way to increase the recruitment and retention of international students.

Forty per cent of the communications, marketing, and recruitment staff surveyed responded that their universities do not provide cross-cultural sensitivity training or supporting resources, and a surprising 57 per cent of the International Advisors and International Centre staff surveyed also indicated that their universities do not provide this training. The remaining participants of the latter group indicated that their universities do provide cross-cultural training through multicultural team training, cultural awareness training, interactive training, and didactic and experiential training. In the former group, the communications, marketing and recruitment staff who indicated that their universities do offer them cross-cultural training further commented that they receive interactive training and experiential training. Both groups rated, on a scale of one (not very aware) to five (very aware), the cross-cultural awareness of their respective staff groupings at their universities. A rating of three was the most popular response in both the communications, marketing and recruitment staff survey group, and the International Advisors and International Centre staff survey group, suggesting that they view the cross-cultural awareness of their respective staff groups at their universities to be mediocre. This implies that university staff members who work to communicate with, recruit, support and retain international students are not adequately equipped with the cross-cultural awareness that would

help them provide better resources and support to the international students they welcome to their campuses each year. There is a need for better cross-cultural training for these staff groups. This is important because, as international student enrolment numbers continue to rise in Atlantic Canada, universities need to provide the appropriate resources and support to retain them.

Some communications, marketing and recruitment staff surveyed indicated that they would like to receive cross-cultural training such as: a lesson on sensitive issues for international students; training to ensure their communications with the university community are not confusing, alienating or offending anyone; details on market-specific information on student trends; training on cultural sensitivities and awareness before embarking on recruitment travel to a new location; social media training that is country specific; training on appropriate business communication skills for prospective international students and their families; and general awareness of diversity on campus and a sense of the main concerns and challenges of international students. One participant indicated that recruitment staff at their university are closely connected with the International Centre. As the first point of contact for many prospective students, recruitment staff in particular should be trained in cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity. Research by Littrell et al. (2006) on the effectiveness of cross-cultural training provides “support for the belief that [cross-cultural training] improves expatriate performance on foreign assignment” and that “general cross-cultural adjustment influences the success of the global assignment” (p. 372). In the survey research informing this paper, one participant who self-identified as a Director of Recruitment commented:

“It would be helpful to be provided more market-specific information about student trends, cultural sensitivities and awareness, before undergoing recruitment travel to a new location. We are dependent on third-party information sources currently, and the onus is

on employees to seek this information out themselves with little direction from management. A commitment of resources to send employees to professional development opportunities through organizations like CBIE, EduCanada, WES, ICEF, could be helpful in building cross-cultural/sensitivity capacity in employees working on the front lines with international students.”

Comments from the international student participant group addressing the training they would like to see provided to communications, marketing, and recruitment staff complemented this same staff group’s desired training. A few examples of the training that international students recommended as offerings for communications, marketing and recruitment staff training, as presented in the Results chapter, include: training on gestures, cultural behaviors and communication styles of people from other countries; awareness of stereotypes, racism, ability, and gender; knowledge of university cultures and systems in other countries; a brief background over multiple cultures and societies of international countries; specific country-to-country information and training; and basic or a working knowledge of global geography.

Research by Lenartowicz et al. (2014) and Mazlaveckiene’s (2014) found experiential learning to be one of the most effective forms of cross-cultural training. Allowing Atlantic Canadian university staff members the opportunities to integrate into a foreign culture or multicultural community and experience what it is like to be in another culture could greatly increase their cross-cultural awareness. Universities should consider providing their staff, particularly the ones who work to communicate with, recruit and support international students, with this type of training.

Zhang’s (2012) research noted the importance of the human factor when it comes to international business relations because these representatives, or actual ‘people’ who represent

the organizations, must be willing and able to function well across both national and cultural boundaries for organizations to succeed. Zhang's (2012) presentation of the major cultural challenges facing the global workforce included sending business people overseas who are unprepared to deal with a new culture as a result of their engrained behaviors of how to react when confronted with other cultures or ethnic groups. This research supports the findings here that recruitment staff should receive appropriate cross-cultural training before embarking on foreign assignment to recruit international students. Additionally, communications and marketing staff should also receive this type of training to better know their markets and equip them with the capability to communicate their messages and marketing materials appropriately and without fear of adding insult to or experiencing misunderstandings with such diverse audiences.

The International Advisors and International Centre staff surveyed indicated they would like to see cross-cultural training offered to staff that support international students across the university. They see on-going professional development as important across the board to ensure that students are not getting frustrated or confused when communicating with university staff outside of the International Centres.

International Advisors and International Centre staff also provided insight into the sorts of training they would like to see offered to the university staff that work to recruit international students. Their suggestions included: case studies to develop best practice strategies, specific training for recruiters going to specific countries; and training on cultural norms and behavioral patterns of other cultures and peoples. These suggested forms of training reflect the research by Lenartowicz et al. (2014) which nominated experiential learning as the best medium for transfer of tacit knowledge. As discovered in the survey responses from the International Advisors and

International Centre staff members, even though most of them indicated that they received no formal cross-cultural training at their universities, they have cross-cultural experience which they acquired when they spent time living or travelling abroad. Being immersed in a foreign culture and meeting people from a foreign culture is the best form of experiential learning, as presented in Mazlaveckiene's (2014) research.

Responses by the communications, marketing and recruitment staff participant group and the International Advisors and International Centre staff participant group present quite a difference in cross-cultural awareness. Communications, marketing and recruitment staff tended to focus on training that would help with first contact with prospective students, which would help with the communications and marketing materials they produce. Their responses, however, were quite general. International Advisors and International Centre staff seemed to have greater insight into the challenges that international students studying in Atlantic Canada face and the training and resources these staff hope to receive to support and communicate with international students and help them adjust to life in Canada and successfully integrate into the university community. This implies that cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity of staff members within a university seems to typically be concentrated in the International Centre.

University staffs who have cross-cultural training and experience are better able to communicate and interact with international students.

University staff members who have travelled overseas have experienced firsthand what it is like to be an international. They have experienced arriving to a new culture where a different language is spoken and where they have likely been viewed as *different*. They have experienced the misunderstandings, the communication breakdowns, and the frustrations attached to these

experiences. As Zhang (2012) claimed, to be more cross-culturally aware, employees need to spend an appropriate amount of time in a host culture to identify inappropriate behavior and to learn from other cultures. But these types of experiences matter because they help these staff members realize the challenges international students studying in Atlantic Canada face on a regular basis. These experiences allow them to empathize with the international students' frustrations and think from their points of view when considering the sorts of materials and resources that could encourage students to want to study in Canada and when considering the necessary supports to ensure that these students are happy and satisfied with their experiences, ensuring that their expectations have been met.

Research by Lenartowicz et al. (2014) defined the differences between explicit knowledge (factual, declarative) and tacit knowledge (based on actions, ideals, values, emotions and experiences). These researchers nominated experiential learning as the best medium for transfer of tacit knowledge, which involves learning about a culture through integration and immersion. Also supporting this type of cross-cultural training were the students who responded to Mazlaveckiene's (2014) survey which attributed experiential learning activities, such as "travelling and meeting people of different cultures[,] as the most decisive in developing their cultural experience and ability to cope with various (inter)cultural situations" (p. 246). The findings of my study also point to this type of training as beneficial to university staff members. As one respondent from the International Centre staff group commented: "I received no formal training when I began working with international students. I still have not received any formal training/professional development in this area in the past five years since I began working with international students. I had a lot of experience living and working in other countries and

participated in cross-cultural training workshops as a recent undergraduate so this helped me when I began working.”

University staff members that are not sufficiently equipped with cross-cultural knowledge or training do not go unnoticed by international students. International students notice when university staff members do not have the appropriate cross-cultural knowledge to effectively and respectfully communicate with them. One international student participant provided the following comment:

“Training should incorporate dealing with issues of discrimination on the basis of race, ability, and gender; and making staff (and students) aware of the policies in place to deal with these problems. Training participants should be aware that not all international students are people of color, and that there are students whose native language is English and who come from a country where English is the official language. Encouraging a bit of researching before interacting with a prospective international student, whether in person, by phone, or by email, could save staff the embarrassment of having offended someone for imposing preconceived notions about that person or appearing unknowledgeable.”

This comment supports the desired training and resources that International Advisors and International Centre staff report that they would like to see at their universities, including opportunities to ‘train the trainer,’ equipping staff trainers with the tools to train other staff members and students about cross-cultural awareness and how to interact and communicate better with international students.

University staff who have received cross-cultural training can help to decrease the misunderstandings between Atlantic Canadian university staff and students and international students.

Eighty per cent of the communications, marketing, and recruitment staff group and 71 per cent of the International Advisors and International Centre staff group indicated that they have experienced misunderstandings with students from other countries or cultural backgrounds. Examples of these misunderstandings from the former group include language barriers, communication breakdown errors, misunderstandings through phone calls and emails, and misunderstandings around admissions. Examples from the latter group include misunderstanding intentions or best ways to comfort students in negative situations as well as misunderstandings because of language barriers.

Banty  and In i rien 's (2012) research identified one of the fundamental problems between teachers and students of different cultural backgrounds—a lack of understanding when they study, work, and communicate, leading to misunderstandings that result from insufficient awareness of each other's respective cultural backgrounds. The following comment by an international student respondent to their respective survey further supports this research, only it reflects on university staff instead of teachers:

“International Relations Office's staff are excellent. However, accounting staff, research staff are terrible. They are not accustomed to English as a Second Language Students. It is strongly necessary for these staff to learn how to communicate with international students. In addition, accounting staff and other staff[,] except [the] International Relations Office[,] look down on international students.”

This comment suggests that students are aware of the university staff members who have cross-cultural awareness and communication skills and those who do not, and, in some cases, they may generalize an entire department's cross-cultural awareness based on an unpleasant experience with one staff member.

