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THE INFLUX OF CHINESE STUDENTS INTO AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS OF
HIGHER LEARNING: STATE OF AFFAIRS ANALYSIS OF WPI AS A CASE
STUDY

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Abstract

The number of Chinese applicants to American graduate schools has increased by double-digit percentages since 2005 (Korn, 2012). Worcester Polytechnic Institute's graduate program is comprised of 35% international students from many countries all over the world (WPI). This paper examines these students. In addition, it assesses the effectiveness of WPI's attempts to integrate them into its classrooms and social groups, along with its efforts to prepare American students for collaboration with international students. Furthermore, I will attempt to assess the impact of the WPI admissions process on the students, faculty, and classroom environments on campus. Finally, predictions and recommendations are produced that are aimed at enhancing the integration of Chinese and American students in academia at WPI.

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INTRODUCTION

My motivation for selecting this topic stems from my experiences as a student at WPI in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. It seemed to me that there was a problem with the way that foreign students are integrated into the classroom environment at WPI. While WPI's international student body is comprised of students from many different countries, I selected Chinese students as the focus of this writing. This decision was made because it was more relatable to me and therefore easier to write about, and also because there are a large number of Chinese students at WPI.

Before I talk about WPI, it is prudent to trace this topic back to its Chinese roots. The culture surrounding Chinese students prior to college is probably something that not many WPI students have heard much about. Understanding the culture of the Chinese students before they apply to WPI is paramount to grasping the rest of the information in context. I attempted to write from an unbiased standpoint, having had many opportunities to work with students of many nationalities. My experiences with students of both American and foreign nationalities are a mixture of pleasure and pain, so I maintain a balanced mindset while writing this analysis. I think most students, regardless of where they hail from, will agree when I say that the communicative and cultural barriers presented by such a diverse campus can be frustrating to say the least. On the other hand, understanding the cultural differences has the potential to produce a better result from coordinated efforts. The diversity in backgrounds provides a large amount of collective creativity, which can be harnessed for project success.

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

One of the world's accepted experts in intercultural dynamics is Geert Hofstede. His book "Culture's Consequences" established Hofstede as the founder of intercultural research in the workplace. One of his most famous developments was the creation of national cultural dimensions.

These dimensions are used to evaluate a culture comparatively against another culture. The different cultural dimensions are Power Distance (PDI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Long-term versus Short-term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR). Below is a description of each dimension taken from Hofstede's website (Hofstede, Culture's Consequences, 2002).

POWER DISTANCE

"This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. In societies with low power distance, people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power."

INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS COLLECTIVISM

"The high side of this dimension, called Individualism, can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families only. Its opposite, Collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. A society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'we.'"

MASCULINITY VERSUS FEMININITY

"The masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material reward for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented."

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

"The uncertainty avoidance dimension expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? Countries exhibiting strong UAI maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Weak UAI societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles."

LONG-TERM VERSUS SHORT-TERM ORIENTATION

"The long-term orientation dimension can be interpreted as dealing with society's search for virtue. Societies with a short-term orientation generally have a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth. They are normative in their thinking. They exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small

propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results. In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results."

INDULGENCE VERSUS RESTRAINT

"Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms."

AMERICA ACCORDING TO HOFSTEDE

Hofstede's website provides descriptions of a number of countries in terms of the cultural dimensions. Among the countries described is the United States (Hofstede, The Hofstede Centre).

The United States scores low in Power-Distance, probably hinting at the American ideals of equality and fairness. Hofstede mentions that in American organizations and companies, management structure is created by a fundamental need for SOME structure, but that superiors are expected to be approachable. Employees and employers rely mutually on each other and information is shared in an informal, direct, and participative manner.

America ranks among the most individualistic of countries, meaning that a sense of civic duty may be lower than in a less individualistic country, but that citizens are more apt to approach strangers with whom they will be working. Americans, in general, are creative and are not afraid to express their opinions among their peers.

A slightly masculine-biased culture exists in America, where people commonly talk about their accomplishments and must in order to be successful in business or in societal life. United States citizens believe in the "winner takes all" mentality and strive to achieve a higher status by living to work (Hofstede, The Hofstede Centre).

