

Improving the First-Year Experience of Chinese International Students through Responsive Pedagogy: Insights from F&M in Shanghai

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses lessons learned from the development and execution of F&M in Shanghai, a hybrid residential-remote program created for Franklin and Marshall College's first-year Chinese students in Fall 2020. The F&M Office of International Programs worked with the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA) to develop the residential portion of the program, and coordinated the curriculum and remote engagement framework. F&M in Shanghai represented an opportunity to craft a constructive environment for first-year Chinese students by intentionally considering and meeting their specific needs. Utilizing creative, well-designed pedagogy, thoughtful programming, and a multipronged approach to student support, we were able to operate the program with great success. Assessments of

F&M in Shanghai resulted in a great deal of data, and some results we observed run counter to received wisdom. This article discusses how these results suggest avenues for future research.

Keywords: belonging, Chinese students, faculty development, international students, remote education, student support

INTRODUCTION

Although the number of Chinese international students in the US decreased by nearly 15% in the 2020-2021 academic year, China remains the leading place of origin for international students in the US (Institute of International Education, 2021). According to historical Open Doors Report data, China has been the top source of international students in the US since the 2009-2010 academic year, and the 2020-2021 Open Doors Report showed that Chinese students formed nearly 35% of the total international student population in the US (Institute of International Education, 2021).

A growing body of research has focused on the experiences of Chinese international students in the US and other English-dominant settings. Several studies have found that Chinese students in the US may be marginalized and stigmatized by faculty, staff, and domestic peers (e.g. Chen & Zhou, 2019; Hsieh, 2007; Lee, 2020; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Yan & Berliner, 2013; Yao, 2016; Yeo et al., 2019; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018). In particular, Chinese students in English-dominant countries are often perceived to have a linguistic deficit (e.g. Freeman & Li, 2019; Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018). Such deficit views are applied not only to multilingual students' English-language proficiency but also to their overall intellectual potential and capacity for critical thought (Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Gallagher et al., 2020; Haan et al., 2017; Ryan & Viete, 2009). This mindset can also be shared by Chinese international students themselves, particularly those who come to perceive their linguistic skills as insufficient for their academic goals; these students may even experience an identity crisis as they doubt their academic capabilities, and can suffer severe mental health consequences (Dovchin, 2020; Halic et al., 2009; Freeman & Li, 2019; Zhang-Wu & Brisk, 2021). However, research has also shown that building strong relationships with faculty helps international and multilingual students to

navigate these challenges, and that such relationships are a key factor in helping international students establish a sense of belonging at their institution (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Mamiseishvili, 2012).

Franklin & Marshall College and F&M in Shanghai

International student inclusion, academic success, and sense of belonging are important priorities at Franklin and Marshall College, a selective undergraduate liberal arts institution located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. As reported by the Institute of International Education (2021) in the 2021 Open Doors report, F&M's international population is the 5th largest in the US among baccalaureate institutions. A large proportion of F&M's international students hail from China; in Academic Year 2021-22, Chinese international students formed approximately 12% of the total F&M student body. As a consequence, countering and preventing stigmatization and marginalization of Chinese students, and providing these students with effective academic resources are particular concerns for F&M.

Initiatives towards these goals are often led by F&M's Office of International Programs (OIP), which houses International Student Services (ISS). ISS staff of course have responsibility for regulatory compliance for F-1 visa holders, but also play an active role in supporting international student success at F&M. When collaborating with offices in both academic and student affairs, ISS staff advocate on international students' behalf and educate campus members about both challenges faced and contributions made by international students in the campus community. Working alongside ISS in the OIP is an Assistant Dean dedicated to multilingual and international student academic success. In collaboration with F&M's Writing Center, the Assistant Dean provides specialized multilingual writing support to students; additionally, the Assistant Dean develops pedagogical resources and consults with F&M faculty members when they have questions or concerns related to the international/multilingual students in their classes. The Assistant Dean is thus able to promote an assets-based approach to pedagogy, which encourages faculty to move away from the deficit mindset and to embrace the creativity inherent in a multilingual student's approach to course content. The multifaceted ISS support structure and the Assistant Dean's deep partnership with faculty allow the OIP to advocate for inclusion and equity for F&M international students in many arenas.