Not only should marketing, communications, and recruitment staff and International Advisors and International Centre staff receive this type of training, but this type of training should be offered university-wide as international students interact with staff across the university, just as domestic students must do. One respondent who identified as an International Partnerships Coordinator commented as follows in response to the survey question asking them to outline any further cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training they would like to see offered to their university's staff to support international students: "Experiential training, cross cultural awareness training for ALL departments and faculties."

One international student provided the following comment on the type of services they would like to see offered to international students by staff at Atlantic Canadian universities:

"The number of international students increased in Canada. However, most of the staff are not accustomed to international students. They should have training of understanding international students' English. For example, such as a course of EAP [English for Academic Purposes] program. Depending on the nationality, international students have some characteristics, Chinese students cannot distinguish 'zu' and 'su', Japanese students cannot pronounce 'R' and 'L'."

Not only are university staff aware of the growing populations of international students at universities in Atlantic Canada and the concomitant need for better cross-cultural awareness for university staff, but students are also aware of this. This implies that, if students note a lack of

cross-cultural awareness in university staff members, they may question their choice of educational institution and transfer to another institution where they may find their needs better met and the staff more cross-culturally aware.

International students feel that university communications, marketing, recruitment and support staff should be cross-culturally trained to be able to effectively communicate with and support international students

As Black (2010) mentioned in his research, students have certain perceptions of institutional promises, and some regard these promises as guarantees. He added that “students universally see themselves as educational consumers with certain rights and privileges. When promises are kept, student commitment and loyalty to an institution grows. Conversely, when perceived covenants are broken, student dissatisfaction, attrition, and negative word-of-mouth become natural consequences” (p. 117). My research found that students who had good experiences with university recruiters and staff remember those interactions and speak favorably about those experiences. When asked if they met with any staff from their universities while still in their home countries, some of the students commented that they received great support from the university staff. One student noted: “I met with a recruiting officer of Dal at a local college fair. He was super helpful in my whole application process to Dal.” Another student added: “Constant help and support. He always replied to my queries and emails even though he was travelling around the world. Helped me in my registration and to get into residence. He was present. We never chased the university registrar to get information. If the recruiter wasn't there, I don't think that I would have been able to make it that far.” In opposition to this claim, students who do not have amiable experiences with university staff members remember those experiences

in a negative light. As one international student who responded to the survey question on meeting with a university staff in their home country added: “[I met a] recruiter. Typical recruiter who’s trying to get more students.” This implies that students who have positive experiences with international recruiters and other university staff members will speak more favorably about their experiences with these universities than those that didn’t have a positive experience. This could affect recruitment and retention, because students could talk about their experiences with their friends who may be considering studying in Canada—and, as Black (2010) noted, negative word-of-mouth could lead to negative consequences.

The international students surveyed in my study had the opportunity to rate the university staff members’ knowledge of their home countries, on a scale of one (strongly unknowledgeable) to five (strongly knowledgeable). About one half of the student respondents rated the staff members’ knowledge as a three or less. This implies that students have noticed that many university staff are not very cross-culturally aware. When asked, “How much cross-cultural information or training do you think is important for university staff members to have when recruiting international students on a scale of one (little information) to five (a lot information),” 105 of the 113 students that responded to this question (out of a total number of 128 participants) gave a rating of three or higher.

The international students also had the opportunity to comment on the sort of cross-cultural and sensitivity training they would like to see offered to Atlantic Canadian universities’ communications, marketing and international recruitment staff members. Among their responses, students indicated the following: training on gestures, cultural behaviors and communication styles of people from other countries; awareness of stereotypes and racism; knowledge of cultures and systems in other countries; background information on multiple cultures and

societies of international countries; training based on individual countries where students come from to study at the targeted Canadian universities; knowledge of geography; and what questions or phrases can insult international students. One student added that the support and appreciation from these university staff members must continue after their arrival and not just during the recruitment process: "Support the student after his/her arrival and during his/her studies. Not just before to make him choose this university. I was treated really well and I chose the program. When I arrived, nobody cared any more, they already took my fees so they just don't care." This implies that international students would speak more highly of an institution and would better enjoy their time spent studying at that institution if the staff were cross-culturally aware and supported them. This also implies that international student retention would benefit from having university staff members who are appropriately cross-culturally aware.

Students also provided details through the questionnaire about additional programs or services that they would like to see offered for international students at their universities. These additional programs and services included: more opportunities for social interaction, settlement assistance, lessons on understanding appropriate behavior and laws in Canada, visa assistance, religious preferences, and opportunities to learn about other regions in Canada. If Atlantic Canadian university staff members offered more of these programs and services, perhaps the satisfaction rate of international students' experiences at Canadian universities would increase.

My findings aligned with Creswell's (2013) definition of critical theory which states: "Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender" (p. 65, citing Fay, 1987). Even though I collected my responses from the three different participant groups and there was no direct

contact between members of these groups in my data collection process, I used this thesis as a medium to connect the communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members; the International Advisors and the International Centre staff members; and the international students' knowledge of available training and resources of cross-cultural training/awareness, desired training and resources, and their acknowledgements of their universities' strengths and weaknesses with regards to cross-cultural awareness. This research provided a platform for these participant groups to provide details on areas that require improvement, and encouraged them to acknowledge and realize what areas need improvement. International students who may feel that they normally cannot express their frustrations over the challenges that they face at Atlantic Canadian universities have been given an outlet to express these thoughts and concerns. The opinions collected from individuals of various classes and cultural backgrounds and from varying economic structures have been recorded in this one thesis report

International students have expressed their reasons for wanting to move to Canada, and student mobility continues to grow. But to encourage these students to choose a particular university, communications, marketing, and recruitment staff at these universities must demonstrate cross-cultural awareness in their messaging. To retain these students, university staff members must provide these students with appropriate resources and support, and also communicate with them effectively to make them feel welcome and a part of the community.

Limitations

During the data collection stage of my research, the surveys received extremely low response rates from universities outside of the Atlantic Provinces. I originally intended to survey staff and international students from universities across Canada (with one university representing each of the 10 provinces, excluding the territories. The territories were excluded because of a low percentage – less than one per cent – of international student presence there). When responses received from the universities outside of Atlantic Canada were few, and in some cases nil in numbers, I shifted my sample to represent staff and international students at universities in the Atlantic Provinces only. Additionally, response rates from the international student survey participants in Atlantic Canada were less than 20 to 30 per cent, which is the average response rate for online surveys, so the 128 international students who participated in my research represent a small percentage of international student presence in Atlantic Canadian universities. International students' access to this survey varied between the four universities. In some cases, staff at the universities forwarded my email containing the link to the survey to their international student distribution lists. In other cases, staff at the universities shared the link to my survey on their department or International Centre Facebook wall. These different modes of sharing my survey with the international students could have affected the response rates.

Directions for future research

As this research focuses on Atlantic Canadian universities, opportunity still exists to study cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training in the communications management and recruitment as well as retention of international students at universities in central and western Canada. Additionally, comparative studies between universities on Canada's east and west coasts could examine the difference in cross-cultural awareness in both regions of Canada.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Revisiting the research questions

This study explored the cross-cultural and sensitivity training opportunities that are currently offered and that should be offered to communications, marketing and recruitment teams working to recruit international students to study in Atlantic Canada. Alongside this, the study also identified the cross-cultural training opportunities currently provided to International Centre staff and International Advisors at Atlantic Canadian universities as well as the types of support services that these staff members offer to international students.

The study employed a survey methodology to collect data from these three groups. Results revealed that most communications, marketing and recruitment staff claim they do not receive official cross-cultural training at the universities that employ them. A few participants claimed that they receive interactive and experiential training, and others commented that this type of training exists at their respective universities, but that it is not offered to their particular staff group.

Communications, marketing, and recruitment staff indicated that they would like to receive the following types of training: formal sessions or lessons with experts in the field or from the international office on sensitive issues for international students; cross-cultural/sensitivity training and gender-neutral sensitivity training; market-specific information about student trends; cultural sensitivities and awareness training before undergoing international recruitment travel; resources to send employees to professional development opportunities organized by national organizations that work to bring international students to Canada; training

on the main concerns or transition challenges for international students; and country-specific social media and appropriate international business conduct training. Additionally, the staff who support international students in their daily routine added that communications, marketing, and recruitment staff should receive training in best practice strategies (through reviewing and role-playing case studies), cross-cultural communication strategies for traveling to different countries, and training on understanding the power dynamics of other cultures.

According to the international students surveyed, communications, marketing, and recruitment staff should receive training on behaviors, gestures, and communication styles of people from other cultures, as well as more general information on the countries where these students relocate from (i.e. cultures and university systems in other countries, and knowledge of their geography and political climate).

Most International Advisors and International Centre staff indicated that they do not receive cross-cultural training at their universities. Others indicated that they have received multicultural team training, cross-cultural awareness training, and immersion training, with the minority indicating they've received didactic and interactive training.

This participant group indicated that they would like to see training opportunities offered at their universities that include cultural sensitivity training for all staff (including academic staff and faculty), awareness of other cultures, and training on non-judgmental behaviors and equity treatment.

Overall, the communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members, along with the International Advisors and International Centre staff and the international students surveyed in this study want the same thing—a university campus that is open and welcoming to international students, where staff are trained to support and communicate effectively with students; where

communications and marketing materials provide understandable information and truths about the campuses and target different demographics of students appropriately; where recruiters inspire in their targeted students a desire to study at their respective campus; and where international students find a welcoming, understanding, honest, inclusive and safe place to call “home” for the duration of their post-secondary education.