The United States is a largely risk-taking community, accepting inherent uncertainty in the nature of the world. As a result, Americans tend to try new ideas and concepts and produce innovative technologies.

Compared to most cultures, Americans think short-term. One example of the short-term mindset is the measurement timescale for businesses being quarterly, occurring four times per year. Most individuals attempt to make quick gains and rapid results both in the workplace and in other aspects of daily life.

Lastly, going hand-in-hand with the short-term orientation and the masculinity, Americans are largely indulgent, not showing much restraint. Ownership of property and faddish items are seen as a form of status and people tend to focus less on saving money than citizens of other developed countries.

CHINA ACCORDING TO HOFSTEDE

China, according to Hofstede (Hofstede, The Hofstede Centre), in contrast to the United States, is a high power-distance culture. In general, people are not treated equally and this is acceptable. The relationship between employees and employers tends to be extremely formal and individuals respect the legitimate authority of someone in power without question.

Also different from America is China's collectivist culture. Relations with co-workers are stronger than the ties that bind a person to his/her company or employer.

China is a masculine culture, competitive, and uses success and achievement as strong metrics of quality of life. Work is often a top priority and exam scores among students are strongly emphasized.

Like the United States, Chinese culture is fairly accepting of the uncertain. Hofstede cites the Chinese language as an example, being riddled with complex meanings and ambiguity (Hofstede, The Hofstede Centre).

Chinese thinking has a long-term orientation. This means that investments are typically analyzed for long-term profitability.

WHAT THE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS TELL US

When the two cultures are compared, the first impression is that there is enough in common, culturally, to allow the two cultures to form creative working relationships together. This is evident on campus, as there is a largely intercultural and collaborative environment in the classroom. The difficulty comes with the differences, being American impatience and short-term thinking vs. Chinese perseverance and long-term orientation. From the cultural dimensions, one can predict that the typical WPI student might find many other cultures that vary from his/her own. With specific regard to this research, Chinese and American cultures share some commonalities but also some differences.

PRE-COLLEGE LIFE

The first phase of investigation was focused on the pre-college life of students from both cultures. In order to put the cultural dimensions in context, as well as to provide a good platform for discussing the application process, I tried to acquire a reliable picture of what childhood is like in China. For this, I approached author and professor Jennifer Rudolph at Worcester Polytechnic Institute whose main area of study is Chinese political history. She has spent extensive time in China, and uses cultural examples and research in her teaching.

COMING OF AGE IN CHINA

ONE-CHILD POLICY

Much of the characteristics of Chinese childhood and the resulting culture can be related back to the one-child policy. “In a country where children struggle to succeed,” the policy, enacted by Deng Xiaoping roughly 30 years ago, “helps parents focus their resources on a single child” (Massoud, 2012). The policy requires that Chinese parents only have one child. If the first child born is a female, the parents are sometimes permitted one more child.

“The One-Child policy came into effect around 1979 and was in response to this idea of sustainable growth, as China's population was booming because they had been encouraging people to have as many children as possible in the 60's. So come '79 they put the one child policy in place, but even from the beginning the One-Child policy wasn't strictly a one child policy, it was mainly aimed at urban areas, large urban centers like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and in the urban areas they made a huge push to have one child and they were able to enforce it through both a program of incentives and punishments.” - (Rudolph, 2012)

Often, the parents must pay a social maintenance fee for the second child, which varies based on income and can be anywhere from a few thousand US dollars per parent to millions of dollars. It is said that the main motivation behind the one-child policy was to raise a generation of exceptionally smart and competitive citizens (The Economist, 2012).

GROWING UP UNDER THE ONE-CHILD POLICY

Accounts of growing up in China vary depending on who is being asked. In *Only hope: coming of age under China's one-child policy*, Vanessa Fong relates many stories that she collected over a period of 27 months in northeastern China. Not having relevant experience myself, I will use her accounts and Taylor Clark's article from *Psychology Today* as the primary source for my information about Chinese childhood (Clark, 2008) (Fong, 2004).

