

The Needs of South Korean International Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study

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A B S T R A C T

With increased numbers of undergraduate Korean international students, there was a need to examine multiple aspects of their university life in order to better engage them on campus. Employing Case Study as a methodology, the author analyzed survey and interview data collected from 121 Korean international undergraduate students in a major university in the U.S. Midwest. Many of the participants shared academic and social challenges, including academic difficulties and mandatory military service (for male students). They also shared methods used to find support and deal with these challenges, relying in most cases on their friends. Some participants had early study abroad experiences, resulting in more fluent English and cultural adaptation skills. However, the author argues that it is critical to acknowledge the specific needs of these younger Korean international students in order to better facilitate their success. Finally, the author challenges U.S. higher education institutions to customize international student services to accommodate students' unique needs without making generalizations about their abilities and potentials.

Keywords: international education, higher education, international students, student services

I . Introduction

The number of international students in the United States (U.S.) has grown substantially along with the increase of students' international mobility around the globe. According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), in 2014, there were about 886,000 international students studying in U.S. higher education institutions, with about half of those students from China, India and Korea. More than half of the students in the Korean

international student population were pursuing an undergraduate degree. These students are the second largest international undergraduate student population in the U.S. following China (IIE, 2014). Given these international student demographics as well as the growing number of international students in the U.S. at the undergraduate level, the author examined on the needs and experiences of Korean undergraduate international students, in order to identify supports for these students to be successful.

In 2014, this study was launched to describe Korean international undergraduate students' experiences at a major mid-western university in the U.S. This university has a long history of hosting Korean international students, along with international students from numerous other countries. About 10% of the student body is composed

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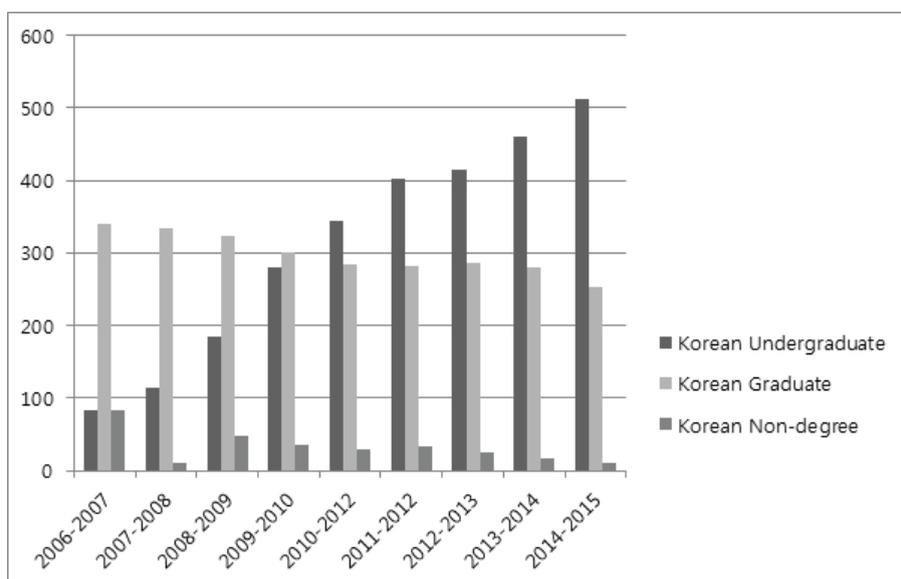


Fig. 1. The numbers of Korean international students at degree level at the university.

of international students from more than a hundred countries. As the number of undergraduate international students in the U.S. has increased, there has been a substantial increase in the number of undergraduate international students on this campus. Approximately, 3,000 international students were enrolled in an undergraduate program at this institution in the year of 2014. Among them, approximately 500 were from South Korea. The number of Korean undergraduate international students was relatively stable until 2008, but has increased substantially since then. By 2010, the number of Korean undergraduate students had surpassed the number of Korean graduate students (Figure 1).