Final thoughts

The topic of support and appropriate communication strategies for international students is important to me. In the various professional roles where I interacted with international students, I learned about misunderstandings with these students—how a simple gesture can be misinterpreted and how communications materials may seem normal and ordinary for one cultural group; but impose insult on individuals from another culture. People experienced in working with international students and working in cross-cultural settings have a different point of view than those who are not cross-culturally aware. With increased cross-cultural awareness for university staff, particularly in communications and marketing roles, there is great potential to improve the international student recruitment practice and student experience at Canadian universities. The results of this research may assist Atlantic Canadian universities with their international student recruitment processes and retention rates and may increase the international student body enrolment numbers at less internationalised universities in Canada.

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APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B**Email to Communications, Marketing, and Recruitment Staff at Canadian Universities**

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

I will select participants from 10 Canadian universities and classified into three sub-groups: 1) recruitment, communications, and marketing university staff, 2) international advisors and International Centre staff, and 3) international students. Each group receives separate surveys. The survey for communications, marketing, and recruitment staff can be accessed via a link at the end of this email.

The survey is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this research, please follow the link to the Letter of Informed Consent. If you check the box indicating that you agree to the conditions as outlined in the Letter, you will be redirected to the online survey.

Individuals who complete this survey will have the option to enter a draw for a \$50 gift card. Names entered into this draw will not be linked to the survey responses submitted. All participants' responses will remain anonymous.

Thank you.

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

APPENDIX C

**Letter of Informed Consent for Participating Communications, Marketing, and Recruitment Staff at Canadian Universities**

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

The results of this study will be presented during a thesis defense that will be open to the university community. The results of the study will be written and may be shared with the academic community and public in the form of academic and/or conference presentations and journal articles.

I ask that you consider participating in this research study. As a participant, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended and multiple choice questions. Once submitted, your responses will be sent directly to me. All answers remain anonymous and therefore cannot be attributed to any participant. Any information (i.e. resources currently available for international students) that is already publicly available will be attributed to the corresponding university. Any opinion-based responses or information collected in the survey that could potentially be attributed to a particular university and, from there, to an individual respondent (such as in the case where a university has only one recruitment officer) will remain anonymous. To maintain anonymity, I will be careful not to attribute staff responses in a way that identifies a specific university so as to prevent any individual respondent from being identifiable. For example, I may generalize the information into bar graphs or general statements. You will have the option to withdraw from the research up until you submit your responses online. You may also contact me if you wish to review the results when my thesis becomes publicly available.

If you have any questions about my research or if you would like further information on this study, please email me at [PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS REMOVED]. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the

study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB), c/o MSVU Research Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

If you agree to participate in this research, please check the appropriate box below and complete the online survey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this study (You will be directed to the survey)
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study

APPENDIX D**Email to International Advisors/International Centre Staff at Canadian Universities**

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

I will select participants from 10 Canadian universities and classified into three sub-groups: 1) recruitment, communications, and marketing university staff, 2) international advisors and International Centre staff, and 3) international students. Each group receives separate surveys. The survey for International Advisors and International Centre staff can be accessed via a link at the end of this email.

The survey is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this research, please follow the link to the Letter of Informed Consent. If you check the box indicating that you agree to the conditions as outlined in the Letter, you will be redirected to the online survey.

Individuals who complete this survey will have the option to enter a draw for a \$50 gift card. Names entered into this draw will not be linked to the survey responses submitted. All participants' responses will remain anonymous.

Thank you.

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

APPENDIX E**Letter of Informed Consent for Participating International Advisors/International Centre Staff at Canadian Universities**

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

The results of this study will be presented during a thesis defense that will be open to the university community. The results of the study will be written and may be shared with the academic community and public in the form of academic and/or conference presentations and journal articles.

I ask that you consider participating in this research study. As a participant, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended and multiple choice questions. Once submitted, your responses will be sent directly to me. All answers remain anonymous and therefore cannot be attributed to any participant. Any information (i.e. resources currently available for international students) that is already publicly available will be attributed to the corresponding university. Any opinion-based responses or information collected in the survey that could potentially be attributed to a particular university and, from there, to an individual respondent (such as in the case where a university has only one recruitment officer) will remain anonymous. To maintain anonymity, I will be careful not to attribute staff responses in a way that identifies a specific university so as to prevent any individual respondent from being identifiable. For example, I may generalize the information into bar graphs or general statements. You will have the option to withdraw from the research up until you submit your responses online. You may also contact me if you wish to review the results when my thesis becomes publicly available.

If you have any questions about my research or if you would like further information on this study, please email me at [PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS REMOVED]. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB), c/o MSVU Research Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

If you agree to participate in this research, please check the appropriate box below and complete the online survey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this study (You will be directed to the survey)
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study

Appendix F**Email to International Advisors/International Centre Staff: Request to forward survey to International Students**

Dear International Advisor/International Centre staff:

I request your assistance reaching international students at your respective university. Please review the following message and forward this email to the international student email lists at your university. Thank you for your assistance.

Dear International Student:

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

I will select participants from 10 Canadian universities and classified into three sub-groups: 1) recruitment, communications, and marketing university staff, 2) international advisors and International Centre staff, and 3) international students. Each group receives separate surveys. The survey for international students can be accessed via a link at the end of this email.

The survey is expected to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this research, please follow the link to the Letter of Informed Consent. If you check the box indicating that you agree to the conditions as outlined in the Letter, you will be redirected to the online survey.

Individuals who complete this survey will have the option to enter a draw for a \$50 gift card. Names entered into this draw will not be linked to the survey responses submitted. All participants' responses will remain anonymous.

Thank you.

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix G**Letter of Informed Consent for Participating International Students
Studying at Canadian Universities**

My name is Genevieve MacIntyre. I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts (Communication) program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A requirement of this program is to conduct original research to complete a master's thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate the ways in which communications, marketing and recruitment professionals, as well as university support staff, attempt to recruit and retain international students in Canadian universities. In addition, I will research the cross-cultural training offered to university employees, consider what further training should be introduced, and explore international students' opinions on this topic.

The results of this study will be presented during a thesis defense that will be open to the university community. The results of the study will be written and may be shared with the academic community and public in the form of academic and/or conference presentations and journal articles.

I ask that you consider participating in this research study. As a participant, you will be asked to answer a series of open-ended and multiple choice questions. Once submitted, your responses will be sent directly to me. All answers remain anonymous and therefore cannot be attributed to any participant. You will have the option to withdraw from the research up until you submit your responses online. You may also contact me if you wish to review the results when my thesis becomes publicly available.

If you have any questions about my research or if you would like further information on this study, please email me at **[PERSONAL CONTACT DETAILS REMOVED]**. If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB), c/o MSVU Research Office, at (902) 457-6350 or via e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

If you agree to participate in this research, please check the appropriate box below and complete the online survey.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Genevieve MacIntyre
Master of Arts (Communication) student
Department of Communication Studies
Mount Saint Vincent University

Please check the appropriate box:

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this study (You will be directed to the survey)
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study

APPENDIX H**Survey questions for communications (including marketing and public relations) and recruitment staff of Canadian universities**

1. Which university do you represent?

- ☐ University of British Columbia
- ☐ McGill University
- ☐ University of Alberta
- ☐ Dalhousie University
- ☐ University of Toronto
- ☐ Mount Allison University
- ☐ University of Prince Edward Island
- ☐ Memorial University of Newfoundland
- ☐ University of Saskatchewan
- ☐ University of Winnipeg.

2. What is your title?

- ☐ Communications officer
- ☐ Communications manager
- ☐ Director of Communications
- ☐ Recruitment officer
- ☐ International recruitment officer
- ☐ Recruitment manager
- ☐ International recruitment manager
- ☐ Director of recruitment
- ☐ Marketing officer
- ☐ Marketing manager
- ☐ Director of marketing
- ☐ Other (Please explain):

3. How long have you been employed by this university?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ More than 1 year but less than 3 years
- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years but less than 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years but less than 15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years

4. Please state your gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

For the following open-ended and multiple choice questions, please answer and select the answers which best apply to you (please check all that apply). You may provide additional details in the spaces provided.

1. My university provides cross-cultural and sensitivity training to communications, marketing, or recruitment staff through:

- ☐ My university does not provide this training
- ☐ Multicultural team training (ie: teams made up of members from various cultural backgrounds)
- ☐ Interactive training (ie: role plays, simulations, etc.)
- ☐ Language training
- ☐ Didactic (information giving) training (ie: lectures, written materials, videos, etc.)
- ☐ Experiential training (ie: integration of cultures, second language use, travel, etc.)
- ☐ Immersion programming (ie: field trips, extended visits to foreign cultures/societies, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please explain):

2. Have you, as a Canadian university staff member, ever experienced misunderstandings with a student from another country or cultural background? Please explain.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

3. What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to communications, marketing, or recruitment staff at your university? Please explain:

4. My university offers the following services to international students (please check all that apply or that you are aware of):

- ☐ International advising
- ☐ English language training/support
- ☐ Visa assistance
- ☐ Medical assistance
- ☐ Cross-cultural adjustment assistance
- ☐ Culture shock support
- ☐ Integration into university/campus/local communities
- ☐ Conversation clubs/conversation partners
- ☐ Volunteer work opportunities
- ☐ Exam accommodations
- ☐ Academic support
- ☐ Social support
- ☐ Psychological support
- ☐ Other (please explain):

5. My university offers literature and materials for communications, marketing and recruitment staff to inform them of cultural differences, customs and language needs of students from other countries:

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

6. My university offers curriculum on cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural development or sensitivity training to all undergraduate and graduate students:

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

7. If you answered no to question 6, what cross-cultural training and/or curriculum would you like to see added to your university's offerings?

8. As a communications, marketing, or recruitment professional, what courses in international or cross-cultural awareness training would you like to have received when you were a university or college student?