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF THE ONE-CHILD POLICY

The one-child policy was discussed as early as the 1970's as the Planned Birth Ordinance (Coale, 1981), and the psychological effects have been widely debated since. Chinese children are

told from their first days of school that their success or failure in the future depends on their scores on the National College Entrance Exam, China's SAT. It has the affectionate nickname Gao Kao or "tall test" because of the magnitude of the importance of scoring well. If students perform well, they can look forward to an education in a well-known institution. If not, they face their impending futures as blue-collar workers. The one-child policy was intended to control the explosive population growth in China in the 1970's. The legacy of the growth is that there is a large pool of able-bodied young workers, making employees largely expendable and contributing to China's ability to produce goods cheaply and be competitive in the global market (Clark, 2008). As a result employed Chinese citizens work long hard hours. So much so, that there has been a shift in the attitude of many towards wanting only one or no children (Newman, 2011). The job market, especially in the middle-class, has become so competitive, in fact, that it is not uncommon for families to devote themselves entirely to their child's studies and preparation from infancy. According to Clark, China is still a developing country with limited opportunity. Chinese universities graduate roughly 4 million students annually, but these students are entering a workplace that can only provide 1.6 million new jobs. As a result, many graduating Chinese students have a hard time finding employment. Suicide has become China's leading cause of death among people aged 20 to 35 (Reuters).

TO BE COMPETITIVE

The volume of applications from Chinese students to US schools has seen percentage rises in the double digits for seven years. Specific interest seems to be paid to engineering, business, and earth sciences. The exploding Chinese middle-class and tough job market have created an environment in which a Chinese job applicant with western exposure is more desirable (Korn, 2012), something also known by Rudolph (Rudolph, 2012). The rapid influx of Chinese students to American institutions in the last decade has been a blessing and a curse. Colleges are eager to broaden their ethnic diversity but some professors say they have had to alter how they teach.

“College officials and consultants say they are seeing widespread fabrication on applications, whether that means a personal essay written by an agent or an English proficiency score that doesn’t jibe with a student’s speaking ability” (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011). According to Bartlett and Fischer, colleges are beginning to adjust and try new strategies both for incorporating and acclimating the students, but also for distinguishing between accurate and falsified applications.

The results of the hyper-competitiveness and pressing requirements for Chinese students aspiring to come to America is summarized in a report published by Zinch, a consulting company that advises American colleges and Universities about China. In the report, CEO Tom Melcher reveals that, based on interviews with 250 Beijing students bound for the U.S., 90 percent of Chinese applicants submit false recommendations letters, 70 percent didn’t write their own personal essays, 50 percent have forged high school transcripts, and 10 percent take credit for awards and honors they did not receive (Melcher, 2012). In his report, Melcher sympathizes with the students and the agents who provide the services saying that they’re only responding to the demands of their environment.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Tom Melcher is a graduate of Yale and the Harvard Business School. He lived in Beijing between 1985 and 1987 and has lived there again since 2004. Already a best-selling author, Melcher is now the Chairman of Zinch China, an organization that attempts to connect Chinese students with colleges and universities around the world and the many scholarships they offer. Melcher's White Paper No.4 contains a section that describes the cultural reasons that lead Chinese applicants to falsify their admissions paperwork. The White Paper refers to undergraduate admissions.

Melcher cites parental pressure as the number one driving force behind applicant cheating. He implies that navigation of the extensive process of applying to a foreign institution is largely conducted by the parents of the potential student. Traditional thinking in China considers that a student not yet in college is also not yet responsible enough to make a weighty decision such as choosing which college to attend. The hyper-competitiveness of China's school system encourages parents to cheat when matters involve their children. Melcher likens it to the speed limit in the United States, saying that even though drivers know they are driving too fast, they do it anyway because everyone else is doing it.

FUNDAMENTAL CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Bartlett and Fischer also discuss the cultural differences that create the admissions problems. They talk about the American applications being written entirely in English, which can be baffling to prospective and aspiring Chinese students. Chinese students are also confused by the emphasis on extra-curriculars, may never have written a personal essay, and don't know how to procure a letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor because guidance counselors are largely non-existent in China. They may also choose which institutions to apply to in America based

on the recommendations of paid placement agents in China or the rankings of the institutions in newspapers, which they consider to be official government publications.