With the shift of Korean international students from older students to much younger ones, the student services staff desired to understand more about the experiences of this student group. Their motivation stemmed from a need to be able to advise male students' decision-making related to Korean mandatory military service, and how to better engage students on campus for social and career events. In addition, they desired to differentiate Korean cultural values and heritage from those of Chinese and Japanese students. Many more educational opportunities provided staff with information about Chinese and Japanese international students, yet staff members suspected the content might not be applicable to Korean students although their experiences seemed alike.

II. Literature Review

The United States has been the most desired country to visit to study abroad in the world for the past decades, and the contribution of international students to globalization of higher education is well documented (Chellaraj, Maskus, & Matto, 2008; Parsons, 2010). In 2016, the Institute of International Education (IIE) announced that the U.S. hosted more than 4.5 globally mobile students of colleges and universities that was more than of any other county in the world. Scholars stated that international students on college campuses play an important role in facilitating cross-cultural partnerships and knowledge exchange between domestic and international groups (Heppner, 2006). In the long run, they create international trade and business connection, become political allies, and promote foreign policy interests (NAFSA, 2003). Along with international insights and diverse perspectives, international students accounted for 340,000 jobs in the U.S. in 2014 and contributed more than 30 billion dollars to the U.S. economy in 2015 (IIE, 2016).

International students' motivations to study abroad may vary, yet can be summarized by an intent to obtain international experiences and make new friends, pursue their academic goals, gain prestige through a degree from

a U.S. higher education institution, and escape their home-country's economic, political, and/or educational conditions (Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). By studying abroad, international students can "develop new outlooks, increase their self-esteem and confidence, and mature as a result of their independent life experiences in another culture" (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010, p. 33). Korean students have been heading to many destinations abroad in recent years, including the United States. Along with the known benefits of studying abroad, studies identified more specific reason for Korean students to pursue U.S. higher education degrees. Korean college students' intentions to study abroad in the U.S. were related to dissatisfaction with the Korean higher education system, and pursuit of cultural capital with the symbolic value of an American college degree, with a hope for an opportunity for social mobility in Korean society (Park, 2009; Jon, 2013).

Despite these good intentions, international students experience many challenges in U.S. higher education institutions. Many studies have focused on students' experiences and challenges in that international students experience more challenges compared to the majority of American domestic students (Andrade, 2006; Mori, 2000; Özturgut & Murphy, 2009; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Common challenges in international student experiences are due to both cultural and academic adaptation to a new environment. Scholars have identified several negative factors related to international students' experiences, such as language difficulties, financial stress, racial discrimination, and loneliness, and also positive factors such as a sense of belonging, host friends, university support, and campus engagement (Glass, Gomez, & Urzua, 2014; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Cho & Yu, 2015; Zhao, Kuh, & Garini, 2005).

Scholars have also identified the need to pay attention to the differences in international students' experiences and specific challenges based on their region of origin. For example, Lee (2010) found that students from predominantly non-white regions experienced greater difficulties and had more negative experiences compared to those of students from predominantly white regions (e.g., Europe). Similarly, international students from East Asia studying in Anglophone countries including the U.S. have fewer host friends than international students from other parts of the world (Gareis, 2012). Byon, Chan and Thomas (1999) noted that Korean international students

had unique expectations about counseling compared to those of other Asian international students, such as Chinese and Japanese, as well as those of other Asian immigrant students. Researchers have noted that that it is unfortunate to find there is a common assumption that research findings regarding Chinese or Japanese students are applicable to Korean students and have criticized the inappropriateness of generalizations about Korean international students' lives, national identities and culture based on those of students from these other nations (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Soe & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). The missing piece in the literature is a framework that explores the experiences and specific needs of sub-groups of international students base their country of origin, especially those of younger students at the undergraduate level.

III. Purpose

In this study, the author explores the needs of Korean undergraduate international students by describing their specific challenges, and how they meet their academic and social needs, in order to generate methods for international educators and student services staff members to work closely with this student population. The following two research questions are addressed:

1. What are the unique challenges for Korean international undergraduate students and how do they find support?
2. What are the potential best practices and institutional strategies for working with Korean international undergraduate students?