When F&M locked down campus in response to the pandemic in March 2020, staff in the OIP began planning our strategies for the fall semester. We

anticipated that international travel restrictions and consular closures would prevent many—if not most—international students in the class of 2024 from traveling to the US to begin their F&M degrees, and we were concerned about the potential impact of remote learning to enrollment and retention of this group. As we considered how we could provide first-year international students with the foundations of an F&M experience despite their physical separation from campus, we identified several priorities related to student retention and persistence: access to resources necessary to academic success in a virtual environment; avenues for a sense of belonging in the F&M community; and opportunities to directly experience the F&M liberal arts tradition, which emphasizes the exploration of different disciplines and experiential learning. We ultimately developed four options for international students outside the US to begin their F&M education, one of which was F&M in Shanghai, a program specifically for Chinese students.

F&M in Shanghai was anchored in a hybrid residential-remote structure that offered F&M courses taught by F&M faculty. Direct, synchronous faculty engagement with the students was a cornerstone of our vision for the program since it would ensure a purposeful, sustained connection between the students in China and the F&M community in Lancaster. However, while the F&M in Shanghai students participated in courses virtually, they were simultaneously in physical community with each other. Our on-site program was administered by the Institute for Study Abroad (IFSA), who collaborated with us in designing a residential plan and co-curricular programming for F&M in Shanghai participants. This structure was chosen to promote our priorities for student learning and to facilitate a productive teaching environment for faculty despite the challenging circumstances of virtual instruction. As students were grouped together in one geographic location and had on-site support from IFSA staff, this structure reduced the difficulty for faculty to respond to their students' needs and eliminated the need to accommodate students in different time zones from their classmates.

The F&M in Shanghai program can be productively compared to Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) models. These models may also be described as “telecollaboration,” “Online Intercultural Exchange” (OIE), or “Virtual Exchange” (VE) (O’Dowd, 2021). Rubin (2017) explains that the “essence” of COIL is meaningful internationalization, which promotes real interaction and teamwork between people of different cultures and not just superficial exposure to information about cultural differences (pp. 33-34) The

fundamental purpose of COIL is to make such internationalization in education possible even without international mobility (Rubin, 2017). These principles were fully realized through the F&M in Shanghai program; however, the program's structure only partially matched the COIL/VE model. Both Rubin (2017) and O'Dowd (2021) emphasize that COIL and VE refer to collaboration between multiple institutions, typically with a pair of foreign language teachers from different countries developing a shared curriculum that would require substantial interaction between students in their respective classes. Though F&M and the IFSA collaborated in establishing residential aspects of the program, the curriculum itself of F&M in Shanghai was still fundamentally F&M coursework, the participants themselves were full members of the F&M community, and their coursework did not typically require sustained engagement with students residing in other countries. F&M in Shanghai thus does not offer a perspective on using COIL/VE programs to achieve meaningful internationalization via interaction between students in different countries. However, it does suggest possibilities for promoting significant connection between faculty and international students.

F&M in Shanghai was designed specifically as a response to the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we do not intend to replicate it in future. Nevertheless, the experience of developing, running, and assessing the program offered valuable insight into faculty development of inclusive pedagogy practices as a tool to reduce stigmatization and marginalization of Chinese international students in the classroom. This paper provides an overview of the program, describes its outcomes, and ultimately points towards the ways we can apply what we learned to promote student success—for both Chinese and other international students—moving forward.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the F&M in Shanghai program was built in response to an immediate need, and was not structured as an experiment, we approached the design of the program thoughtfully, and considered how we might use the opportunity to address specific issues that affect Chinese students' educational experiences in the US. Among these issues were the stereotyping and sinophobia that Chinese students often encounter inside and outside the classroom, and faculty misconceptions about the needs of multilingual students (e.g. Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Haan et al., 2017; Hsieh, 2007; Lee, 2020; Yeo et al., 2019; Zhu &

Bresnahan, 2018). We also considered how we could support faculty in developing skill sets in Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI) and Linguistically Responsive Instruction (LRI) (e.g. Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Haan et al., 2017; He & Bagwell, 2022; Zhang-Wu & Brisk, 2021).