There exist some fundamental misunderstandings with regard to the application contents. Letters of recommendation, for example, in America are typically nearly a page long. When admissions recruiters examine letters of recommendation, they are looking at the content to determine what kind of person the applicant is. In China, application letters are typically 3-5 sentences long and the content doesn't matter. What matters in China is the signature block, because who you know is more important than who you are.

AFTER ARRIVAL

To find out about what occurs after an international student arrives at WPI, I approached Tom Thomsen, director of International House. Mr. Thomsen is acutely aware of the cross-cultural challenges faced by students at WPI and, in my interview with him, provided some very useful insight.

Between my interview with Mr. Thomsen (Thomsen, 2013) and my interview with Karen Goudey from WPI admissions (Goudey, 2013), I have been able to get a very good idea of the process for bringing international students into the WPI community. To begin with, Mrs. Goudey, being an admissions officer, described a situation of conditional admittance.

“Typically students are not retested, and there are some students across the board who will be conditionally admitted, like if we see an applicant who is a very strong applicant for WPI and their only negative is that they aren’t meeting the English proficiency requirement, maybe they’re close but not quite there yet, there is a handful of students we’ll conditionally admit, who are required to attend our summer ESL institute. Those students who progress through the institute are re-evaluated to make sure they’re ready to enter the classroom here.” - (Goudey, 2013)

Something that struck me as odd was that Mrs. Goudey said students are “re-evaluated to make sure they’re ready to enter the classroom”, and yet Mr. Thomsen described the situation a little differently.

“It’s a requirement to take the course and it’s pass/fail for zero credit. Passing is basically based on attendance. If you come and you make your best effort you’ll pass. There’s no test, we’re not going to say you didn’t improve enough, but if you blow it off you won’t pass.” - (Thomsen, 2013)

The operative difference between the two being that Mrs. Goudey stated that the students are evaluated again for proficiency, but Mr. Thomsen stated that they are put through the summer ESL course but not re-evaluated, that passing the course is contingent upon attendance and effort.

The discrepancy in understanding between these two school faculty members is something I found interesting.

The summer ESL institute is a different entity from the brief orientation that international students receive. Mr. Thomsen describes the graduate international student orientation as being a short discussion about administrative topics. The undergraduate international student orientation is a little more involved, occupying a three-day span.

“For the undergraduate students, we have a pretty comprehensive three-day orientation program, as for all undergraduate international students and you can actually go on the international house web page and see the dates. We basically cover issues like some immigration rules, cross-cultural issues, safety in Worcester and on campus, we have someone from food services come and talk about meal plans and what they can do for foreign students as far as special needs and special requests. We have social activities when we bring back 15 or so international students who work with these students. So there’s this three-day orientation and then during A-term, peer mentors do activities with them and we provide opportunities for them to go shopping in case they came from a long way away and couldn’t bring much with them. At the graduate level it’s a little different. There isn’t much of that in the general graduate orientation. There is one general presentation when they arrive, it takes two hours and covers finding off-campus housing, what to look out for when signing a lease, and so we do that. Now for graduate students, they often need to shop for their apartments, so we have one trip that goes out to Ikea, and then all international graduate students have to take a language test, English test. Those who end up in the ESL classes, which teaches language, also receive a cultural component.” - (Thomsen, 2013)

Lastly, Mr. Thomsen highlights a difference between the WPI international orientation process in general and the orientation process that the School of Business employs.

“The school of business does things a little differently, they have one lecture with all its new Chinese students, they bring all the Chinese students into a classroom the day before classes start and they give them a talk-to from the Chinese faculty in Chinese. They’re told this is the first and last time we’re going to speak Chinese to you and they basically read them the rules about plagiarism, academic honesty, not speaking Chinese in class and they do that in Chinese to make sure they understand it. They say that’s the last time you’re going to hear us speak Chinese to you in the School of Business.” - (Thomsen, 2013)

CONCLUSIONS

In writing this paper I have acquired a general perception of what a Chinese student's life has been like prior to applying to WPI, what the process is for applying, and how they are acclimated upon arrival. In looking at the entire picture, I have come to a few conclusions.