9. How would you rate the cross-cultural awareness of the communications and international recruitment staff at your university?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very aware) to 5 (very aware)

Please provide any comments:

10. Do you believe cross-cultural bias affects cross-cultural sensitivity?

- ☐ No. Please explain
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

11. Have you ever experienced uncertainty avoidance (feeling uncomfortable in unstructured situations) with individuals from other nationalities?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

12. What resources has your university put in place for staff to internationalize your campus community? Please select all that apply:

- ☐ Cross-cultural training
- ☐ Experiential training opportunities
- ☐ Language training

- ☐ Literature (brochures, web material, etc.) on target countries
- ☐ International Centre
- ☐ International travel opportunities
- ☐ Other: Please explain.

13. Please describe your university's strengths and/or weaknesses in providing appropriate knowledge and training for communications, marketing and recruitment staff who work to welcome international students.

14. Please outline any further cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training that you would like to see offered to your university's communications, marketing and international student recruitment staff.

15. Does your university work with international agents in the recruitment of international students?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. If you answered yes to question 15, how do these agents affect the international recruitment rates at your university and how have these agents positively or negatively impacted your university's brand?

17. Please offer any further information or issues that you would like to see addressed in this research. ***Please note that your answers are anonymous and your personal information will not be addressed in the research results.**

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

APPENDIX I**Survey questions for International Advisors and International Centre staff of Canadian universities**

1. Which university do you represent?

- ☐ University of British Columbia
- ☐ McGill University
- ☐ University of Alberta
- ☐ Dalhousie University
- ☐ University of Toronto
- ☐ Mount Allison University
- ☐ University of Prince Edward Island
- ☐ Memorial University of Newfoundland
- ☐ University of Saskatchewan
- ☐ University of Winnipeg.

2. What is your title?

- ☐ International Advisor
- ☐ International Centre staff
- ☐ International Centre manager
- ☐ Other (please explain):

3. How long have you been employed by this university?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ More than 1 year but less than 3 years
- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years but less than 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years but less than 15 years
- ☐ More than 15 years

4. Please state your gender:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

For the following open-ended and multiple choice questions, please answer and select the answers which best apply to you (please check all that apply). You may provide additional details in the spaces provided.

1. My university provides cross-cultural and sensitivity training to staff that support international students through:

- ☐ My university does not provide this training
- ☐ Multicultural team training
- ☐ Cultural awareness training
- ☐ Interactive training
- ☐ Language training
- ☐ Didactic (information giving) training
- ☐ Experiential training
- ☐ Immersion programming
- ☐ Other (please explain):

2. I am certified as a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

3. What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to international student support staff at your university? Please explain:

4. What cross-cultural/sensitivity training would you like to see offered to the staff involved with international student recruitment at your university? Please explain:

5. Have you, as a staff member at a Canadian university, ever experienced misunderstandings with a student from another country or cultural background?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

6. Have you ever addressed any issues with students who were having a difficult time with cross-cultural adjustment?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please provide some examples of these types of issues (leaving out any information that would identify any student):

7. How would you rate international students' cultural adjustments at your university?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very adjusted) to 5 (strongly adjusted)

Please provide any comments:

8. My university offers the following services to international students (please check all that apply):

- ☐ International advising
- ☐ English language training/support
- ☐ Visa assistance
- ☐ Medical assistance
- ☐ Cross-cultural adjustment assistance
- ☐ Culture shock support
- ☐ Integration into university/campus/local communities
- ☐ Conversation clubs/conversation partners
- ☐ Volunteer work opportunities
- ☐ Exam accommodations
- ☐ Academic support
- ☐ Social support
- ☐ Psychological support
- ☐ Other (please explain):

9. My university offers literature and materials for university staff to inform them of cultural differences, customs and language needs of students from other countries:

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

10. My university offers curriculum on cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural development or sensitivity training to undergraduate and graduate students:

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

11. If you answered no to question 10, what cross-cultural training and/or curriculum would you like to see added to your university's offerings?

12. How would you rate the cross-cultural awareness of staff that support international students at your university?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very aware) to 5 (very aware)

Please provide any comments.

13. Do you believe cross-cultural bias affects cross-cultural sensitivity?

- ☐ No. Please explain
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

14. Have you ever experienced uncertainty avoidance (feeling uncomfortable in unstructured situations) with individuals from other nationalities?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

15. What resources has your university put in place to internationalize your campus community? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Cross-cultural training
- ☐ Experiential training opportunities
- ☐ Language training
- ☐ Literature (brochures, web material, etc.) on target countries
- ☐ International Centre
- ☐ Exchange program opportunities
- ☐ International travel opportunities for staff
- ☐ Other: Please explain.

16. Please describe your university's strengths and/or weaknesses in providing appropriate knowledge and training for staff who work to welcome international students.

17. Please outline any further cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training that you would like to see offered to your university's staff that support international students.

18. Please offer any further information or issues that you would like to see addressed in this research. ***Please note that your answers are anonymous and your personal information will not be addressed in the research results.**

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

APPENDIX J**Survey questions for international students currently studying at Canadian universities**

1. Which Canadian university do you attend?

- ☐ University of British Columbia
- ☐ McGill University
- ☐ University of Alberta
- ☐ Dalhousie University
- ☐ University of Toronto
- ☐ Mount Allison University
- ☐ University of Prince Edward Island
- ☐ Memorial University of Newfoundland
- ☐ University of Saskatchewan
- ☐ University of Winnipeg

2. What year of study are you in:

- ☐ Undergraduate year 1
- ☐ Undergraduate year 2
- ☐ Undergraduate year 3
- ☐ Undergraduate year 4
- ☐ Master's program
- ☐ PhD program

3. How old are you?

- ☐ Under 18 years old
- ☐ 18
- ☐ 19
- ☐ 20
- ☐ 21
- ☐ 22
- ☐ 23
- ☐ 24
- ☐ 25 or older

4. What country are you from?

5. How long have you been in Canada?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ More than 1 year but less than 3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years but less than 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

6. Are you:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

7. What is your major area of study?

- ☐ Arts
- ☐ Sciences
- ☐ Business/Commerce/Management
- ☐ Fine Arts (for example: music, theatre, art, dance)
- ☐ Computer Science
- ☐ Health Professions (for example: nursing, human kinetics, pharmacy, etc.)
- ☐ Medicine
- ☐ Dentistry
- ☐ Other: Please explain

For the following open-ended and multiple choice questions, please answer and select the answers which best apply to you (please check all that apply). You may provide additional details in the spaces provided.

1. Why did you decide to study at a university in Canada? Please choose all answers that apply to you.

- ☐ To gain international experience
- ☐ To improve my English skills
- ☐ To learn about international economics and business
- ☐ To improve my adaptation skills
- ☐ Canada has a good academic reputation
- ☐ I heard that Canada is a safe country
- ☐ University education in Canada is affordable
- ☐ I hope to stay in Canada after I graduate
- ☐ Other: Please explain

2. Why did you decide to study at this Canadian university? Please choose all answers that apply to you.

- ☐ This university has a very good reputation
- ☐ This university has affordable fees
- ☐ The recruiter from this university influenced my decision
- ☐ From the brochures/videos/website; this campus appeared to be very beautiful
- ☐ My friends go/plan to go to this university
- ☐ My parents told me I should/must go to this university
- ☐ This university is in a big city
- ☐ This university is in a small town or country side
- ☐ This university is in a city/town with many people from my country

- ☐ This university in a city/town with few people from my country
- ☐ Other: Please explain

3. Does your university offer any of the following special programs or services for international students?

- ☐ International advising
- ☐ English language training/support
- ☐ Visa assistance
- ☐ Medical assistance
- ☐ Cross-cultural adjustment assistance
- ☐ Culture shock support
- ☐ Integration into university/campus/local communities
- ☐ Conversation clubs/conversation partners
- ☐ Volunteer work opportunities
- ☐ Exam accommodations
- ☐ Academic support
- ☐ Social support
- ☐ Psychological support
- ☐ Other (please explain):

4. What additional programs or services would you like to be offered for international students at your university?

5. What did you know about this university before you left your home country?

6. Did you meet with any staff from this university in your home country? If yes, what did they do to help you decide to study at this university?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

7. What training or information on living and studying at a Canadian university were you given before you left your home country?

- ☐ I did not receive any pre-departure training
- ☐ Multicultural team training
- ☐ Cultural awareness training
- ☐ Interactive training
- ☐ Language/Dialect training
- ☐ Didactic (information giving) training
- ☐ Experiential training
- ☐ Immersion programming
- ☐ Other (please explain):

8. Are there any information or services that you would like to see Canadian university staff offer to international students who are considering studying in Canada? Please explain.

9. Do you feel comfortable using English with native-English speakers?

☐ Yes

☐ No

10. How prepared did you feel about coming to study in Canada?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (not very prepared) to 5 (very prepared)

Please provide any comments:

11. Since arriving in Canada, have your experiences matched what you expected before you left your home country?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (my experiences have not met my expectations) to 5 (my experiences have very much met my expectations)

Please provide any comments:

12. How would you rate the educational experience that you have received so far at this Canadian university?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied)

Please provide any comments:

13. When you first contacted or met the staff from the Canadian university, how would you rate his or her knowledge about your home country?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly unknowledgeable) to 5 (strongly knowledgeable)

Please provide any comments:

14. How much cross-cultural information or training do you think is important for Canadian university staff members to have when recruiting international students?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (little information) to 5 (a lot of information)

Please provide any comments:

15. Do you think any changes should be made to the Canadian international university student recruitment process?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (do not think that changes should be made) to 5 (strongly think that changes should be made)

Please provide any comments:

16. Are you satisfied with Canada's international student recruitment system?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied)

Please provide any comments:

17. Did an education agent help you with your application and preparation for coming to Canada?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. If you answered yes to question 17, how satisfied were you with the help from your agent?