Three areas of Korean international undergraduate students' university life experiences are the focus: (a) students' experiences prior to their university life, including their motivations to choose to study at this particular university, and some of the students' early study abroad experiences; (b) the specific challenges that this student population has experienced, and the ways they have dealt with those challenges; and (c) suggestions generated by students to help university administrators and staff to meet their needs.

IV. Methodology

A mixed-method case study consisting of a survey and interviews with the target students was used to explore Korean international undergraduate students' experiences. A Qualtrics online survey was developed with 60 questions related to students' demographics, academic and social engagement, and career planning. The survey was sent to 480 Korean undergraduate students in the spring of 2014. Of the 480 on-line survey recipients, 121 students participated in the survey. Survey participants were also asked if they would be willing to participate in individual interviews as a follow-up, and from that pool of willing students, 15 students were selected for in-depth interviews. These interviews were semi-structured, conducted in Korean, and lasted for about an hour each. During the interviews, students were asked about

- their motivations to study abroad at the university,
- experiences of transitioning to the university,
- the academic and social challenges they experienced,
- what they found helpful to overcome these challenges, and
- how the university could help them better achieve their academic and career goals (see Appendix A for Interview Questions).

Before the interviews, the research protocol and process were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the research site of university. The protocol was designed by the researcher and shared with the interview participants in Korean language. The interviews were recorded and translated from Korean to English by the researcher. After the interviews, the data was analyzed for themes and perspectives with detailed descriptions according to the structured points listed above.

V. Findings

The findings of this study are organized by three areas: students' experiences prior to university, university experiences and suggestions for the university. Korean international undergraduate students' experiences prior to university have two themes: their motivation for family

and friends and impacts of early study abroad. Their university experiences are organized by four areas: academic challenges, social challenges, military service requirement, career planning. Lastly, students' suggestions were summarized for the university to consider in order to facilitate the students' success.

A. Students' Experiences Prior to University: Motivation

When participants were asked about their motivation to study abroad at this university, many of them reported that they knew about the university through exchange programs or their family and friends who had experiences either working at or studying in the university. In the in-depth interviews, they reported that their motivations were also related to degree program specialties offered, the reputation and ranking of the university, and the relatively more reasonable cost of living in the campus area as compared to schools on the East or West Coast. Student participant K commented:

I wanted to take courses of management without disciplinary boundaries... I came here to have dual majors in Management of Information Systems and Accounting... My parents were visiting scholars at the university when I was young and we knew that it would be a great place for me to study.

Another participant (Participant M) said,

I participated in the exchange program of my university in South Korea. I studied there for the first year and came to this university as a sophomore. I also have an uncle who was doing his Ph.D. here, so talking to him helped me, too.

In the in-depth interviews, some participants mentioned that they heard about the experiences of other students. In other cases, their parents' suggestion was the key to their decision to come to study at the university. Parental influence had multiple layers in the Korean students' pursuit of the study abroad experience. One student mentioned that her parents searched for a university abroad because they were not satisfied with the Korean education system. Another student mentioned that it was her dream university to study based on her parents' strong recommendation. Her parents had been visiting scholars

at the university when she was young, and the family had a positive experience. Hence, her parents' experience was critical in her decision. Another student noted that his father's advisor, a university Ph.D. alumnus, strongly recommended to study abroad at the university based on the quality of its education programs.

B. Students' Experiences Prior to University: Early Study Abroad

Another notable finding was that many participants experienced early study abroad opportunities prior to coming to the university. Two interview participants mentioned that they had studied abroad in America during their elementary school years for a short period of time due to their parents' work/study situations. More than 50% of the interviewed participants (eight out of 15) were early study abroad students: five out of 15 interviewed participants went to a U.S. high school, and three out of the 15 interviewed participants graduated from an international high school outside of either South Korea or the U.S. The students reported that one of the advantages of early study abroad was better English language proficiency and higher adaptability to an English-speaking education setting. One very academically successful participant said: "I am fast to adapt to a new environment... both my friend from Singapore and I speak English with high fluency and we are used to American culture" (Participant J).