First, students in general do not receive a very comprehensive level of cultural training. I had the opportunity in my study-abroad in Konstanz, Germany, to take an Intercultural Management course. The course was very enlightening and ultimately led to my interest in the issue of integrating cultures at WPI. From speaking with Karen Goudey and Tom Thomsen, it is apparent that the only cultural training WPI students are likely to receive is from their preparations for IQPs abroad. This cultural training is often too localized to be broadly applicable to intercultural work in general, although clearly it has irrefutable value.

Second, the issue of unreliable English competency test results is widely known, accepted, and administration is having a difficult time determining how to handle the information. All three interviewees that were cited in this report mentioned the issue of cheating on the TOEFL exam and yet none of them named a concrete way of filtering or validating the exam results. WPI offers the summer ESL institute for students who clearly need additional help with their English, but having passed the course does not indicate a level of English mastery.

The approach of the School of Business of using an introductory briefing is an interesting one because it involves a simple concept of managing expectations. They are setting the tone for a student's time at WPI by laying out the rules and standards in a language that can be understood. Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to speak with any faculty from the school of business to determine the effectiveness of that tactic. I can testify to the fact that students in the School of Business don't speak Chinese in classroom, or at least didn't in the classes that I took.

My ultimate conclusion is that the awareness of administrative officials at American universities to the issue of cultural integration is fairly new at WPI. It seems that only in the last decade, solutions have started appearing to address the cultural challenges faced by students. Domestic students simply don't receive any cultural awareness training and exacerbate cultural issues. On the other hand, foreign students are expected to meet certain stated English competency minimums but in practice aren't actually held to the minimums. It is my opinion that the lack of English competency screening of applicants, combined with a lack of cultural training for both domestic and foreign students is absolutely affecting the classrooms at WPI.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I do believe that there are a couple small changes that can be made that would facilitate positive progress. WPI is a uniquely creative community and I believe that the creative project environment can be attributed in part to the diversity of the faculty and students on campus. Having said that, it is unreasonable to expect students to work together who don't speak the same language. In our admissions process we require students to be competent in English and yet in practice we don't hold them to the standards that we set. There is a known problem of cheating on the TOEFL exam. If a student's application seems a little suspicious with regard to English competency, he or she is made to take a test of English again upon arrival. Not all students are made to do this and even if a student fails the English test after having passed it on the application, he or she attends the summer ESL institute. A passing grade in the ESL institute must be achieved before entering the WPI curriculum, but the assessment metric is attendance not competency. This strikes me as a fundamental flaw in the English evaluation process.

One very reliable way to address the issue of students arriving in WPI classrooms with sub-standard English ability would be to test every international student for English mastery upon arriving in the United States. Students that don't pass the test would enter the summer ESL institute and would have to re-test again after the five weeks of English as a Second Language training. If the retested and failed again, they would simply have to retake the ESL institute course a second time, or as many times as it took before passing the English competency test. This approach sounds burdensome, but it seems to me to be the best way to ensure that all students have achieved the expected level of English competency before entering classrooms at WPI.

My second improvement would be to add a cross-cultural workshop to orientation week for freshmen. This would be for both domestic and international students. The workshop would involve activities that would force students into positions of empathy and understanding. It would

involve hands-on interactive activities that highlight the challenges of working with people from different backgrounds. I think the workshop would also involve a presentation of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and examples from various cultures to show how they can be used to understand the viewpoint of someone from another country. The design of this cross-cultural competency module for orientation could potentially be a domestic IQP for a student who can't travel abroad.

The additional of a cross-cultural competency module to orientation for all students, along with a more robust assessment of English competency for international students, would be two steps in the right direction for addressing some of the challenges faced by WPI students and faculty.

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APPENDIX A: PROFESSOR JENNIFER RUDOLPH INTERVIEW

Interview Subject: *Professor Jennifer Rudolph, PhD*

Interviewed by: *Greg Overton*

Interview Date and Location: *14 February 2013, Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

Introduction: *Jennifer Rudolph is an author and professor at WPI. She has spent time in China and serves as a good cultural information reference for this paper.*

Greg Overton: Obviously one of the most prominent things that I have been reading about with regards to Chinese childhood is the One-Child policy. Is it something that is still practiced to a great extent, or is it falling out of popularity and enforcement?