Please rate on a scale of 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied)

Please provide any comments:

19. Have you ever experienced any misunderstanding with a staff member at your Canadian university?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes. Please explain:

20. Please describe what cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training you would like to see offered to Canadian universities' communications, marketing and international recruitment staff.

21. Please list your favorite things about studying in Canada:

22. Please offer any further information or issues that you would like to see addressed in this research. ***Please note that your answers are anonymous and your personal information will not be addressed in the research results.**

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

APPENDIX K**Table 1.**

Survey response rates, by university and by participant group

UNIVERSITY	SAMPLE GROUP		
	Communications, marketing and recruitment professionals	International Advisors and International Centre staff	International Students
Dalhousie University	Sample size: 14	Sample size: 5	Sample size: 1,961 students (unknown if full- or part-time) had access to survey via the International Centre Facebook page
	# Responses: 4	# Responses: 2	# Responses: 20
	Response rate: 28.57%	Response rate: 40%	Response rate: 1.02%
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Sample size: 13	Sample size: 4	Sample size: 2,318 international full- and part-time students registered at MUN in Fall 2015 (mun.ca Fact Book, 2015)
	# Responses: 2	# Responses: 1	#Responses: 27
	Response rate: 15.38%	Response rate: 25%	Response rate: 1.16%
Mount Allison University	Sample size: 8	Sample size: 3	Sample size: 220 international student emails on distribution list
	# Responses: 2	# Responses: 2	Student responses received: 14
	Response rate: 25%	Response rate: 66.67%	Response rate: 6.36%
University of Prince Edward Island	Sample size: 9	Sample size: 5	Sample size: 778 international student emails on distribution list
	# Responses: 2	# Responses: 2	Student responses received: 67
	Response rate: 22.22%	Response rate: 40%	Response rate: 8.61%

Appendix L

The vertical axis in each chart represents the number of respondents who selected the corresponding option in the legend.

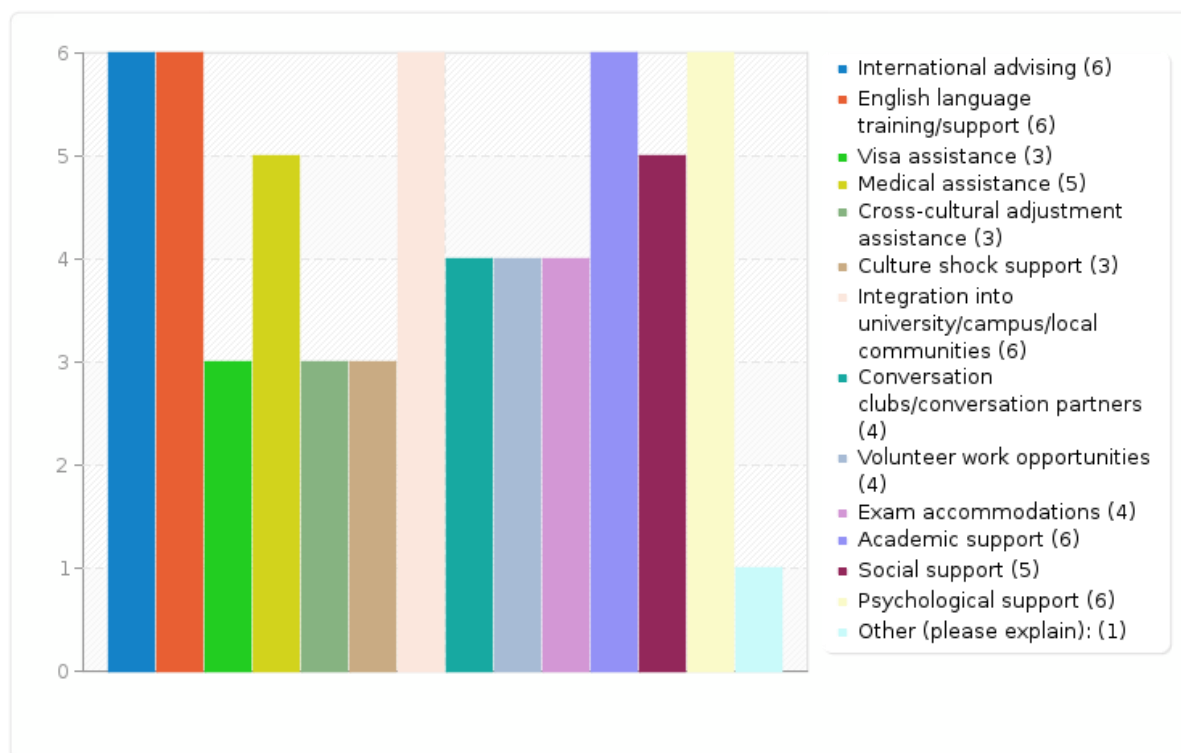


Figure 1. Communications, marketing or recruitment staff members' knowledge of services offered to international students.

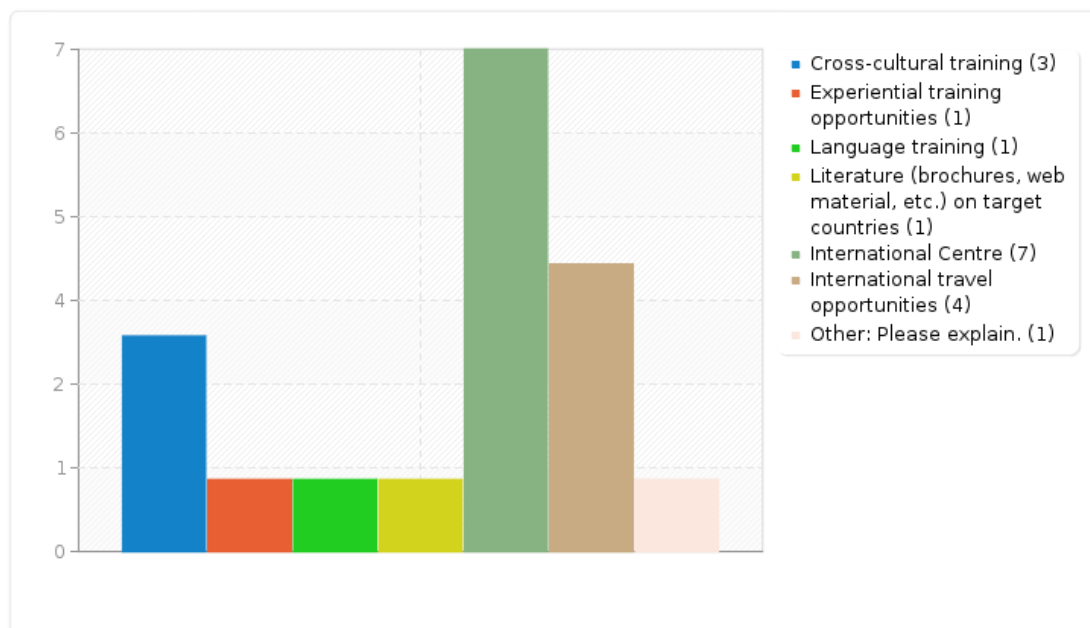


Figure 2. Communications, marketing or recruitment staff members' knowledge of resources that internationalize their campus communities.

Table 2.

Cross-cultural training that communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members would like to see offered to their respective staff groups.

<p>“A formal session/lesson with experts in the field or the international office on sensitive issues for international students/persons.”</p>
<p>“To be honest, I’m not sure what’s out there beyond the maybe two training sessions I’ve participated in over eight years in my office. I felt that one of the sessions included generalizing statements about particular cultures, which I thought was problematic.”</p>
<p>“I do not feel informed enough to know whether or not this would have an impact on my day-to-day activities/role.”</p>
<p>“It would be helpful to be provided more market-specific information about student trends, cultural sensitivities and awareness, before undergoing recruitment travel to a new location. We are dependent on third-party information sources currently, and the onus is on employees to seek this information out themselves with little direction from management. A commitment of resources to send employees to professional development opportunities through organizations like CBIE [Canadian Bureau for International Education], EduCanada, WES [World Education Services], ICEF, could be helpful in building cross-cultural/sensitivity capacity in employees working on the front lines with international students.”</p>
<p>“I have chatted with quite a few international students as well as with staff in the International Centre as part of my job. I’ve learned quite a bit from that. But an overview of the supports offered to International students would be very helpful.”</p>
<p>“Generally just being aware of the diversity of campuses these days and perhaps having a sense of the main concerns or transition challenges for international students.”</p>
<p>“I’d like to see cross-cultural/sensitivity training and gender-neutral sensitivity training so we can be sure that our communications with the university community are not confusing, alienating, offending or shaming anyone unintentionally.”</p>

Table 3.**Communications, marketing, and recruitment staff members' acknowledged strengths and weaknesses with respect to their working to welcome international students.**

“Staff are open and receptive; however, limited resources and knowledge are provided to staff working with international students outside of the International Relations Office.”
“I’m not really able to speak to this, as my office is not directly involved in on-campus student services.”
“I believe they do a great job with the International Centre staff but the communications and marketing staff have had no training.”
“As a small university with a relatively small international student population, we are good at providing one on one attention if/when issues around cross-cultural sensitivity arise, to help an employee to deal with situations. But it is all quite reactive as situations occur, as opposed to a proactive approach to provide training in advance to be prepared for issues...I believe we could utilize our current students by soliciting their feedback on their experiences to help us to identify what is problematic from their viewpoint and address accordingly.”
“I’m not aware of anything directed specifically at communications, marketing and recruitment staff.”
“I am sorry, I don’t have enough understanding of this to provide much thought on it. My colleagues in marketing may have great training on it of which I am unaware.”
“Strengths – recruitment staff are closely linked to the International Centre and Student Affairs; recruitment staff work with students on campus from different cultural backgrounds; international recruiting is done by experienced recruiters with experience in cross-cultural settings; information on campus in terms of student events; responsive student union.”

