A Survey of Expected Versus Actual Pedagogical Challenges Experienced by International Professors

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Abstract

The international mobility of knowledge workers, as reflected in the vast numbers of international (or immigrant) scholars, help provide the intellectual infrastructure of several higher institutions of learning and research across the world. Although the large numbers involved reflect an apparent success of this phenomenon, there are hidden challenges faced by international scholars. In this study, a survey was administered to determine what international professors expected pedagogical challenges were before arriving in the United States, versus the actual experiences they faced after they began teaching in the United States. The most common pedagogical issues international professors expected to face included instructor-student communication, challenges with their own proficiency of spoken American English, and cultural differences. These three issues were also the most frequently reported pedagogical issues that they experienced, along with a sense of unpreparedness for different instructional strategies necessary for instructional success in the United States classroom. Implications for specialized support for immigrant scholars are discussed.

Keywords: international scholars, pedagogical challenges, international professors, faculty mobility, cross-cultural challenges, instructional differences

International Scholars among Higher Education Professionals - By the Numbers

Globalization, and its associated worker mobility, has changed the face of the average worker, especially in cosmopolitan cities. In the last two decades or so, the number of migrants worldwide has rapidly increased. According to The United Nations International Migration Report of 2015, the formal counts of migrants reached 244 million in 2015, up from 222 million in 2010, and 173 million in 2000. A subset of this migrant group comprises international academic workers whose skills are needed in instructional and research fields in higher education.

Although the statistics are hard to find (for reasons delineated later), the following percentages of foreign-born academic workers have been reported:

- United Kingdom: 63,275 out of 204,665 academic workers (31%) during the 2016-1017 academic year.

- Canada: 40% of Canadian faculty have at least one degree from a foreign university (Times Higher Education, 2017).
- Russia: 2,000 of 319,300 academic workers (0.63%) (based on 2018 data from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation).
- United States: There were 124,861 "international scholars" during the 2014-15 academic year (Institute of International Education, YEAR).

Peripheral to the above list, in China, there have been efforts to attract top global talent to its top tier universities. For example, Plan 111, established in 2005, hoped to hire 1,000 overseas academics (Times Higher Education, 2017).

As indicated above, the contributions of international scholars to ~~the~~ academia cannot be overstated. In the U.S. context for example, Tolga Yuret (2017) analyzed the educational backgrounds of 14,310 full professors from the top 48 universities in the United States and found that one in three professors at prestigious U.S. universities received their undergraduate degree abroad, and one in eight received their doctoral degrees abroad. Yuret also found that higher ranked universities tended to hire foreign-educated professors at the same rate as lower ranked ones, public or private, and that about half of all professors of mathematics and a quarter of all professors of chemistry obtained their undergraduate degrees outside the U.S. Similarly, Herget (2016) reported that in the U.S., the majority (75%) of the "international scholars" (more on this terminology later) work in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. In addition to the aforementioned numbers, there are about 80 American university campuses outside the United States, and most of them involve U.S.-born faculty.

Significant in Numbers, but Still Undercounted

Despite the high numbers of international scholars in the west, and to a lesser extent, elsewhere across the world, these the western statistics are still a significant undercount. The first reason for this is that a large number of immigrant scholars do not directly enter their current professions through the conventional immigrational processes. For example, this paper's first author entered the U.S. as a scientist, but became a professor after obtaining his doctoral degree 13 years after his initial career. More notably, in his research of international scholars, he has found that more than 60% of those the author knows personally entered the U.S. as graduate students, and then remained in the host country to become professors, *after* they had become citizens. They therefore were not hired as international scholars, and for this reason, are not represented in the formal immigration counts as listed above.

Another reason for the undercount is how the terms *international scholars* or *international professors* are defined. Whereas several institutions of higher learning define the former as any foreigner who enters a country to conduct formal research—excluding teaching—many foreign-born professors often self-define as international scholars. And lastly, many members of the academy who entered as international scholars or international professors currently perform administrative duties. This subpopulation may potentially evade definition and hence, formal counts. Partly for these reasons, it is difficult to determine, with certainty, the true

populations and impact of international scholars around the world. In this study, *international scholars* will be used to include researchers, instructors, including administrators who used to be scholars and professors, and *international professors* will specify international scholars with instructional responsibilities.