Prof. Rudolph: It depends, so the One-Child policy came into effect around 1979 and was in response to this idea of sustainable growth, as China's population was booming because they had been encouraging people to have as many children as possible in the 60's. So come '79 they put the one child policy in place, but even from the beginning the One-Child policy wasn't strictly a one child policy, it was mainly aimed at urban areas, large urban centers like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and in the urban areas they made a huge push to have one child and they were able to enforce it through both a program of incentives and punishments. They had to get people to buy into this idea that it didn't matter if it was a boy or a girl.

Greg Overton: Which is kind of contrary to the cultural norm - that everyone should have a male son?

Prof. Rudolph: It's a cultural bias it has to do with the fact that it's a patrilineal society, patrilineal, all these things. So in urban areas they had large amounts of success in this because your housing was linked to the fact that you would only have one child, you would sign a promise that you would only have one child and once you had that child you would sign another promise that you would only have that one child, and as a reward you would get a bigger apartment, you would get promotions or you know a job, all that kind of stuff. They were able to do it because everything was organized around your work unit. Your work unit determined not only your job, but also the schooling of your child, your apartment, all sorts of things like that. In the countryside it was a little different, because there you have an agrarian society where you need to have a son to carry on the farm and the manual labor and to take care of the parents as they age. It's a patrilocal society, as well as a patrilineal and patriarchal, so if you had a girl, she would go and more often than not, go to her husband's family, her new husband's family, and become part of that family, probably not in the same village or anything. So it's hard to make the argument that a girl is as good as a boy when a girl, an only girl, threatens the local economy of a single family. So in the countryside, it was never a one-child policy, it was if you had a girl, then you waited a certain amount of time that the government told you that you had to wait, you would often be allowed to try again for a boy. If you had a girl again the second time, you were out of luck. If you have a boy the second time, you're

golden. You cannot have a third child. Everyone always asks 'what if you have twins?', twins are okay, you won't have to get a selective abortion or anything like that, but there were a lot of enforced abortions, if you did not follow the rules. So in the countryside then, it was a two-child policy, if you had a girl first. In the minority areas like Shenzhen or Tibet, they didn't enforce the one- or two-child policy, you could as many children as you wanted, so it was never a clear-cut policy. But in large urban areas, it was a one-child policy.

Greg Overton: That's the feeling I got from what I was reading, but I wasn't able to distinguish where it was selective and where it wasn't.

Prof. Rudolph: Now it's still in place, but it's harder and harder to enforce because of the private economy that has taken off in the economic reform era. We think of it as capitalism here, it's not quite capitalism but, now your work unit doesn't control your life as much, so they don't have as much of a stick or as much incentive to get people to buy into the one-child policy. In large urban areas, people tend to have smaller families anyway, like in Manhattan, people won't have seven children because where are you going to put them? And if you're paying for your own education now, or paying for your children's education, you're not going to want to have as many kids. So the urban environment has been a natural form of birth control, and that's where you get people buying into the one-child policy anyway. Now people who have a lot of money- if you have an extra child you just have to pay a large fine, and people are opting to do that so you do see families with two or three children in the cities. Before, you might have to pay a large fine, but that still didn't get your child recognition. If you had a second child in the city before, in defiance of the state, that child was not issued a birth certificate, they could not go to school, so the state had ways of pressuring you not to have more than one child. Now it's just a fine, so if you can pay the fine, you can have a child.

Greg Overton: Does the fine increase if you have more than one or two additional children?

Prof. Rudolph: I think so... I haven't actually heard of anyone who's had more than three children. I'm sure there are in the city, but I haven't heard of anyone in my circles.

Greg Overton: Do you know how much the fine is?

Prof. Rudolph: No I don't.

Greg Overton: When a Chinese family has a child, would it trend that one parent would drop what they are doing and focus on the one child? One thing I've been reading a lot about is the hyper-competitive academic environment.