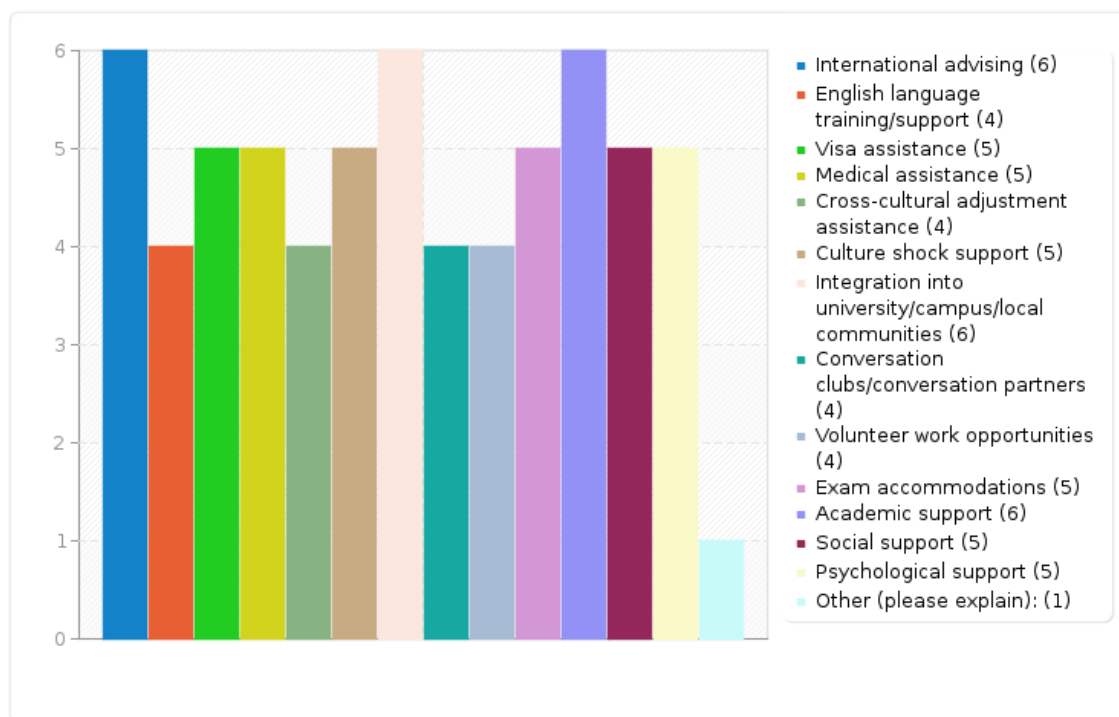


Figure 3. International Advisors and International Centre staff members' awareness of services available to international students.

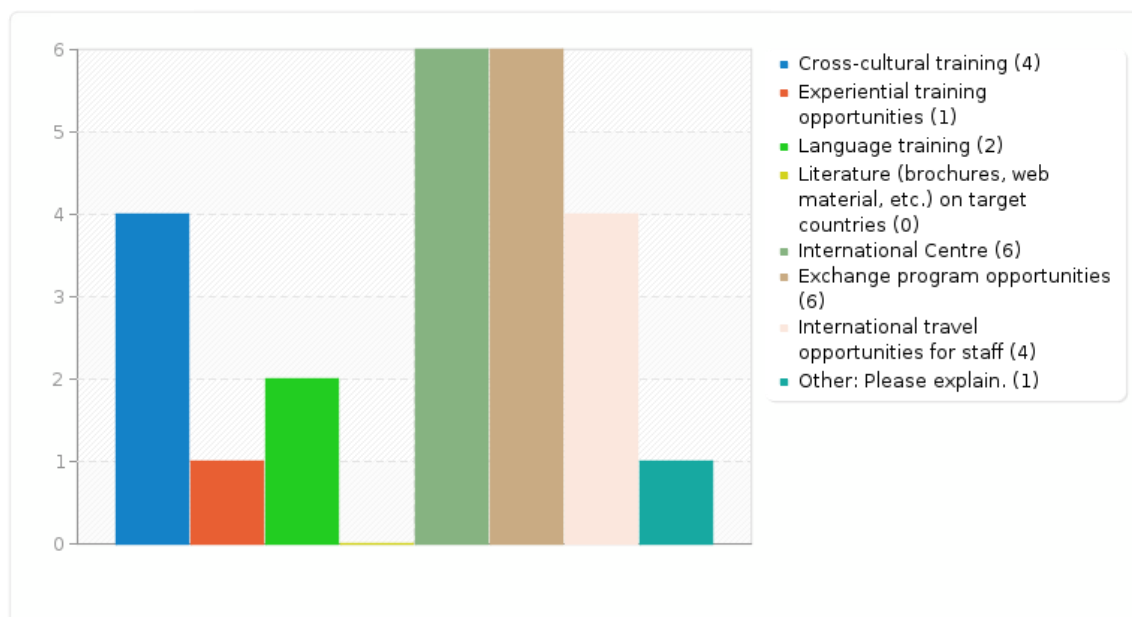


Figure 4. International Advisors' and International Centre staff members' awareness of resources that internationalize their campus communities.

Table 4.

International Advisors' and International Centre staff members' opinions on the strengths and weaknesses in providing staff with cross-cultural training.

Comments by International Advisors' and International Centre staff members

"[Our] strength is that we have a large International Relations office [which] opened in 2012 [with a] staff of 14 who are all cross-trained. We changed the face of campus in three years from 12 per cent international to 18 per cent. Familiarity and presence increases awareness and tolerance. [Our] weakness is we can't force people to accept and support multiculturalism. Some professors don't want any more international students in their classrooms. This is very difficult."

"There are always staff on call to help answer questions; but if [these] staff would need to reach out to receive support, [this means they] do not yet have the capacity to deal with issues on their own."

"We have an extremely strong International Office team and we are all cross-trained in all areas to make sure our students are strongly supported...Our weakness would be that we need to ensure other departments and faculties are equally strong in this area."

"I think there is an assumption that staff in these roles will be the resources for such information for other university staff and students; however, developing curriculum on cross-cultural training is something that may need some professional development."

"I received no formal training when I began working with international students. I still have not received any formal training/professional development in this area in the past five years since I began working with international students. I had a lot of experience living and working in other countries and participated in cross-cultural training workshops as recent undergraduate so this helped me when I began working. I believe that because [this university] is a small university and it is known as a friendly, supportive and welcoming community that university administrators feel they don't need to provide the appropriate knowledge and training to staff who welcome international students because the environment replaces the need for appropriate cross-cultural training."

"Internationalization is on the radar of the university but more work needs to be done to educate faculty and staff, especially those who work with international students."

Providing the knowledge and training is one thing but making changes to communication styles and behaviors is another thing. It takes time but I think we are on the right path."

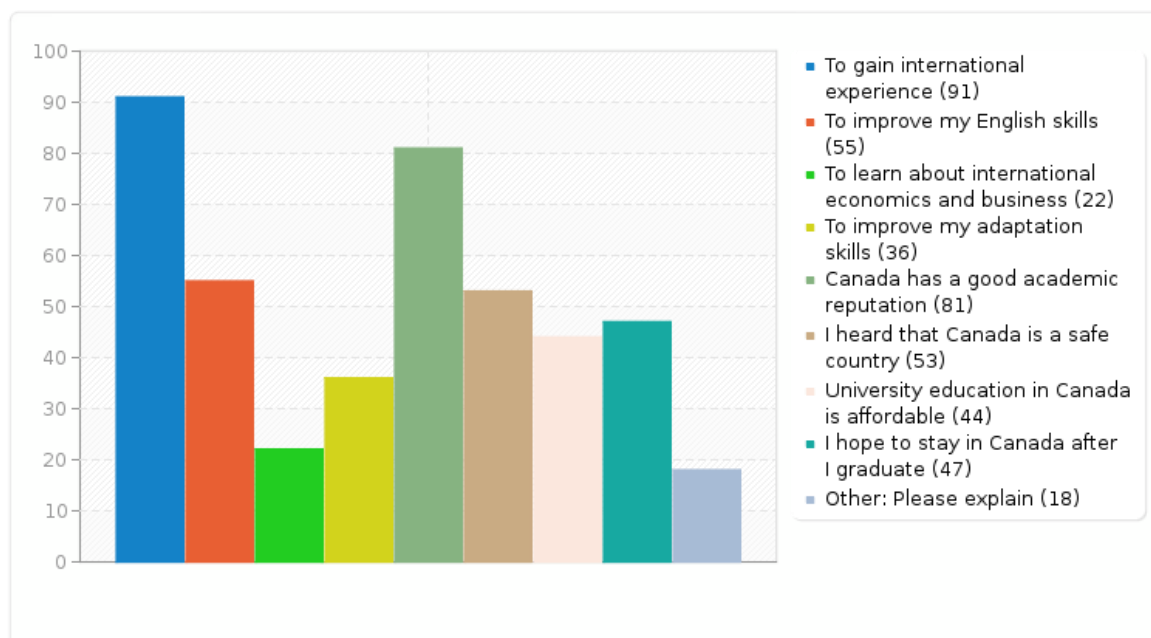


Figure 5. Reasons identified by international student survey participants' for choosing to study at a university in Canada