It is noteworthy that, in the assessment of the Institute of International Education, the 124,861 U.S. number indicated growth—thus making international faculty an important part of the growing global academic labor market. Their contributions to this labor market are more valuable than simply their statistical significance, however: they add to the needed diversity, skills, and new perspectives in academic settings (Yudkevich, Altbach, & Rumbley, 2016). In addition, international faculty tend to be more productive than their local counterparts (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011).

Important by the Numbers, but Challenged on the Job

In spite of their value in the labor market and their apparent success as achievers on the educational ladder, international faculty face a variety of challenges. Multiple studies have been conducted in attempts to identify their major challenges. The findings of these studies indicate that these challenges include relations with students, feelings of loneliness, and difficulty obtaining permanent residency in the United States (e.g., Collins, 2008; Herget, 2016). Student attitudes towards international faculty varied, with some students being put off by a professor's "foreignness," while others reported, encouragingly, that international professors exposed them to different points of view, helped them overcome stereotypes, and gave them first-hand insights into other cultures and places (Alberts, 2008). In one comprehensive, phenomenological study of international faculty, Hutchison (2015) found, in addition to the struggles noted above, indications of socio-cultural shock, communications issues, systematic barriers, and differences in pedagogical approaches, including differences in assessment philosophies and expectations.

As with all pedagogical contexts, instructors may expect to encounter different kinds of challenges. For immigrant instructors, however, their instructional landscapes are laden with an additional later of instructional challenges (in harmony with Hutchison's [2015] research findings mentioned earlier), partly because pedagogical approaches often reflect the culture of the larger society from which the instructor hails: traditionalist societies tend to be more lecture-based, while egalitarian societies have a tendency towards conversational approach to instruction (Hutchison, 2005). New international faculty members therefore need to negotiate these differences, too, when moving from one teaching culture to another.

The Importance and Purpose of This Study

Previous research studies have identified some of the challenges experienced by international faculty; however, all have focused on the challenges faced only after they arrived on the job. The current study aimed to examine specifically what disconnects in terms of pedagogy international professors expected to face *before* they arrived on the job, and how their expectations matched reality during their first three years of working in the United States. This

study also examined the extent to which international professors expected to face specific challenges, and how frequently they were negatively impacted by those challenges in reality. In addition, this study explored how much support international faculty received in navigating these issues, and how they might want this support. The research questions were:

1) To what extent did international professors expect to encounter pedagogical challenges when coming to the United States?
2) To what extent did international professors actually encounter pedagogical challenges while working in the United States?
3) To what extent did international professors receive support in navigating those pedagogical challenges?
4) What is the difference between the international professors expected challenges and actual challenges experienced?
5) How does gender, years of higher education experience in country of origin, family status, and perception of their country of origin impact the challenges the international professors expected or experienced?

Method

Sample Population

The sampling frame for this survey, international professors working at an urban, research university in the southeastern U.S., was provided by the university International Student and Scholar Office. The sampling frame consisted of 97 international professors. Since the sampling frame was relatively small, the research team decided to disseminate the questionnaire to the entire group. In order for the results from this survey to be considered representative of this sampling frame, 78 responses were needed (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Questionnaire Development

A research team that included two professors and seven graduate students developed and disseminated the questionnaire. One international professor served as the expert on issues of international faculty, and the other served as the expert in survey research methods. The instrument was designed based on previous research of the expert. The expert and a representative of the university international office reviewed the questionnaire for content validity. Changes for clarity were made to the questionnaire. Once finalized, the questionnaire was piloted with three international doctoral students to ensure that the instructions, questions, and answer choices were clear, and to establish a time frame for survey completion.

The questionnaire was comprised of 23 questions designed to examine the anticipated pedagogical challenges, experienced pedagogical challenges, support needs, and basic demographic information of international professors. Response options consisted of checklists and interval scales. The questions and response options are provided in the results section of this paper.

Research Design

This cross-sectional survey utilized the tailored-design method and was disseminated using social exchange theory principles (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). It captured the perceptions of one university's international faculty at one point in time. The tailored-design method and social exchange theory principles tailor the survey to a particular population and situation in order to develop trust, motivate respondents to reply, and reduce total survey error.

Survey Procedures

An internet-based survey tool was used to disseminate the questionnaire. An initial email and four reminders sent between 5 and 7 days apart to potential respondents contained a link to the survey. Reminders were only sent to individuals in the sampling frame who had not yet responded. The email addresses were not linked to the actual responses of the individual. There was no incentive offered for completing the survey.