Chinese Students and US Higher Education

Chinese students in the US face a great deal of stigmatization from both faculty and domestic peers (e.g. Hsieh, 2007; Yeo et al., 2019). Both research studying Chinese students' perceptions of their domestic peers' behavior (Heng, 2017; Lee & Rice, 2007) and research on domestic students' self-described attitudes toward their Chinese peers (Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018) indicate that US students tend to characterize Chinese students as cold, unfriendly, antisocial, less capable, and uninterested in connecting with people who are different from them. Some domestic students in Zhu & Bresnahan (2018) also utilize sinophobic rhetoric when describing their feelings towards Chinese students, speaking of their peers as invaders and others, and echoing political stereotypes that all Chinese people are spies and criminals (p. 1626). This pernicious line of thought is also echoed in Lee (2020), an article exploring how the current anti-China political dogma of the US, which has intensified in recent decades, is also applied to Chinese international students. These experiences of marginalization and racialization have academic repercussions for Chinese students. Freeman & Li (2019) and Ryan & Viete (2009) discuss ways that domestic students may actively exclude Chinese and other international students from participating in group projects, and may ignore their multilingual peers' contributions in class discussions. Both Freeman & Li (2019) and Halic & et al. (2009) indicate that as Chinese students experience this marginalization in the classroom, they begin to question their identities as students, doubting their own academic skills and finding their sense of confidence and self-esteem shaken. This can lead to repercussions for students' mental health, sense of physical safety on campus, isolation from communities, and opinion of the US. Students may also face pressure to assimilate, even by changing the way they speak; research has shown that people with accents that are perceived as less "disturbing" to American students due to their phonetic proximity to American English tend to be viewed as more social and more intelligent (Ruble & Zhang, 2013).

All of the above poses a threat to Chinese students' sense of belonging to a campus community. However, Mamiseishvili (2012) and Chen & Zhou (2019)

have found that Chinese students' sense of belonging and persistence can be influenced positively as they develop a close relationship with faculty and reestablish their academic sense of self. For this reason, it is critical for faculty to empathize with their Chinese students and respect them. If faculty build meaningful relationships with Chinese students, the students will be better able to persist through the challenges of the first-year transition to the US higher ed environment. If faculty demonstrate their respect for Chinese students in the classroom, they can also encourage domestic students with stigmatizing attitudes to revise their assumptions and include their peers.

Faculty Support for Multilingual Students

Linguistically responsive instruction, or LRI, is a pedagogical framework designed to support multilingual students in content-focused classes, and requires faculty to understand and intentionally accommodate the process of second language acquisition (SLA) (Gallagher and Haan, 2018). LRI in higher education is a relatively new area of study, but it has become an important focus in the fields of SLA and the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL); in fact, the 2021 Special Issue of TESOL Quarterly was devoted to exploring LRI. Recent publications have explored faculty attitudes about LRI and multilingual students (e.g. Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Gallagher et al., 2020; Haan et al., 2017), faculty development of LRI-related pedagogical knowledge (e.g. Zawacki & Cox, 2014; Tomaš & Shapiro, 2021; He & Bagwell, 2022); and international students' experiences with linguistically responsive practices (e.g. Zhang-Wu & Brisk, 2021).

Gallagher and Haan (2018) examined the perceptions of faculty across disciplinary areas about the multilingual students enrolled at their universities, as well as faculty attitudes about their own roles in helping multilingual students build and refine their communicative skills. The study found that faculty tended to hold negative views of multilingual students, framing them as deficient in linguistic skills even though these students spoke more than one language (p. 312). Though the faculty surveyed expressed concern for multilingual students, they also seemed to feel that someone else should be providing these students with additional support; in other words, they believed that it was not their responsibility to help students access their courses, and that changing their pedagogical approaches in order to do so would be burdensome, deprive domestic/native speaker students of opportunities to learn, and reduce the rigor of their courses (pp. 316-317). Haan et

al. (2017) found similar beliefs among faculty when studying attitudes about international students.

Researchers have repeatedly found that many faculty hold similar beliefs about international and multilingual students; such findings date back more than three decades (e.g. Spack, 1988; Zamel, 1995). These beliefs have thus persisted and recurred even as the international and multilingual student population in the US has grown tremendously—the enrollment peak of 2018-2019 of more than a million total international students in the US was nearly triple the total of the international student population in 1988 (Institute of International Education, 2021). At the same time, multilingual writing specialists have increasingly adopted a diversity, equity, and inclusion and decolonialist lens, and more and more resources about international and multilingual students’ needs have been developed and made widely available (e.g. Habib & Mallet, 2011; Zawacki & Cox, 2014; Zawacki et al., 2007).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to speculate about the possible factors underlying continued faculty misconceptions about international and multilingual students and resistance towards LRI. However, one simple explanation could be that faculty may feel they do not have the time nor the support resources necessary to reconceptualize their courses to facilitate linguistic scaffolding; furthermore, the dynamics between international/multilingual students and domestic/native speaker students may impede faculty efforts to truly get to know international and multilingual students. This is precisely why we consider the opportunities we had to support faculty in adapting their courses for F&M in Shanghai to have been so valuable; as we will discuss below, the Fall 2020 semester was a serendipitous moment when faculty were both deeply invested in learning as much as possible about the needs of their international and multilingual students, and were required by circumstance to approach their teaching in new, creative ways.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE

The construction of the F&M in Shanghai curriculum over Spring and Summer 2020 was driven by practical considerations. First, we needed to offer a selection of courses to satisfy general education requirements, mirroring as much as possible the educational experience of F&M first-year students under normal circumstances. This selection had to include a sufficient number of “Connections” (First-Year Seminar) sections to enroll every participant since this F&M course is

required in the first semester. We also hoped to offer a variety of courses frequently taken by first-year international students, including options from Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities. The F&M in Shanghai sections were not available to the rest of the F&M first-year population; this structure was chosen so that the students studying together in Shanghai would form a true cohort, and so that it would be logistically possible to schedule these courses to be offered synchronously at more or less reasonable times of day for both faculty in the US and students in China. Another goal was to limit the likelihood that some students would refrain from actively engaging in class out of a lack of confidence in their English skills and anticipated judgment from native speaker classmates.

As we began to discuss the program with partners around campus, a handful of faculty members volunteered to teach sections of their Fall courses for the Shanghai students. The other F&M in Shanghai courses were found through discussions with department chairs about their staffing and section capacity. At the end of this process, we had a group of dedicated, experienced faculty members from different disciplines, each with unique teaching styles and strengths, who were willing to undertake the work of adapting their engaging and challenging courses for live, virtual delivery to students on the other side of the world.

In June 2020, F&M announced that it would switch to a five-module calendar for the 2020-2021 academic year, in lieu of two 16-week semesters. This change from the semester to module calendar was proposed by F&M's Educational Programming Committee after researching the advantages and disadvantages of the compressed system and surveying faculty and students about their experiences with online classes. There were numerous reasons this approach was considered, but one important rationale behind the change to this system was the fact that many students and faculty had mentioned feeling overwhelmed and had difficulty focusing after the pivot to online classes in the Spring 2020 semester. While the College did not collect data to support or refute the success of the module system, they hoped participation in fewer courses at a time would offer an opportunity to create a more focused learning environment, the aim being to lessen the likelihood of students and faculty becoming overwhelmed. Moreover, the change to the module calendar essentially required all F&M faculty to substantially rework the design of their fall courses. For the purposes of the F&M in Shanghai program, the timing was fortuitous; the courses that would be offered to the participants had recently been finalized, we were eager to begin working with the faculty to prepare

for an unusual teaching experience, and we were excited by the opportunity to purposefully integrate linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogical practices into the F&M in Shanghai program.

Faculty Preparation

Once faculty were identified, the Assistant Dean for International and Multilingual Student Academic Success began meeting with them to answer questions and help them envision delivery of the curriculum in these unusual circumstances. The first few rounds of meetings were one-on-one, and focused on addressing each individual's specific concerns about issues like student technological access, or how to scaffold teaching objectives for an all-multilingual, all-Chinese group. These conversations provided a fantastic opportunity to reframe "deficit mindset" assumptions about Chinese students into "asset mindset" course planning.

The Assistant Dean then began to organize opportunities for the faculty to meet as a group and share ideas. The Shanghai faculty became a cohort unto themselves, and this preparation was vital for information sharing and for building interpersonal connections and trust. We connected F&M faculty with our IFSA partners, which enabled them to plan creative co-curricular programming that connected the work students would do in the (virtual) classroom with local activities and excursions in Shanghai. This also enabled faculty to develop some familiarity with the local environment where students would be living.

Collaboration with expert partners across campus was also key to the program's success. F&M is fortunate to have talented and creative instructional technologists and librarians, and these staff were central in making the virtual experience not only functional, but lively and engaging. Interactive activities that used the city of Shanghai as a learning environment were facilitated by IT staff with an expert sense for the intersection of pedagogy and technology. Thus, rather than chafing against the virtual environment, faculty were invited to experiment with it, and were well supported throughout the semester. Furthermore, F&M's Faculty Center is directed by an expert in faculty development and pedagogy. The Faculty Center director was especially helpful in working with faculty members to develop skills with Canvas, our Learning Management System. Additionally, the director hosted conversations with faculty about good practices for teaching in the virtual environment, encouraging faculty to think creatively about possibilities presented by the online experience rather than attempting to force the structure of

an in-person class onto the virtual space. The Faculty Center director is a strong proponent for equity-driven practices in the classroom and has been a consistent champion of an assets-based approach to international students. The director was instrumental in reinforcing this approach with the Shanghai faculty.