Prof. Rudolph: Well, most couples work in China, and a lot of the child care goes on to the grandparent generation. Up until recently, families weren't necessarily together, they would leave their child with the grandparents because the parents would be with their work units. It is a hyper-competitive educational system in large part because it's an exam-based educational system, which is not particular to China. Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, all have exam-based educational systems. In fact, if you look it up in the NYT just in the past week was a big article about Taiwan and

how they are moving away from the competitive system to get into high schools. They're going from 9 years of compulsory education to 12. If you read that article you're going to get insight into what it's like in China too. So what happens is in the US you have a guaranteed education, right? I think you can't even drop out until you're 16, maybe. It's 12 years of education, and it doesn't matter if you're a terrible student, you're still going to a high school, you might opt to go to a vocational high school, but you have a chance to go to your local college-prep high school. In China, what happens, is that they start branching out somewhere around 7th grade. So you take an exam that determines what middle school you're going to go to, then you take an exam to get into high school and that exam determines what high school you get into, what ranked high school. You might not get into a high school, you might get into a vocational school. That, then, determines your life path. Then when you graduate from high school, say you're going to a college prep HS, you have to take another exam to get into college. That exam, and their changing it now but until recently, that exam determined not only what college you went to, but also your major. So the state controlled a lot of your life and the educational system was very structured. That means with each exam there's really high-level competition because the stakes are so high. So you do get a lot of people just monitoring their kids' study habits, the kids would often go to school after school, and this is not just in china, but in Korea, Japan, and they're studying until 10 or 11 o'clock every night so from the time school begins in the morning until 10 at night, the kids are in school studying. They're in regular school, they're in after-school, then after-after-school. it's all about studying to make sure they do well on those exams. They're changing that. They're getting rid of it, it's called the Gao Kao, I think in 2014. China is also reforming its educational system. It's trying to expand it so that there are more options. They've been actively building up a number of universities and private universities. So not all universities in China now require the competitive exams. One of the reasons why we get a lot of Chinese students in the U.S. is because they don't have to take the competitive exams to come to school in the US. They have to take the SATs and the TOEFL.

Greg Overton: Sometimes the TOEFL.

Prof. Rudolph: Most schools require the TOEFL.

Greg Overton: Is it regarded as prestigious to have western exposure? Does it make you more competitive in China to have western exposure?

Prof. Rudolph: Yes, For one thing, it means that your English is going to be a lot better. For another thing, it means you're going to be more global. The US is still recognized as having the strongest higher-education system in the world. For all those reasons, yes. As for the prestige factor, if you go to MIT, definitely cooler than going to WPI in China, because it has national and international ranking.

Greg Overton: Is there a cultural perception that the names that you can read about are more prestigious because in China the government controls the media?

Prof. Rudolph: No, the schools that are prestigious are prestigious because of the research. I taught at Suny Albany before. Suny has some name recognition, but no one's going to tell you it's a prestigious school, whether you're here or in China. It has name recognition. If you're talking about Yale, pretty much anywhere, people are going to say 'yes, I've heard of that', and that's one of the World's top universities. You've never been to Oxford, or Cambridge, but you know that those are among the top universities in the world.

Greg Overton: Have you ever heard of Zinch? It's a company that makes it their business to facilitate international students studying in other countries. Their China branch, Zinch China, published a White Paper that addressed a problem with falsification of applications. Do you know anything about, for example, placement agents or agencies to get Chinese students into schools in other countries?

Prof. Rudolph: Yeah, that's a recognized problem. You should talk to the admissions office here, just say you're doing an IQP and you want to talk to someone about this. They might be hesitant, but in general are there things they look out for? Are there red flags? The TOEFL exam scores, and I would have to look this up, might have been ten years ago, they cancelled all the TOEFL exam scores one year because of the rampant cheating. TOEFL scores can be meaningful or they don't have to be meaningful because people will take them for other people. There is a problem, I don't know how rampant it is, but there is a problem with international students, students from Asia, having false credentials, fudging scores, all this kind of stuff. WPI, and every school, tries to figure out how can you best select international students. When you're looking at pool of applications from all over the world, your whole selection process rises because you're looking at people who have the get-up-n-go who want to go to another country, and you probably do have a lot of people with excellent credentials. You also have the group of people who have a lot of money and if you can fudge it, why not? So you have to be able to discern if those credentials are meaningful. WPI has to deal with that. Usually you don't deal with it as much in the technical backgrounds, but the math and science backgrounds are typically pretty strong in places like China. It's the ability to speak English and understand English and therefore able to succeed in a US academic environment. So truly I would say English is the biggest problematic area for incoming students.