Results

Thirty-six of the 97 potential respondents in the sampling frame responded to the questionnaire. This represents a 38% response rate. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are displayed in Table 1. The majority of the survey respondents were male (58.3%) aged between 31 to 40 years (65.7%), and married (61.1%). There were 18 different counties of origin. China was the most frequent country of origin (n=8), followed by Germany and Iran (each n =3), then Brazil, India, South Korea, and Vietnam (each n=2). Other countries with one respondent each included France, Turkey, Nigeria, Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, Spain, United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, and Cyprus. The H1B visa (47.1%) and Visiting Scholar (41.2%) designations accounted for the majority of the respondents' immigration status. A majority of the respondents had considerable teaching and research experience, with only 11.1% reporting less than one year of experience in their country of origin and 31.4% reporting less than one year of experience in the U.S. Most of the respondents (65.7%) had lived in the U.S. for five or fewer years. The most frequent areas of appointment were Engineering (20.6%) and Computing & Informatics (17.7%). Assistant Professor (38.2%) and Visiting Scholar (38.2%) were the most common job titles.

While sixty-one percent of the respondents reported being married, only 38.9% of the spouses resided in the U.S. and 27.8% had children who resided in the U.S. Adjustment challenges of family member was mixed, with 37.5% and 50.5% indicating some adjustment challenges for spouses and children, respectively.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of international faculty

Characteristic			Characteristic		
	F	%		*F*	%
Gender			Area of appointment		

Male	21	58.3
Female	15	41.7
Age		
21-30 years	6	17.1
31-40 years	23	65.7
41-50 years	4	11.4
51-60 years	1	2.9
61-70 years	1	2.9
Marital Status		
Married	22	61.1
Live-in partner, not married	2	5.6
Single or divorced	12	33.3
Spouse & Children		
Spouse born in U.S.	3	9.1
Spouse reside in U.S.	14	38.9
Children reside in U.S.	10	27.8
Time teaching/research in country of origin		
Less than 1 year	4	11.1
1-5 years	10	27.8
6-10 years	10	27.8
11-15 years	7	19.4
16 or more years	5	13.9
Time teaching/research experience in U.S.		
Less than 1 year	11	31.4
1-5 years	15	42.8
6-10 years	6	17.1
11-15 years	1	2.9
16 or more years	2	5.7
Time lived in U.S.		
0-5 years	23	65.7
6-10 years	11	31.4
11-15 years	1	2.9
16 or more years	0	0
Arts & Architecture	0	0
Business	2	5.9
Computing & Informatics	6	17.7
Education	1	2.9
Engineering	7	20.6
Health & Human Services	2	5.9
Liberal Arts & Sciences	2	5.9
Current Title		
Lecturer	2	5.9
Researcher	3	8.8
Assistant Professor	13	38.2
Clinical Professor	1	2.9
Visiting Scholar	13	38.2
Postgraduate Fellow	2	5.9
Immigration Status		
H1B visa	16	47.1
Visiting Scholar	14	41.2
J1	3	8.8
F1	1	2.9

Research Question 1: To what extent did international professors expect to encounter pedagogical challenges when coming to the United States?

International faculty and staff were asked to think back to the time of their initial appointment and to identify the pedagogical issues they expected to encounter once they began teaching in the U.S. The question provided a list of 23 potential issues from which the respondent could check as many as applied (see Table 2). Of the 36 respondents to the survey, 20 (55.6%) ranked student understanding of their spoken American English as the most common anticipated concern, followed by 19 (52.8%) who reported proficiency in their own spoken American English as the next most common pedagogical concern. Additionally, 16 (44.4%) anticipated that the cultural differences between their country of origin and the U.S. may be an issue.

Table 2
Frequency and percent of pedagogical issues international faculty anticipated and experienced

	Anticipated		Experienced	
Pedagogical Issue	F	%	F	%
Student understanding of my spoken American English	20	55.6	32	88.9*
Proficiency in spoken American English	19	52.8	31	86.1*
Cultural differences between my country of origin and the U.S.	16	44.4	33	91.7*
Knowledge of students' prior understanding of the content area I teach	14	38.9	33	91.7*
Knowledge of differences in academic expectations (e.g., grading, evaluation)	13	36.1	29	80.6*
Understanding students' perspective in their evaluation of my teaching	11	30.6	28	81.8*
Differences in how instructors measure student learning (e.g. tests, projects)	10	27.8	28	77.8*
Proficiency in written American English	10	27.8	28	77.8*
Knowledge about different instructional strategies (e.g., lecture, seminar)	10	27.8	29	80.6*
My knowledge about professional standards in my field	4	11.1	26	72.2*
Developing rapport with faculty colleagues	9	25	23	63.9*
Understanding intellectual property/plagiarism standards in the US	7	19.4	20	55.6*
Respect from faculty colleagues	7	19.4	22	61.1*
Developing rapport with administration (Chair, Dean, and university levels)	6	16.7	24	66.7*
Respect from students for my professorial position	5	13.9	27	75.0*