Our summer preparation also focused on laying the groundwork for faculty and students to establish a strong rapport. The Assistant Dean was able to “introduce” students and faculty in advance through activities like a “Meet the Faculty” webinar, and by having students record brief videos about themselves for their faculty to watch. Another F&M partner, a Teaching Professor of Chinese who serves as a cultural and academic liaison for Chinese students and parents, generously recorded the pronunciation of all F&M in Shanghai participants’ Chinese names. Furthermore, we invested time in preparing the student participants for the start of the semester, ensuring that every student was sufficiently familiar with Canvas, campus email, Zoom, and other technological tools. We developed opportunities for students to practice with these tools while ensuring they completed necessary administrative tasks before the start of the semester.

Faculty were asked to teach in an environment that posed fundamental questions and concerns. They ventured into new pedagogical territory from an unfamiliar virtual course environment. We would like to acknowledge here the goodwill and generous spirit that characterized the Shanghai faculty’s disposition throughout the planning process. Their dedication to offering students the best possible educational experience and creative, engaging teaching were instrumental to the program’s success.

Fostering Student Engagement

We hoped that F&M in Shanghai students would feel a sense of belonging and membership in the F&M academic and co-curricular community. However, we also knew that this was unlikely for many students without some kind of structural guidance, since connecting virtually with the campus community in Lancaster would require extra time and effort. We were particularly concerned that a lack of campus connection outside of class meetings would block access to many informal learning opportunities. Students would not have exposure to a diverse set of classmates in a residence hall, casual encounters with faculty in campus spaces, spontaneous opportunities to attend events, or the simple opportunity to walk around campus and familiarize themselves with the support resources available.

Fortunately, the OIP regularly develops and revises resources to introduce new international students to the F&M community, so could adapt these strategies into a suitable structure for the circumstances.

Since F&M international students tend to be most motivated to engage with activities in the context of coursework, we decided to build our framework for facilitating engagement with the broader F&M community in the form of a mandatory, primarily asynchronous, course. The course ran through both modules of the fall term, and if students satisfactorily completed the requisite work, they received a “Pass” and a half-credit. The course, titled “Engaging in the Liberal Arts at F&M,” had three main components. First, students had readings or other materials assigned each week; for most weeks, we alternated readings related to the liberal arts and learning with short, 20-minute interviews in which F&M faculty reflected on their own experiences in college. These recorded interviews were well received by students, in part because of the engaging topic, but also because they helped students “meet” their potential future instructors and learn about their disciplines and courses. Second, students submitted weekly reflections on their engagement with campus, detailing their academic successes and frustrations. These reflections allowed students to define how they were making progress and becoming familiar with campus resources, while also identifying areas where they would need to do more exploration. The third component of the course comprised longer reflection pieces which allowed students to think about broader goals. Since the semester was divided into two modules, students had the opportunity to learn from the experience of module 1 to establish goals for module 2. The reflections also served as a place to imagine life at F&M and claim agency towards their own F&M experience.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

We ended the Fall 2020 semester with the impression that the F&M in Shanghai program had been largely successful; as detailed below, we achieved a very satisfactory retention rate from fall to spring semester, the participants performed well academically, and informal faculty feedback on their experiences was very positive.

We must underscore again that the F&M in Shanghai program was not constructed as an experiment; we did not seek to test the effect of any particular variables on student experience, and we had no control group. We were, however,

aware that we were building an innovative program, and that it would be a wasted opportunity if we did not try to assess its effectiveness. We have been able to gather quantitative and qualitative data dealing with student outcomes and faculty perceptions of the experience. While we cannot claim that any particular factor led to specific results, we have identified promising avenues for future research.

Retention

The most fundamental goal of the F&M in Shanghai program was to retain and enroll our Chinese international students. Of the 63 students who completed the Fall 2020 semester in Shanghai, 61—or 97%—chose to enroll in the spring semester as well. Of those 61, 58 (95%) chose to enroll in remote F&M courses rather than attend a study abroad option. 3 chose to attend a study abroad program owned by F&M in the UK; while the courses offered through this program earned F&M credit, they were delivered in hybrid format by faculty in the UK, rather than by F&M faculty in remote format. The primary reason cited by students who chose to attend this program was that they were interested in studying in the UK.

The ISS arm of the OIP tracks patterns in our F-1 student population carefully, so we are able to compare our retention numbers for the F&M in Shanghai participants to our retention numbers for all international students over the last several years. Since the Shanghai students are now in their sophomore year, we examined the retention rate for this population from year one to year two, and compared it to our rates for the previous five years.