Despite these earlier study abroad experiences, only one out of 15 interview participants said that she faced no academic challenges or difficulties making friends in English. Other participants experienced difficulties adjusting to the university life including making new friends and navigating the unfamiliar educational environment, regardless of their English language ability or familiarity with American culture. Some students indicated that they felt alone due to the long period of time away from home and having to be independent of their immediate family's support. Another unique concern of these students who experienced study abroad before university was keeping up with their two languages, Korean and English. One student who studied abroad before college mentioned the following as a specific challenge:

I came to the U.S. in the last year of junior high... Because I did not have much problem with English language, I thought everything would be easy... Because the university is so big, I still had difficulty making friends (Participant O).

Another student (Participant F) added: "When I ask my parents about having to choose an academic major or something important like that, they tell me that I must know the situation better and I should decide. It's weird... I feel alone."

C. University Experiences: Academic Challenges

While many of the students were satisfied with the rigorous education, described as "intellectually challenging courses" and "competitive grading," concerns about academic difficulty were mentioned as one of their biggest challenges. Challenges related to their academic experiences included English language, work load and time management, group work, and feeling alienated in class. As illustrated in figure two, about half of student participants identified as having a need for academic support either *all the time* (11%) or *often* (34%).

Participants who had studied in an international high school outside the U.S. said that their English performance did not transfer to their daily use of American English at the university. Although many student participants had learned English and were exposed to an English speaking environment from a young age, they had to learn the American form of English used in writing and speaking at the university. The following comments were made by students who were exposed to an English language immersion environment before coming to the university. "I do not understand 100% what the professor says. I do not feel confident writing in English. Other people do not understand me, so I do not feel comfortable" (Participant I). Another student added:

Even if I try hard, the starting point is different from American students. It was hard. There was so much to read. I thought I could be great with English, but I had difficult times as I felt the limits (Participant M).

Transfer students, who made up 62% of survey participants, mentioned that they experienced challenges

with the increased intensity and demands of their course work. A couple of them stated that they were busy catching up with the courses and they did not have time to seek help or participate in extracurricular activities that could help them overcome some of their other challenges. Other than lack of time, transfer students mentioned that they had to relearn everything and adjust to the University support system, including relearning procedures and restrictions related to scheduling. In some cases, it was inconvenient to utilize university services due to conflicting schedules and limited spaces for services that could help the students' academic needs. Some of them also mentioned that there were more accommodations for international students in their previous colleges, such as dictionary use during exams and free ESL tutoring. Students' comments concerning their academic challenges were as follows: "I had academic difficulty greatly in the first major course. I did not have enough time to sleep...so much workload, so I could not seek help or use resources" (Participant C). Additionally, "biggest challenge that most international students are going through is academic difficulty, and catching up for the courses" (Participant C).

Related academic challenges were in-class group work and discussion. Students mentioned how they felt unwanted by some students when they were supposed to form groups with their classmates. On a similar note, one student mentioned that she felt alienated because she was the only international student or student of color in her class. For the survey question, 'where do you mostly find academic support?' about 40% of the participants chose friends as their source of academic support. To a lesser extent, they found support from teaching assistants (TA), classmates, and professors. Far less support came from advisers, counselors, parents, private tutors, international services staff, and "others" (Table 1). The students reported that the option "other" included both the internet and gathering academic support by themselves.

The participants found academic support from professors and teaching assistants most helpful. In interviews, one student mentioned that how he found it helpful when professors were willing to accommodate students' needs by providing the discussion topics and questions ahead of time and assigning students to specific group projects and assignments. He stated that "it was most helpful when I asked professors to get discussion

Table 1. Source of Academic Support

Rank	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Friends	36	40%
2	TA	17	19%
	Classmates	17	19%
3	Professor	12	13%
4	Academic Advisor	2	2%
	Counselor	2	2%
5	Parents	1	1%
	Private Tutor	1	1%
6	International Student Staff	0	0%
	Other	3	3%
	Total	91	100%

topics ahead so that I had enough time to prepare. I appreciate when professors just group students because it minimizes chances to be discriminated by other students" (Participant C).