Respect from students for my content knowledge	4	11.1	25	69.4*
Use of peer review in the reappointment, promotion & tenure	3	8.3	23	63.9*
Developing rapport with students	3	8.3	25	69.4*
Respect from administration (Chair, Dean, and university levels)	3	8.3	22	61.1*
Respect for the ideas of my students	3	8.3	20	55.6*
My respect for students	2	5.6	21	58.3*
Respect for the ideas of my students	3	8.3	20	55.6*

before teaching in the U.S. * $p < .01$

Research Question 2: To what extent did international professors actually encounter pedagogical challenges while working in the United States?

Next, international faculty were asked, given the same list of pedagogical issues, to identify which items they actually experienced during their first two years of teaching or conducting research in the U.S. (see Table 3). Respondents were provided a frequency scale defined as follows: (a) never, zero times in two years, (b) rarely, one to five times in two years, (c) occasionally, six to ten times in two years, (d) often, 11-20 times in two years, and (e) very often, more than 20 times in two years. On average, few respondents marked any issues as being experienced "very often." The most frequently reported pedagogical issues rated as "very often" were respect from students about their content knowledge (10.7%) and professorial position (10.3%). The most frequently reported pedagogical issues rated as "often" were proficiency in their written American English (25.8%), proficiency in their spoken American English (21.1%), and knowledge about different instructional strategies (20.7%). The most frequently reported pedagogical issues rated as "occasionally" were cultural differences between their country of origin and the U.S. (41.9%), understanding of students' prior knowledge of the content (38.7%), and understanding students' perspective in their evaluation of my teaching (27.6%). Respondents also reported that only "rarely" did they experience issues with respect from colleagues (46.7%) or administration (46.7%).

Research Question 3: To what extent did international professors receive support in navigating those pedagogical challenges?

The most frequently received support reported was one for providing more knowledge regarding different instructional approaches (45.2%, See Table 4). More respondents reported that they would like to receive support in this area (25.8%). Similarly, while 38.7% reported that they received support in how instructors teach, an additional 29% indicated a desire for this support. Previously, none of the respondents anticipated the use of peer observation in teaching as being a potential pedagogical issue prior to working in the U.S. However, 41.9% of respondents received support in this area and 12.9% more indicated they would like this support. Also of note, 37.9% reported they received support regarding academic expectations (e.g., grading, evaluation, assessment) and 20.7% indicated a desire to receive support in this area.

Table 3

*Frequency and percent of pedagogical issues international faculty and staff **experienced** teaching in the U.S.*

Pedagogical issues experienced in years 1 and 2	Never		Rarely		Occasionally		Often		Very Often	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Proficiency in spoken American English	5	15.2	11	33.3	8	24.2	7	21.1	2	6.1
Proficiency in written American English	8	25.8	7	22.6	7	22.6	8	25.8	1	3.2
Student understanding of my spoken American English	4	11.3	10	33.3	12	40	3	10	1	3.3
Differences in how instructors teach (e.g., lecture, seminar)	8	28.6	10	35.7	6	21.4	4	14.3	0	0
My knowledge about professional standards in my field	10	35.7	16	57.1	1	3.6	1	3.6	0	0
Cultural differences between country of origin and U.S.	3	9.7	11	35.5	13	41.9	3	9.7	1	3.2
Knowledge of students' prior understanding of the content area I teach	3	9.7	9	29.0	12	38.7	4	12.9	2	6.5
Knowledge about different instructional strategies	7	24.1	13	44.8	1	3.4	6	20.7	1	3.4
Differences in how instructors measure student learning	8	29.6	8	29.6	4	14.8	4	14.8	2	7.4
Use of peer observation of teaching	14	48.3	7	24.1	4	13.8	3	10.3	0	0
Use of peer review in the RPT process	13	44.8	9	31.0	3	10.3	2	6.9	1	3.4
Developing rapport with students	11	37.9	8	27.6	7	24.1	2	6.9	0	0
Understanding student’s perspective in evaluations of my teaching	8	27.6	9	31.0	8	27.6	1	3.4	2	6.9
My respect for students	15	53.6	10	35.7	0	0	1	3.6	1	3.6
Respect for the ideas of my students	16	53.3	11	36.7	0	0	1	3.3	1	3.3
Developing rapport with faculty colleagues	13	44.8	9	31.0	2	6.9	4	13.8	0	0
Developing rapport with administration	12	41.4	10	34.5	3	10.3	3	10.3	0	0
Knowledge of the differences in academic expectations	7	24.1	12	41.4	6	20.7	1	3.4	2	6.9
Understanding intellectual property/plagiarism	16	57.1	7	25.0	1	3.6	2	7.1	1	3.6
Respect from students for my content knowledge	11	39.3	11	39.3	2	7.1	0	0	3	10.7
Respect from students for my professorial position	9	31.0	14	48.3	2	6.9	0	0	3	10.3
Respect from faculty colleagues	14	46.7	9	30	3	10	1	3.3	2	6.7
Respect from administration	14	46.7	12	40	1	3.3	0	0	2	6.7