Table 1:

F-1 Retention Data

<i>Entry F-1 Cohort</i>	<i>Entry Dates</i>	<i># enrolled year 1</i>	<i># continuing year 2</i>	<i>% Retained to year 2</i>
2024	AY 20-21	107	100	93%
F&M in Shanghai	August 20	63	58	92%
2023	AY 19-20	141	130	92%
2022	AY 18-19	132	122	92%
2021	AY 17-18	94	88	94%
2020	AY 16-17	106	101	95%
2019	AY 15-16	93	88	95%
<i>Average, AY15-16-AY20-21</i>		<i>112.17</i>	<i>104.83</i>	<i>93%</i>

Note: Continuing = enrolled for year 2, on leave but later returned, or on leave with intent to return

The 92% retention rate for F&M in Shanghai students going into their sophomore year, and the 93% retention rate for the class of 2024 overall, sits squarely in the normal range of F-1 student retention (92-95%) for recent years. Given the challenging circumstances of these students' first year as F&M students—including the pandemic, the difficulty of taking classes across a 12(+) hour time difference, a compressed course schedule, and the physical distance from the F&M community in Lancaster—the fact that we maintained normal levels of retention over the last year can be considered a success.

Academic Performance

The F&M in Shanghai students' average grades for the Fall 2020 semester were slightly higher than the average first-semester GPA for international students in previous years; the average GPA for F&M in Shanghai students was also slightly higher than the average GPA for first-year domestic students in Fall 2020, in line with a trend we have seen in previous years. Even so, there are a number of challenges involved in considering whether the structure of the F&M in Shanghai program had a tangible impact on student grades. There are many factors beyond the program itself that could, and likely did, have some measure of effect on student outcomes, including the ongoing pandemic, compressed schedule, and the use of online and hybrid technologies for class delivery. It is also exceedingly difficult to find an adequate basis for comparison between the F&M in Shanghai students and any other group. Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 offered radically different educational experiences, especially because of their different calendar structures; first-year students in Fall 2020 who resided on campus or studied remotely in the US experienced distinct environmental stressors. Therefore, contrasting the grade performance of F&M in Shanghai students with these groups is of limited use. Finally, grades for all F&M students trended higher in Fall 2020 than Fall 2019; this pattern could have resulted from student performance, grade leniency due to extenuating circumstances, or teachers simply adopting different methods for grade tabulation in their restructured classes. Considering these limitations, we have elected not to incorporate grade-based data into this paper.

Faculty Reflections on the Shanghai Teaching Experience

While the quantitative data of student retention and grades offer only limited information about the outcomes of the program, comments from faculty on their experiences have yielded a great deal of intriguing qualitative information. At the end of the Fall 2020 semester, the Assistant Dean spoke with most of the F&M in Shanghai faculty one-on-one both to debrief about their experiences and to gather feedback and ideas that could be used to support faculty teaching remote students in the Spring 2021 semester. F&M in Shanghai faculty members' feedback at that time was extremely positive, and a strong theme in these conversations was the idea that this experience would have an impact on their future pedagogical practices. We thus resolved to revisit this topic at a later date in order to gauge what lessons from the experience had persisted.

Method and Limitations

During the Fall 2021 semester, we reached out to the faculty who taught F&M in Shanghai courses and invited them to participate in a semi-structured interview to reflect on their teaching experiences in this unique program. Five faculty members were both available and willing to participate. We chose to hold the interview as a group conversation in keeping with the cohorted nature of the preparatory experience; we hoped that as the faculty compared their different perspectives on the questions we asked, they would be able to find interesting connections and insights.

The list of preliminary questions was provided to the interview participants prior to the scheduled conversation so that they would have time to reflect. At the start of the interview, we explained that we would try to cover all of the topics, but that we would not adhere strictly to the questions as written, both acknowledging the fact that responses were likely to address multiple topics and to allow for flexibility in the conversation. Examples of the questions we posed were:

- How did the actual experience [of teaching your class] compare to your expectations? Did anything about your students' behavior and outcomes in the course surprise you?
- What things did you learn from and about your F&M in Shanghai students in Fall 2020?
- Is there anything you gained from the F&M in Shanghai experience that will be useful to you in future courses or teaching experiences?

The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. We then utilized a basic narrative thematic analysis approach to review the data. Many themes emerged from the participants' reflections, including the difficulty of adjusting to the module calendar, the logistical advantages of collaborating with administrators "on the ground," and F&M in Shanghai students' high rates of utilization of office hours. For this paper, we have chosen to analyze themes specifically related to tools and strategies that could address the challenges that affect Chinese international students in the US.