*Table 5.***Nations represented by international student survey participants.**

Students' home countries	Number of students from that country	Overall percentage
Bangladesh	5	4%
Brazil	4	3.20%
Cameroon	1	0.80%
Chile	2	1.60%
China	18	14.40%
Colombia	1	0.80%
Denmark	3	2.40%
Ecuador	1	0.80%
Egypt	2	1.60%
Finland	1	0.80%
Germany	4	3.20%
Ghana	2	1.60%
India	4	3.20%
Iran	3	2.40%
Israel	1	0.80%
Italy	1	0.80%
Japan	4	3.20%
Kenya	2	1.60%
Lebanon	1	0.80%
Libya	3	2.40%
Madagascar	1	0.80%
Malaysia	2	1.60%
Mauritius	1	0.80%
Mexico	1	0.80%
Netherlands	1	0.80%
Nigeria	12	9.60%
Northern Ireland/Scotland	1	0.80%
Norway	4	3.20%
Pakistan	4	3.20%
Puerto Rico	1	0.80%
Russia	1	0.80%
Saudi Arabia	1	0.80%
Senegal	1	0.80%
South Korea	1	0.80%

Sudan	2	1.60%
Sri Lanka	1	0.80%
The Phillipines	1	0.80%
Trinidad and Tobago	1	0.80%
Uganda	1	0.80%
United States	22	17.60%
Venezuela	1	0.80%
Zimbabwe	1	0.80%
Identified countries	125	100%

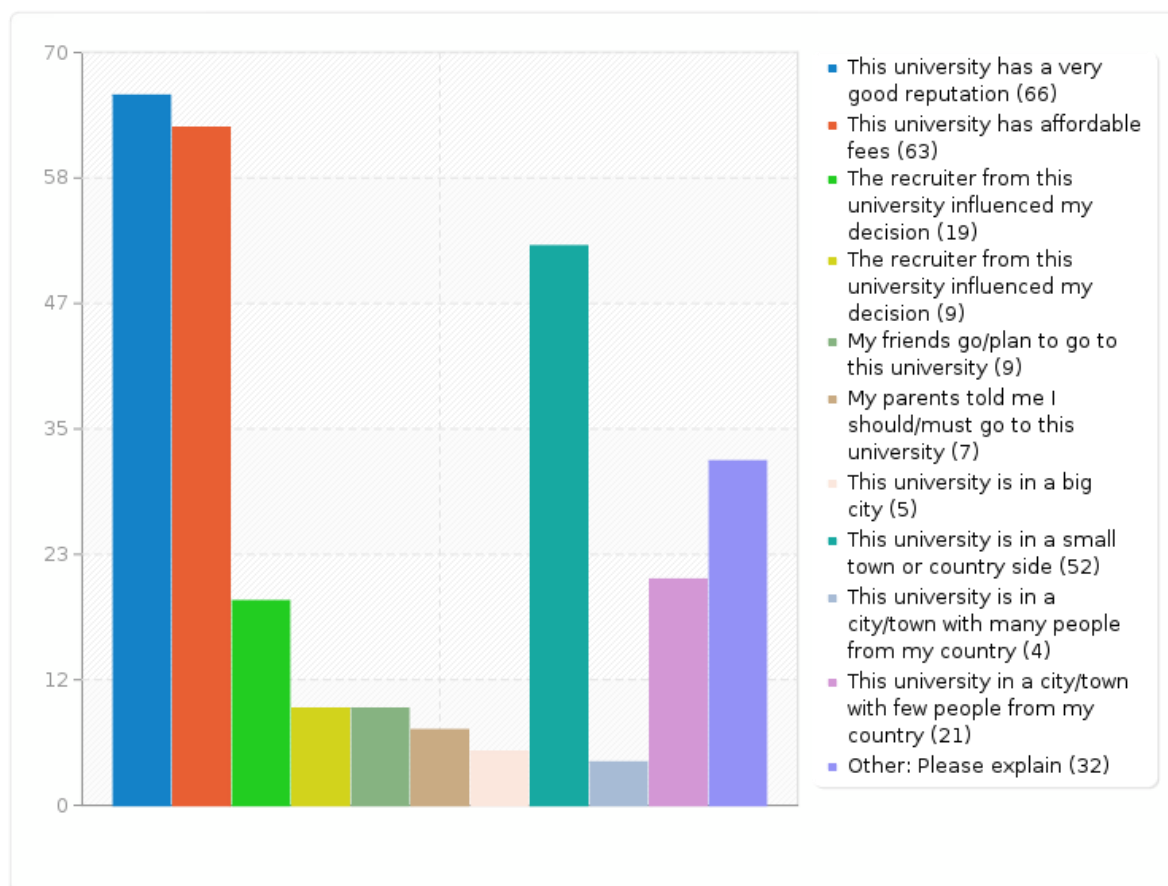


Figure 6. Reasons identified by international student survey participants' for choosing a particular university.

Table 6.

Comments provided by international student survey participants on why they chose their particular university.

Theme	Comments by international students
Culture	<p>"I decide to study in Canada to improve my skill and mix with other people who are not of the same mother tongue. [I wanted to] acquire more skills and knowledge."</p>
Travel	<p>"I've always loved traveling."</p> <p>"I wanted to travel abroad and still stay relatively close to home, and as someone from 'The States,' going to University in Canada gave me that option."</p> <p>"I find that studying internationally helps build maturity and, generally, makes you a better person."</p>
Program Offerings	<p>"International economics, especially - for my International Relations major."</p> <p>"The university covered course similar to those at my home university."</p> <p>"The academic level at my country is very weak."</p> <p>"Co-op programs"</p>
Cost	<p>"Tuition Waiver as an exchange student."</p> <p>"University Education in Canada, is becoming increasingly popular for American students, who do not want to pay the ludicrous tuition fees at US universities."</p> <p>"I was offered a good scholarship to pursue further studies and I wanted to pursue studies out of my home country so as not only to get a comparative advantage, but to experience the difference."</p>
Reputation	<p>"Canada has an excellent academic reputation, at a fraction of the cost of many U.S. universities."</p> <p>"Partner university of my home university."</p> <p>Some students' responses indicated they based their decisions on national university rankings.</p>

Assistance	<p>“My supervisors presented an interesting project and were enthusiastic about my expressed interest in joining the team.”</p> <p>“There was a researcher here studying my interests.”</p>
Location	<p>“Weather is warmer compared to other cities.”</p> <p>“Coming from a major city on the US eastern seaboard, I consider myself to have fairly good "street sense," though have never felt unsafe in Canada.</p> <p>I like the "small college town" atmosphere.”</p>

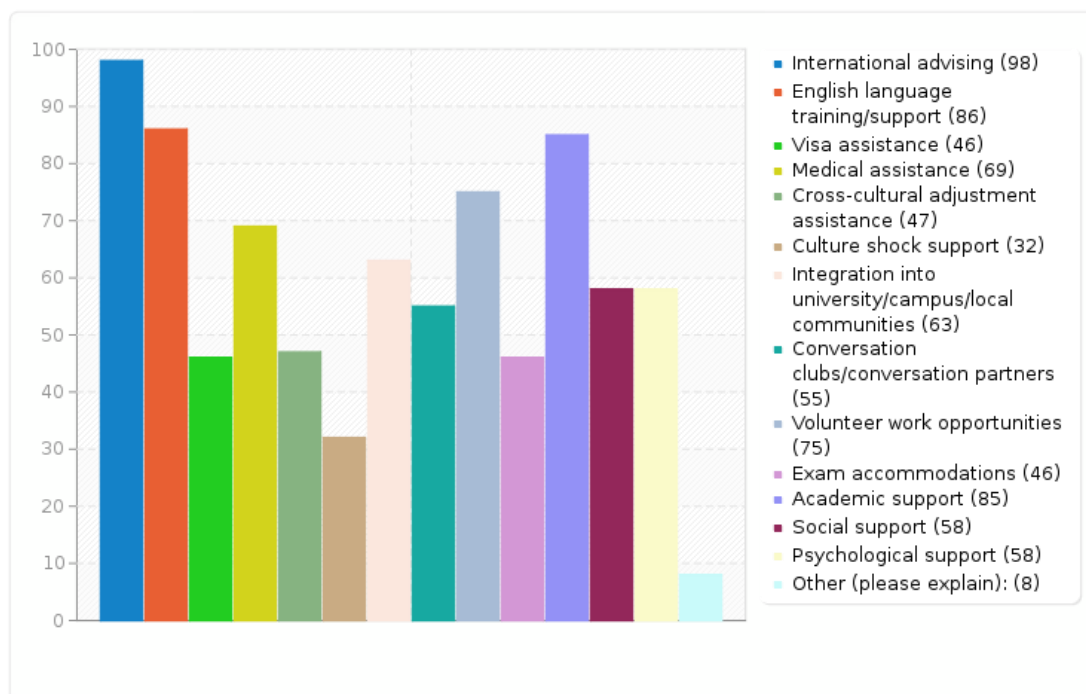


Figure 7. Services or programs offered as identified by international student participants.

Table 7.