D. University Experiences: Social Challenges

The participants also mentioned several common non-academic challenges associated with being international students such as homesickness, feeling lonely, and anxiety for the future, which supports previous research findings (Harvey & Stewart, 1991; Mori, 2000; Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). However, the students reported that the stress they commonly experienced was due to a combination of both academic and social challenges. For example, students had challenges with social relationships, such as relationships with roommates/classmates or lack of friends, and these relationship issues affected their academic achievement. To cope with stress, many of the interviewed participants found comfort from being with their friends, and only one student mentioned that she utilized the counseling services provided by the university as support. In the survey, participants noted that they felt most comfortable discussing non-academic issues with friends (65%), at church (12%), and with parents (11%) (Table 2). Students' social challenges and challenges in seeking help for their social needs are described by participants as follows: "It is an irony. If I want to make a lot of friends, I cannot focus on studying. If I study only, I feel lonely without friends. When there is no balance, I find it difficult to focus on my study"

Table 2. Source of Social Support

Rank	Answer	Response	Percentage
1	Friends	65	69%
2	Church	12	13%
3	Parents	11	12%
4	University (e.g. Advisor/Counselor)	0	0%
	Other	6	6%
	Total	94	100%

(Participant L). Another response was “It is not easy to get help from outside because it is the feeling of loneliness because there are no people around. I do not feel my need is satisfied when talking to a person in distance” (Participant L).

When it came to finding social support based in friendships, a majority of students were satisfied with their current friendships. However, about 26% of the student participants were not adequately satisfied with their current friendships. Knowing that students tended to rely on their friends for their social needs and to deal with their loneliness or anxiety about the future, this finding is of concern if students do not have any friends or satisfying friendships. Moreover, the participants indicated that their close friends were mostly other Korean international students. While it is important for international students to have support from people from their shared cultural background, they also describe one of their challenges as being integrated with students of other national/cultural backgrounds on campus. Some students particularly mentioned this challenge of making friends with American students such as the following: “I try not to have 100% Korean friends. I try to have American friends, but it is not easy... The purpose of study abroad is not met if you have only Korean friends” (Participant K). In addition, “there is a language difference. Especially white friends are cold... It is hard to have deep friendships with them” (Participant K).

E. University Experiences: Military Service Requirement

One additional challenge that Korean male students discussed was related to their two-year mandatory military service requirement in Korea -- mainly because it

interrupted their university career. While the decision about when to serve in the military is a personal choice, male students tended to do the military service in the middle of their undergraduate academic program. All Korean men are required to take physical examinations at age 19 and eligible men, based on the results of the examinations, usually serve in the military between 20-26 years old. Students who study abroad often want to serve in the compulsory army around that age because male students delay their military service, so it is common for Korean male students to go to the university for 1-2 years and then interrupt their studies for 2 years for military service. The male participants reported that they experienced more stress for being late, or feeling behind compared to their peers after they returned. They also commonly experienced new challenges including academic difficulty and/or social and psychological adjustment. Some of the related comments of male student participants included the following: “I thought..., ‘Let’s complete it (military service) early to focus on studying.’ My friends also told me to go early because male students in Korea go early, so if you go later it can only get more challenging” (Participant L). A different participant stated:

I am here... thinking about that (military service). The most fearful thought is that I won’t be able to study for the two years. Compared to others, I will be behind... I have not talked about this with (my) advisor. I did not think that any advisors will know about this (Participant L).

In the words of a participant who served military after he transferred from a college in South Korea,

I could not listen to the class content for about two months after I came back from the absence (for the military service). Because of that (language difficulty), it was hard to participate in classroom discussion. I could not read study materials... It was because I did not study for the two-year absence (Participant A).