While our conversation with faculty was fruitful, we are limited in our ability to reach definitive conclusions. Only 5 of 12 Shanghai faculty were available for these interviews, and we do not know if their experience is representative of the entire group. Additionally, since we did not plan the F&M in Shanghai program as an experiment, we did not design research questions at the initial planning stages, but rather designed the final interviews based on what we had observed over the course of the F&M in Shanghai semester. Finally, our analysis is undoubtedly influenced by personal bias. Our experience in constructing and implementing the program and our professional responsibilities at F&M shape our interpretation of which themes are most salient.

Discussion

Faculty comments in our interview made clear how much they learned about their Chinese students during the Fall 2020 semester, and how gracefully they adapted their practices in this environment to respond to students' needs as they emerged. All faculty members discussed the different types of scaffolding they provided to students related to academic culture and language. One instructor mentioned that she made certain to provide her students with transparent information about the target skills and knowledge goals of each writing assignment. This act of clarifying expectations ultimately allowed students to produce better work, since they could be more confident that their approach to the assignment was appropriate. In effect, because she provided them with scaffolding related to communicative purpose and structure, students were able to produce a more linguistically complex, idea-rich result. The instructor mentioned that she planned to continue the practice.

Another professor provided a similar type of scaffolding to her class, but with a different purpose. The professor explained that she changed the way she assigns homework, which she does not collect or grade. In previous semesters, she

expected students to assume responsibility and to keep up with the recommended practice work independently. However, in Fall 2020, students mentioned that they were having difficulty keeping track of what they needed to do. The professor started using Canvas for a “to-do” list of work, and provided a digital space for students to upload their homework and reflect on their experience of completing the assignment. Even though the professor still does not grade or review the work, students reported that they found the approach helpful, and the professor has continued the practice. This scaffold encouraged students to develop organization and time management skills, as well as accountability and agency in learning. Many first-year international students struggle with these skills, especially if they attended highly structured high schools. Such scaffolding can therefore be extremely useful to students transitioning to the independent environment of a school like F&M.

Another important theme was the contrast between previous experiences of teaching international students in integrated classes and the experience of teaching a cohort class of students from the same country. This topic also arose repeatedly in our informal conversations with F&M in Shanghai faculty in Fall 2020; at that time, professors remarked on the close relationships they developed with their students, noting that they had learned far more about their Chinese students’ lives than they had in previous semesters. In our group interview in Fall 2021, we asked the F&M in Shanghai faculty to reflect on this aspect of their experience and inquired whether these insights had impacted their teaching practices. In response, one professor observed that in classes integrated with domestic students, Chinese students and students from other countries tend to be lumped together as “international students”, erasing other facets of their identities. In his Shanghai class, however, he said:

It was the differences within that particular group that became the new ... tools for getting conversation ... So instead of being the international students versus the other sort of groupings, it’s now north China versus south China, from Beijing or from Shanghai, from seemingly wealthy, less wealthy, having been to the United States, having never been to the United States ... I think that was a kind of opening up and getting to learn and understand what the international students are like.

Students are often asked to consider both their perspectives and those of students who are different from them in class discussions. However, this comment

signals a problem: international students are often constrained by the unstated assumption that they share a perspective because they are not US citizens. This has repercussions for the international students themselves, as this assumption dismisses their individuality and reinforces harmful stereotypes, but also for their domestic peers and faculty. International students in the US, even those with a shared national origin, are very diverse, and the knowledge and perspectives they hold constitute a substantial, often underutilized, asset.

Other faculty members also celebrated participants' assets. One comment underscored the importance of reframing the misconception that international students are deficient because their educational backgrounds differ from many students in the US. Reflecting on an assignment she had taught in other semesters, the professor observed that her Chinese students displayed a more profound understanding of the theoretical framework than she had anticipated:

One assignment was very different with this group than in the past, with past domestic students and mixed groups, because I asked them to write about a book that was important to them as a child. And they had the most sort of just thoughtful ... Clearly they got the idea that a literary text is important, like they all had an important literary text that they could talk about and what they experienced and how they felt after they read it. And I don't see that as much with American students. You know, it's much more diverse there. And so that was sort of a great kind of cross-cultural thing, because I learned a lot about certain texts that are typically read in China that sort of convinced me, like, this is a really good assignment to bring together students' ideas about literacy and what it means to be literate and that they already bring assets just with their background, even if it isn't in the English language.