Comments provided by international students on what they knew about their host universities before they left their home countries

Host University	Students' home country	Students' Comments
	China	"Great reputation, great service, great location."
Dalhousie University	USA	"I knew all the basic stats all universities give. Not much knowledge about Halifax other than it was a small city similar to ones near me."
	Denmark	"I knew the courses would be tough, the people nice, and the international program pretty good."
	Mauritius	"Well, I was pretty well informed by my recruiter about safety, bullying support, the environment and the number of courses offered."
Memorial University of Newfoundland	China	"The tuition is cheaper compared to other Canadian universities. People are nice here. The city is peaceful with a small amount of people. The city has been influenced by Irish culture a lot."
	Zimbabwe	"That it was in a small place and that it had a very good co-op program."
	Cameroon	"It offered good programs, teaching system, support for international students, and affordable tuition."
Mount Allison University	India	"I knew it was a very good liberal arts university where some family friends had gone. And I also knew I had got a scholarship and this was a much more affordable option than other Canadian schools."
	United States	"Very little. I knew it was in a small, rural community and had small class sizes. I knew it had a good reputation amongst Canadian schools, and

	that its tuition was much cheaper than schools in the states.”
Trinidad and Tobago	“It's a very small, primarily undergraduate liberal arts university with many opportunities for students to get involved.”
United States	“Quite a lot. I did a lot of research. It's the #1 school in Canada, has a relatively large international student body for its size, really good reputation among other Canadian universities, and it's generally a pretty liberal/multi-cultural/etc. campus.”
Germany	“Highly engaged people at the International Relations Office to support my study semester abroad; highly qualified university staff willing to help students succeed academically and personally.”
United States	“I knew it was on a relatively small island, with a mix of semi-urban and rural communities. I also knew the university had a strong academic atmosphere, and that its small class sizes enabled students to get to know professors and other university workers well, enriching their academic career. (All of this I found to be true in every last sense in my three years here thus far, and I don't expect that to change at all.)”
The Philippines	“I did not know much. I had never even heard of Prince Edward Island before. All I knew was my on-campus housing information and the courses I was going to be taking that semester. Everything else, I figured out as I went along.”
Brazil	“I knew that was one of the best universities in vet school.”

University of
Prince Edward
Island

Table 8.

Comments from international student participants about their interactions with recruiters/staff from their host universities while in their home countries.

University	Students' home country	Comment
Dalhousie University	Uganda	"I met a prof who explained the scholarships and benefits of a Dalhousie degree and also introduced the basics to apply for the scholarship."
	United States	"I met with a recruiting officer of Dal at a local college fair. He was super helpful in my whole application process to Dal."
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Zimbabwe	"They informed me of the program choices that I actually had."
	Mauritius	"[He provided me with] constant help and support. He always replied to my queries and emails even though he was travelling around the world. Helped me in my registration and to get into residence. He was present. We never chased the university registrar to get information. If the recruiter wasn't there, I don't think that I would have been able to make it that far."
	Madagascar	"Explained the programs and the application procedure. Also helped me throughout this procedure for any question that I had. Very helpful."
	United States	"I met with the school representative/recruiter multiple times. She, herself, went to MTA and so I learned about her first-hand experience. I also learned much about the school and when I visited the campus, I found it all to be true."
Mount Allison University	Nigeria	"The recruiter was very helpful explaining the class sizes."

University of Prince Edward Island	Germany	<i>“Presentation of opportunities at UPEI to study for one semester abroad - tuition waiver was definitely a plus. Impression of the university – felt like home and resulted in choosing UPEI.”</i>
	Kenya	<i>“They gave a talk of the great study opportunities and skill one could acquire after studying here.”</i>
	Chile	<i>“I met my current supervisor while working on a privately funded project. She encouraged me to come to Canada.”</i>

Table 9.

Additional programs or services that international students would like to see offered to them at their Atlantic Canadian universities.

Comments from international students
“Programs to get more in touch with Canadians. Every event is concentrated on only international students. I rarely communicate with Canadians.”
“Sessions on how to adapt to the Canadian university system, which is different from that of other countries.”
“Visa assistance for sure. Getting a Canadian visa is so not easy and getting some assistance from the university would help us a lot. A lot of students get refused for visa every year and I believe they could use some help from the university regarding visa and immigration issues”.
“International Relations Office's staff are excellent. However, accounting staff, research staff are terrible. They are not accustomed to English as a Second Language students. It is strongly necessary for these staff to learn how to communicate with international students. In addition, accounting staff and other staff except international relations office look down on international students.”
“I think they should have residence for students who have family and want to live with them.”
“Many times graduate students do not start at the same time as undergraduates do, and we also do not really have an orientation set up for grad students. I did not get a lot of introductory stuff, but my office mates were really great. Having an online source for many things (how to get bank account, rental help, car insurance/driver's license, voluntary ID etc.) would be great, so everybody can access it when needed and the staff do not have to deal with the same questions over and over.”
“I would like an event that talks about diversity and also help international and Canadian students interact more.”
“I want someone who actually knows how to transfer stuff from the US to Canada like car insurance and things like that. Nobody really knows how to do things like get car insurance and the proper paper work for your car and the best cell phone plans and it is super frustrating.”

Table 10.

Services or information that international students would like to see Canadian staff offer to international students considering studying at universities in Canada.

Comments by international students
“Better descriptions of what they can accomplish; for example, that it is not very easy for students to take up medicine as an international student and that some companies don't hire international students, etc.”
“More support in the departments, where international students might have difficulties adapting and feel like they do not belong to the system.”
“Oh my god, yes please. There are a lot of misconceptions, especially in developing countries.”
“Maybe the universities could use their social networking sites to connect to other international students and answer their queries correctly.”
“Maybe they can get some international students [currently studying at the host university] as volunteers who can communicate with students considering to come, to help them know better about the school as well as the city.”
“The number of international students increased in Canada. However, most of the staff are not accustomed to international students. They should have training of understanding international students' English. For example, such as a course of EAP [English for Academic Purposes] program. Depending on the nationality, international students have some characteristics, Chinese students cannot distinguish ‘zu’ and ‘su’, Japanese students cannot pronounce ‘R’ and ‘L’.”
“More internship opportunities during the summer would be of great help, jobs on campus shouldn't be given to "preferably" Canadians alone. We have no family here and we need jobs to support ourselves too.”
“What it's like coming to a new country in terms of a social life. Also maybe warn international students how young Canadian students can be. In my country [Denmark] we are at least 21 before attending university, it makes a huge difference in maturity.”
“Every university should offer halal food to Muslims in their [food] services. Make worship place for Muslims and provide wash rooms with it, as we do use water for cleaning [before prayer].”

Table 11.

Cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity training that international students would like to see offered to Atlantic Canadian universities communications, marketing and recruitment staff.

Comments by international students
<p>“Support the student after his/her arrival and during his/her studies. Not just before to make him choose this university. I was treated really well and I chose the program. When I arrived, nobody cared any more, they already took my fees so they just don’t care.”</p>
<p>“A brief background over multiple cultures and societies of international countries in order to improve the communication between both sides.”</p>
<p>“Specific, country-to-country information and training. Should be based on each individual country/region of that country that incoming students are coming from - rather than continent-by-continent statistics from prior years.”</p>
<p>“Training should incorporate dealing with issues of discrimination on the basis of race, ability, and gender; and making staff (and students) aware of the policies in place to deal with these problems. Training participants should be aware that not all international students are people of color, and that there are students whose native language is English and who come from a country where English is the official language. Encouraging a bit of researching before interacting with a prospective international student, whether in person, by phone, or by email, could save staff the embarrassment of having offended someone for imposing preconceived notions about that person or appearing unknowledgeable.”</p>
<p>“Basic or a working knowledge of global geography, being informed about different religious restrictions/considerations, and being informed about current events impacting the countries students are coming from.”</p>
<p>“Never tell some they speak “such good English”. Treat international students like you would everyone else.”</p>
<p>“People should be more educated on my culture because I’ve had several ignorant comments and questions thrown at my direction as to how Africans live and travel. People should be educated on the fact that this is the 21st century, we do not live on trees and we didn’t paddle a canoe all the way from Africa and yes we do speak English in my birth town.”</p>
<p>“Training to close the huge gap between Asian and European students.”</p>

Table 12.**International students' favorite things about studying in Canada**

Host University	Students' comments
Dalhousie University	<i>"The scenery in Halifax is wonderful. People are kind."</i>
	<i>"Easy-going city environment, Meeting people from different backgrounds. Having a strong sense of independence and freedom."</i>
	<i>"The people, the language, the food, and while there is a lot of course work I do feel like I am learning a lot."</i>
Memorial University of Newfoundland	<i>"I just love living in Newfoundland. There's nowhere better in the world. I love how nice and friendly folks are in St John's. I love being able to research something that matters to local folks. I love being able to see the ocean every day. I love being a mentor to new international students and getting to help them through being both an international student and also a North American English speaker. I love getting to talk about the differences between the US and Canada and when the folks from the Atlantic Provinces and New England join together to tease folks from the rest of the continents. I love getting to meet international students from around the world- -but I wish we had more in the faculty of arts. I love being in place that's similar to where I grew up in a ton of ways but surprises me in both the ways it is the same and different. I love touts (look them up) few things more yummy."</i>
	<i>"1) People are friendly 2) Cost is affordable 3) There are more opportunities here compared to my home country 4) Canada is a secured place, unlike my home country where I can't go outside after evening due to security reasons 5) Canadian lifestyle and culture."</i>
	<i>"Safety, safety and safety. Food. Friendliness. Incredible amount of support for studies and health. The profs are great too. University is not corrupted here. Vast number of opportunity to make dreams come true."</i>

Mount Allison University	<i>“People are super nice. The country is safe, clean and really beautiful (I haven't seen the winter yet). There is flexibility in what you can study and there is a lot of freedom and independence in terms of how you're treated in University (no attendance to lectures etc, you are an adult who is responsible for your own education).”</i>
	<i>“Tuition prices - Easier opportunity to immigrate here. Learning about other international students' nations and experiences.”</i>
	<i>“The community, residence, small class sizes, active learning, English, new experiences, friends from all over the world.”</i>
University of Prince Edward Island	<i>“The environment is very clean, people are friendly, I admire the quota system and opportunity for small farms to survive, and my school is everything I was hoping for (small class sizes, intense program, supportive staff, etc.).”</i>
	<i>“Canadians, so polite and kind people. The challenge about learning things in other language. Being emerged in another culture made me more mature and tolerant person. I love UPEI, I love Canada in all the aspects. Not as much the freezing cold weather, but the rest compensates.”</i>
	<i>“I love everything in Canada especially going snowboarding, making Canadian friends who are very curious and want to know everything about where you are from.”</i>