Research Question 3: To what extent did international professors receive support in navigating those pedagogical challenges?

The most frequently received support reported was one for providing more knowledge regarding different instructional approaches (45.2%, See Table 4). More respondents reported that they would like to receive support in this area (25.8%). Similarly, while 38.7% reported that they received support in how instructors teach, an additional 29% indicated a desire for this support. Previously, none of the respondents anticipated the use of peer observation in teaching as being a potential pedagogical issue prior to working in the U.S. However, 41.9% of respondents received support in this area and 12.9% more indicated they would like this support. Also of note, 37.9% reported they received support regarding academic expectations (e.g., grading, evaluation, assessment) and 20.7% indicated a desire to receive support in this area.

Table 4
Frequency and percent of international faculty and staff who wanted or received support for pedagogical issues

Pedagogical Issue	Received Support		Wanted Support	
	F	%	F	%
Proficiency in spoken American English	7	21.9	11	34.4
Proficiency in written American English	5	15.6	8	25
Student understanding of my spoken American English	5	16.7	11	36.7
Differences in how instructors teach (e.g., lecture vs. seminar)	12	38.7	9	29
My knowledge about professional standards in my field	6	20.7	5	17.2
Cultural differences between my country of origin and the U.S.	6	18.8	12	37.5
Knowledge of students' prior understanding of the content area I teach	8	25.8	12	38.7
Knowledge about different instructional strategies	14	45.2	8	25.8
Differences in how instructors measure student learning	9	29	12	38.7
Use of peer observation of teaching	13	41.9	4	12.9
Use of peer review in the RPT process	10	32.3	5	16.1
Developing rapport with students	7	23.3	6	20
Understanding student's perspective in their evaluation of my teaching	7	23.3	5	16.7
My respect for students	2	6.9	2	6.9
Respect for the ideas of my students	2	6.9	2	6.9
Developing rapport with faculty colleagues	2	6.9	5	17.2
Developing rapport with administration	2	6.7	6	20
Knowledge of the differences in academic expectations	11	37.9	6	20.7
Understanding intellectual property/plagiarism standards	9	32.1	3	10.7
Respect from students for my content knowledge	5	17.2	2	6.9
Respect from students for my professorial position	3	10.3	2	6.9
Respect from faculty colleagues	2	7.1	3	10.7

Respondents were also asked to indicate their preferred method(s) for receiving support and to identify which methods of support they have utilized already. These responses are displayed in Table 5. The most frequent preference for future support (post-research) was face-to-face seminars and meetings with other international colleagues (70.6%), followed by support through the Center for Teaching and Learning (61.8%). This, in turn, was followed by the use of an online community space with resources and discussions (41.2%), and advice from friends (41.2%). Many respondents preferred to be assigned a mentor (64.7%) with 35.3% preferring an international mentor, and 29.4% preferring a non-international mentor. The two "other" comments indicated a preference for a mentor from the same department or a mentor assigned through faculty training seminars.

The most frequent supports actually used by the respondents included face-to-face seminars/meetings with international colleagues (50.0%), friends (44.1%), and the Center for Teaching and Learning (32.4%). None of the respondents reported using the on-campus counseling center.