As an outcome of this experience, the professor observed how her Chinese students are experts in their own learning, capable of making valuable contributions to the class regardless of their comfort with the English language. The professor also indicates that she intends to continue using this assignment, and to leverage the opportunity to solicit and legitimize international students' knowledge in classes with domestic students. Such teaching practices have the potential to create a profound impact on international students' experiences and sense of belonging.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The F&M in Shanghai project can be related to scholarship in a number of different disciplines, with relevant themes including international education and international student services, second language acquisition and multilingualism, classroom power dynamics, student support services and academic success, and community formation and belonging. One important theme is virtual international education and pedagogy. While F&M in Shanghai employed only some aspects of the COIL model, it is true that the exchanges between F&M in Shanghai students and faculty reflected principles of COIL: students and faculty engaged virtually in real time, using the physical environments in each location to enhance collaborative, active learning. As we demonstrate in this paper, students and faculty alike had a successful educational experience, despite the time zone difference and physical separation. The quantitative comments from F&M faculty in particular reflect the identified benefits of virtual exchange programs. O’Dowd (2021) reports that many studies of virtual exchange programs show that students “[develop] cultural knowledge during their exchanges,” including both “information about the partner culture itself or information about the relationship between the participating countries,” and “a growing awareness of cultural diversity and ... of their partners’ multiple identities and the need to avoid regarding cultures as monolithic” (pp. 217). Similarly, the opportunity to connect so intentionally with their Chinese students seems to have allowed F&M in Shanghai faculty to develop an increased understanding of these students’ diverse backgrounds, identities, and needs. The case of F&M in Shanghai thus suggests that certain aspects of a COIL or Virtual Exchange model could provide a fruitful structure for faculty development related to linguistically responsive pedagogy and support for international and multilingual students.

While we have less information about other specific benefits that may be afforded to international students through classes delivered in a virtual format, we are continuing to explore possibilities for using the virtual space to enhance F&M’s educational reach and internationalization profile. Though we do not intend to replicate F&M in Shanghai, we have retained insights from the experience for creating programming and resources for first-year international students prior to arrival in the US. In particular, the use of these virtual technologies and pedagogical tools makes it possible to provide incoming first-year international students with substantial resources and information about the academic culture of

the College before they arrive on campus to begin their degree programs. We are very interested in hearing from others who are exploring virtual and hybrid models to improve first-year international student transition to campus communities.

The other key theme that may be related to the F&M in Shanghai project is research on the Chinese international student experience in the US. Literature focused specifically on Chinese students studying abroad has been plentiful in recent years; for example, there are a number of studies focusing on sociocultural, acculturative, and academic stressors and their impacts on Chinese students (e.g., Su et al., 2021; Yan, 2017; Yan & Berliner, 2009; Yan & Berliner, 2013), social interactions with domestic and international peers (e.g., Meng et al., 2018; Sato et al., 2020; Wang, 2017; Wilson et al. 2020; Yao, 2016), and choice of host country and purpose in studying abroad (e.g. Chao et al., 2017; Dai & Garcia, 2019; Gong & Huybers, 2015; Yu, 2021). Other literature has sought to provide a nuanced portrait of Chinese international students in order to examine and counter stereotypical representations of such students as perpetually struggling and to center the voices and stories of the students themselves (e.g. Heng, 2017; Heng, 2018; Heng, 2020; Ma, 2020; Suspitsyna & Shalka, 2019). Finally, within literature focusing on international and multilingual student experiences of racialization and linguistic discrimination, there is a substantial amount of qualitative research discussing the particular experiences of Chinese students. For example, Lee & Rice (2007), Yeo et al. (2019), Dovchin (2020), and Hsieh (2007) all shed light on patterns of xenophobia and exclusion perpetuated by domestic students and other members of campus communities against Chinese students. Relatedly, Lee (2020) has examined how Sinophobic and neo-racist stereotypes which portray China and Chinese people as inherently threatening to the US are transferred from the national/political context onto international Chinese students, while studies of US student attitudes towards Chinese and international students (e.g. Mejri, 2019; Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018) have revealed anglocentric beliefs and patterns of exclusionary behavior from domestic students towards their Chinese peers.

Chinese student success and well-being in US higher education is a well-researched topic; however, work remains to improve Chinese student transitions to the US academic environment in the first year, and to address the deficit orientation towards Chinese multilingual students that faculty and domestic peers so often hold. The F&M in Shanghai program offered us a unique opportunity to

teach first-year Chinese students without immersing them in that toxic framework. We were then able to build on existing research and create pathways for faculty to creatively rethink assumptions and expectations of Chinese students, while allowing students to foreground the assets they bring to the classroom. F&M in Shanghai was not designed as an experiment, so we cannot make any conclusive claims about the relationship between the cohorted structure of the program and the positive outcomes for students and faculty. However, positive reflections on the experience from both faculty and students encourage us to continue with similar efforts on the F&M campus. We hope that our experience encourages others to explore these promising avenues for future research on international and multilingual student success.

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