F. University Experiences: Career Planning

Student participants also discussed their concerns about career planning. In the survey, about 92% of the respondents indicated they were concerned about their

career plans. More specifically, 70% of them indicated that they were very concerned, or concerned and 22% somewhat concerned about career plan. Despite this result, only 38% of survey participants answered that they had used the career services provided on campus. The major reason for students not using career services was because they did not know about the services and resources available. Some students did not find the services relevant to their needs, or believed that they would not be helpful. Other participants noted that they were not sure where to start or what to ask, and did not feel ready to discuss their career plans. Similar to how they coped with their social challenges, Korean students relied on other Korean students and/or Korean student groups to meet their career needs, without any guidance from advisors or career coaches. Some participants' comments showed their lack of awareness about career services. "Korean student organizations have opportunities to practice interviews and look for an internship. Students prepare for interviews together. But I have not heard of career services on campus" (Participant B). Participant A added, "I get invitations for career events and such... It seems like many things that the university prepares are not for international students".

G. Suggestions for the University

At the end of interviews, the student participants were asked to provide suggestions for the university to better understand their experiences and help them meet their identified needs. Their suggestions included: (a) collaborate with staff and professors to help international students feel more included and supported in class, (b) diversify ways to communicate with students regarding services and programs when reaching out to students who are normally not engaged, (c) provide English language support for their academic needs, and (d) locate Korean-speaking staff or graduate students in student services and provide services specific to social support. Some of their comments included the following: "If the University knows I am not engaged and pays attention to that, I may participate more. Others may be bothered by that, but I wouldn't be bothered if my name was mentioned" (Participant L). Also another participant added, "there seem to be many events and programs. I wish there were many channels to advertise them. I

get an email and that seems the only way" (Participant C). And, "when international students have needs, there could be a person to talk to easily and comfortably, in their native language" (Participant A).

VI. Discussion and Implications

In this study, the author examined Korean international undergraduate students' experiences and their specific challenges and patterns of finding support in a mid-western university. The findings suggest that Korean international undergraduate students had various experiences prior to the university life. Some of them had attended U.S. high schools or international schools abroad in a country outside of either Korea or the U.S. Others had transferred from other universities inside or outside of the U.S., and others still came directly from Korean high schools. Thus, it is important to note that Korean undergraduate international students had fairly diverse experiences prior to their arrival on campus. While many Korean international students are succeeding and thriving on campus, this study focused on the common challenges that Korean students experience in order to suggest ways to provide organizational supports for this group of students.

First, student participants addressed difficulties dealing with academic challenges and their need for support from faculty and with their learning in English. Although many student participants' motivation to study abroad was to experience the high quality education and competitiveness, not all students were well equipped with the skills and competencies required to be successful at the university. Students felt the need to have better time management skills and to utilize the resources available in order to deal with the work load. Responses also suggested that many students sought support from their friends, professors, and teaching assistants for their academic needs and found the accommodations made by professors to be the most helpful. The participants identified that it was difficult to utilize university services because often times they did not have enough time or lacked information about the services and resources to improve their study skills.

Korean international undergraduate students' experiences were also impacted by the situations in their home country

such as the required military service for male students. In Korea, many Korean male students study hard to secure admission to a university before completing the military requirement, but their options may be limited due to these regulations. For example, they need to be informed about when to take the required examinations to determine their eligibility to serve the military, and there are rarely exemptions from the military requirement based on the results of these examinations. This requirement directly relates to Korean male undergraduate international students because most choose to do the military service when they are 20 - 26 years old, and most often this timeframe is in the middle of their undergraduate education. Even though students' leaves of absence for the military requirement greatly impacted their academic careers, many of them chose not to discuss this requirement with their academic advisors, assuming that the advisors would not understand or want to know about it.

Another key insight was that the students depended on their friends who shared culture and language backgrounds, especially for social needs. While this support was important, total dependency on same-culture peers may exacerbate students' disengagement on campus and deprive them of the opportunities to build cross-cultural friendships. Moreover, not all participants in the current study were satisfied with the social support from their friends. Some students mentioned that they had a hard time making time for friends due to their priorities of academic excellence. Many students mentioned that they tried to make American friends, but some of the students felt that their cross-cultural friendships lacked depth. This finding aligns with the work of Young (2014) who found that both international and domestic students did not fully take advantage of opportunities to make friends from all parts of the world.