Table 5
Frequency and percent of the preferred method to receive support

Method of Support	Future Support		Support Used	
	F	%	F	%
Face-to-face seminars/meetings with international colleagues	24	70.6	17	50.0
Center for Teaching and Learning	21	61.8	11	32.4
Friends	14	41.2	15	44.1
Online community space with resources and discussions	14	41.2	9	26.5
Assigned international colleague	12	35.3	8	23.5
Assigned non-international mentor	10	29.4	4	11.8
Office of International Programs	9	26.5	6	17.7
On-campus counseling center	8	23.5	0	0
Family	6	17.7	8	23.5
Off-campus counseling	2	5.9	3	8.9
Other	2	5.9	1	2.3

Research Question 4: What is the difference between the international professors expected challenges and actual challenges experienced?

Because of the small sample size and number of expected challenges with frequencies less than 5, a related-samples McNemar nonparametric test was used to evaluate the difference between the frequency of expected challenges and the frequency with which international faculty actually experienced pedagogical challenges (see Table 2). The frequency scale of the challenges as displayed in Table 3 was transformed into a dichotomous scale that denoted if the challenge

was experienced or not. These differences were statistically significant for all 22 items with the frequency of challenges experienced greater than the challenges expected. This is an indication that international faculty underestimated the kinds of challenges they might face.

Research Question 5: How does gender, years of higher education experience in country of origin, and family status impact the challenges the international professors expected or experienced?

A chi-square test was used to examine gender differences in the challenges international professors expected and experienced (using the dichotomous variable again). There was a statistically significant difference between gender and the expectation of a challenge of developing rapport with students. More females expected this challenge than males ($\chi^2 = 6.92$ (1), p = .009, Cramer's V = .44). There were no significant differences in gender for the other *expected* challenges. There was a statistically significant difference between gender and *experiencing* the challenge of developing rapport with students. More females experienced this challenge than males ($\chi^2 = 4.58$ (1), p = .032, Cramer's V = .36). There were no significant differences in gender for the other challenges they experienced.

Family status recorded whether or not a partner/spouse or children accompanied the international faculty member to the U.S. There were no statistically significant differences in any of the pedagogical challenges expected or experienced and family status.

A chi-square test was also used to examine differences in the number of years of higher education teaching/research experience in country of origin and the challenges international professors expected and experienced (using the dichotomous variable). Years of higher education experience categories were coded as less than one year, 1-10 years, and 11 or more years in order to reduce the number of cells for analysis. There was a statistically significant difference between years of higher education experience and the expectation of the challenge of developing rapport with colleagues ($\chi^2 = 6.40$ (1), p = .041, Cramer's V = .42). International professors with more higher education experience in their countries of origin expected the challenge of developing rapport with colleagues less often than international professors with less than one year experience in their country of origin. There was a statistically significant difference between years of higher education experience and experiencing the challenge of spoken American English ($\chi^2 = 6.32$ (1), p = .042, Cramer's V = .42). Also, international professors with more higher education experience in their country of origin experienced the challenge of spoken American English more often than international professors with less than one year of experience in their country of origin. There were no statistically significant differences between years of higher education experience and the other challenges they experienced.

Respondents reported the extent to which they believe that their country of origin was viewed positively or negatively in the U.S. No one reported that their country of origin was very negatively viewed. More believed that their country of origin had a "very positive" (28.6%) or "somewhat positive" (28.6%) view among Americans (see Table 6). They also reported the level of ease or difficulty of their transition to work in the U.S. Most of the respondents reported the

transition to be either "very easy" (11.8%) or "somewhat easy" (44.1%). Some respondents (20.6%) reported the transition to be a "little difficult." No one reported the transition to be "very difficult" (see Table 6).

Table 6
Perception of international faculty's country of origin and ease of transition

Characteristic		
	F	%
Very easy	4	11.8
Somewhat easy	15	44.1
A little easy	4	11.8
A little difficult	7	20.6
Somewhat difficult	1	2.9
Very difficult	0	0
Don't Know	3	8.9
Ease of transition		
Very easy	4	11.8
Somewhat easy	15	44.1
A little easy	4	11.8
A little difficult	7	20.6
Somewhat difficult	1	2.9
Very difficult	0	0
Don't Know	3	8.9

Discussion and Conclusion

This purpose of this study was to investigate the expectations and experiences of international professors as they transitioned into a U.S. university. The respondents represented a wide range of professors from 18 different countries working in various departments across the university campus. In consonance with Hutchison's (2015) findings, although many of the participants had done several years of teaching or research in their native countries, they still experienced challenges in the host country. The most common pedagogical issues international professors expected to face included ease of scholar-student communication, proficiency of spoken American English, and cultural differences. These three issues were also the most frequently reported pedagogical issues that they experienced, along with about a sense of being unprepared for different instructional strategies that they did not anticipate. These observations are in agreement with Stigler and Hiebert's (1999) assertion that teaching is a cultural activity.