Many of the Korean students in this study found social support from other students, their local community, and family, but they did not feel that they could comfortably utilize the university services. One reason is that students may have been unaware of the available social support resources and services; hence, reaching out to students is highly recommended given the Korean students' "indifference" toward counseling and mental health services (Kim, 2012). Instead of seeking professional help, most participants relied on other Korean students, who they found more comfortable because of shared experiences of challenges and cultural emotions.

A. Possible Institutional Strategies for Working with Korean Undergraduate International Students

Although many international students, including Koreans, are successful, results from this study illustrate some common challenges Korean international undergraduate students. University programs and services for international students are mostly designed to support all international students. However, there needs to be more support for specific groups of international students to address their unique experiences. To increase Korean students' participation in campus events and services, new initiatives and programs should be launched. Some of the new initiatives and programs can include outreach to students, culture-specific workshops, and Korean language support.

Future endeavors to support Korean undergraduate international students can be provided by academic advisors and counselors who work closely with students. Given that the majority of survey participants did not contact their advisors or counselors for support, it would be helpful to engage in 'proactive advising' in which advisors directly reach out to students to bring information, opportunities, and services to students, rather than expecting students to seek out services that can help them. In addition, advisors and counselors can initiate conversations about Korean military requirements with Korean male students instead of waiting for students to bring it up. In this way, students will feel that their specific needs are known and it is acceptable for them to discuss this challenge with their advisors. Advisors can help them decide when to go and plan appropriate courses throughout the program before and after their military service. Higher education institutions must understand that a large percentage of Korean international students are not aware of the career services on campus. Career services can collaborate with international student service centers to give an orientation to international students, thereby providing basic information about campus career services and addressing student expectations. It would also help to let students know that they are welcome to come in even when they do not know where to start with their career development. Emphasizing the available services should be an on-going process rather than expecting immediate results.

In addition, employment relations staff may have the ability to reach out to potential employment contacts

abroad knowing that many undergraduate international students typically go back to their home country after graduation. Students' transition from university to the workforce could be aided by making connections with international alumni and organizations that would be interested in hiring Korean international graduates both in the U.S. and abroad.

B. Limitations

This study explored the needs of Korean undergraduate international students' experiences by describing their lived experiences in a major research university in the mid-western U.S. Although this study provides important information about the experiences of this sub-group of international students, it is only from one university. Hence, the descriptions of the Korean undergraduate international students' experiences may not be representative of all Korean international undergraduate students across the U.S. Because of the focus on student needs, this study omits successful stories of the target student population. Although not included in the span of this project, there are many international undergraduate students from South Korea who are thriving on and off campus. Future studies should be designed to both identify the challenges for the target students and possible best practices and institutional strategies to meet their needs.

C. Suggestions for Further Study

Additional research should be conducted on international students due to the ever-increasing international student population in U.S. higher education institutions. Supporting international students based on their specific needs is relevant to all sub-groups of international students. Students from different places around the world may have diverse experiences because of their unique cultural values, upbringings, and their countries' socio-economic and political systems. International students intend to study abroad in order to gain international experiences, including making friends from other countries. Hence, much needed research areas include cross-cultural friendships between international and domestic students, and the role of higher education institutions in promoting intercultural communication and competency development for all students.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose this university to study abroad?
2. Thinking back to when you first came here, what was it like?
3. What do you most enjoy about your life here at the University?
4. How do you spend your free time?
5. Who is in your social circle?
 - a. How did you meet your closest friends in the circle?
 - b. What do you do when you get together?
6. Who do you talk to when it comes to important decisions?
7. What are some challenges as a Korean international student in the University?
8. Where do you go to seek help when you experience challenges?

9. What is your social support group like?
10. How can the University better help you with your challenges?

For male students only,

1. Have you completed your compulsory military service?
2. How did you make your decision when to serve in the military?
3. How did you adjust yourself to military service and also returning to the University?
4. What are some different social expectations for males?

For female students only,

1. Do you have any different expectations and experiences because you are female?