Support for different instructional methods was the most frequently reported support both needed and received. Specifically, the frequently reported perceived instructional support needed

and received included how instructors teach (e.g., lecture vs. seminar), use of peer observation in teaching, and knowledge of the differences in academic expectations (e.g., grading, evaluation, assessment). It is notable that most of the respondents (20) were from relatively traditionalist societies (China [n=8], Iran [n =3], India, South Korea, and Vietnam [N=6], Nigeria, Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago [N=3]). For this reason, it is not a surprise that instructional support garnered a high frequency. These observations align with idea that people's cultural backgrounds influence how they view the world, and consequently, how they learn (Cobern, 1991), and that instructors from traditionalist societies are likely to subscribe to the lecture method, and would therefore need an orientation to western pedagogical approaches (Hutchison, 2005).

The finding that Engineering and Computing and Informatics professors were the most frequent fields of appointment for international faculty supports Herget's (2016) report that in the U.S., the majority (75%) of the international professors are in STEM fields. It is also notable that Assistant Professor (38.2%) was one of the common job titles, possibly reflecting the potential growth of this population (if the respondents are assumed to be a fair representation of the target population [cf. Yudkevich, Altbach, & Rumbley, 2016]).

The findings of this study may be useful in informing future university practices. The reported ease of transition and the observation that the most frequently needed supports were also those most frequently received indicate that procedures for supporting international faculty and staff target the pedagogical issues that they expected to encounter and actually experienced. There is thus a strong indication of the need to continue providing the support services. A couple of the recommendations highlight a need to promote interactions among colleagues. This may reflect the idea that immigrant professors often feel lonely (e.g., Collins, 2008; Herget, 2016). In an individualistic culture such as the United States, it comes as no surprise that instructors feel socially isolated and could therefore benefit from targeted social programs.

Ultimately, the discrepancy between the anticipated and experienced data can be explained by Hutchison's research findings that broadly theorize that teaching across cultural and international borders involve oft-unpredictable factors (e.g., Hutchison, 2015), and thus, the need for more research on this topic.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

There are several limitations of this study, including the low response rate, the use of a single mode of survey dissemination, and the inclusion of participants from only one university, all of which restrict its generalizability within and without the university settings. While a response rate of 38% is considered good for contemporary surveys, it challenges this study's representation of the experiences of the entire population of international professors at the university. The views of 62% of the international faculty are not represented in these findings and they be different from those who did respond to the survey. Providing alternative modes to complete the survey (such as a paper version) or other languages may have increased the response rate. Another potential reason for the low response rate could be the mobility of the international faculty. Some of the potential respondents in the sampling frame were not in the

U.S. at the time of the survey. Several in the sampling frame list replied to the survey email request that they were out of the country and unavailable to complete the survey; for others, an automated "out of the office" reply was received.

In light of the survey challenges, future studies should prioritize the use of mixed mode questionnaires to improve timeliness, reduce coverage error, and increase the response rate. Mixed mode surveys use multiple avenues to reach the potential respondents such as disseminating both paper and electronic versions of the questionnaire. This survey could have distributed paper versions of the survey through campus mail. Research has demonstrated that questionnaires distributed via paper receive higher response rates (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). The use of an incentive for completing the survey may motivate more potential respondents to complete the survey. Another suggestion for future research is to expand the research to include additional higher educational institutions with international professors. Use of different campuses (large and small, urban and rural, research-intensive and teaching-intensive, resource-rich and resource-challenged) might highlight the convergent and divergent expectations and experiences of international professors and their need for support. The use of alternate modes of data collection such as a focus group of international faculty and staff could also add depth to our understanding of these survey findings. Another interesting study may be to compare the expected challenges and real challenges that were actually experienced by an American faculty cohort. This may help to clarify the findings of this study and help to explain the discrepancy between anticipated and actual experiences of international professors.

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