Greg Overton: I've done a couple informal interviews with other international students from China and also with students that were born in America so I'm look at this relationship. What got me turned onto this subject was something that a professor of mine did last semester. The first day of class he said effectively 'I wanted to use a different book, but we're using [this] book because it's easier for the whole class to understand'. What it got me thinking about is the relationship between American and international students and the things we're doing right and wrong to acclimate both parties to working together. Diversity tends to yield creativity but one difficulty is communication. Every student I've talked to so far has cited communication difficulties as a frustration. I don't think that communication only means language speaking ability, but also cultural differences. One example in admissions is that in our application process, we require letters of

recommendation. There was an interesting article I read that accurately described our letters of recommendation as being weighed based on the content, not the credentials of the author. On the other hand, in China, and you can confirm or deny, it's the signature block that's important, who wrote the letter, and the content might only be two to five sentences in length. Yet, we still ask for letters of recommendation and potentially from students who don't have the facilities to acquire these letters. On the same token, we ask for a statement of purpose a lot of times, which is a lot to ask of a student from China who has probably never written anything personal before. Back on track, I'm wondering, despite our admissions screening process, how have our classrooms developed into an environment in which our American students are ethnocentric, unable to understand other cultures and some international students can't speak English?

Prof. Rudolph: Well we have classes in place in Humanities and Arts for international students for this purpose. It's a three-course sequence. Next year it will be a four-course sequence. It's specifically for international students who have been deemed proficient enough in English to enter the sequence. The ones whose English is questionable have to do an ESL course over the summer. After that, for the students who are slightly better, they take this sequence. It's to get them used to this academic environment in English and get them used to the culture of the US so they know what the classroom culture is. So you know, you are expected to ask questions, you are expected to participate in a group, because in China, that is not typical. So that's one thing that WPI does. Those classes have the prefix ISE. Also, we have International House, run by Professor Tom Thomsen, and they have a lot of activities for international students - they're the ones who do the remedial English in the summer and they do a lot of the training for the graduate students coming in- so WPI is concerned about this issue. How do you acclimate students to the English-speaking culture in the US. So I would suggest you talk to Tom Thomsen as well as admissions. What do they look for in terms of red flags?

Greg Overton: Do you happen to know if the TOEFL is only taken at home or if they take it again when they get here?

Prof. Rudolph: They take it in their home country and then there are other tests that they can take here, one that is called the Versant - Tom Thomsen would know more about this- and I think they have some of the graduate students doing that. I don't think they do the undergraduates. There must be another exam for the undergraduates. There's a conditional admittance, but I think admissions might be getting rid of that.

Greg Overton: These are hard questions to ask because I feel like they could come across offensive, depending on who's hearing them. Do you have any advice on how to handle that?

Prof. Rudolph: Well that's why I think you ask admission about red flags. Say 'this is a documented problem, so WPI is surely on the lookout for that, when you're receiving all these applications are there particular red flags that you can tell me about?' I think you can assume that they think that every student that they admit deserves to be admitted. There are lots of students they don't admit, maybe their

academic credentials don't seem like they're up to snuff, or their English didn't match their TOEFL scores. 'Out of all of our international student applications, we only red flag, maybe 5 percent. Maybe we red flag 50 percent.' That's how I would phrase it. I don't think you have to worry about offending Tom Thomsen, he thinks about these things all the time. He himself is from Europe so he's had the international experience. He's very much aware of cultural differences and that these are issues. That's what one of his jobs here at WPI is, is to help international students here on campus and give them the support through different types of programs. Maybe you could contact the Chinese Student Association. Say you're doing an IQP. There are some 400 Chinese students on campus so could they put you in touch with a group? I think they still have a Chinese Corner some night of the week, maybe ask if you can just go there and talk to the Chinese students that are assembled and say you're trying to figure this out. Maybe it will benefit WPI.

Greg Overton: Every IQP is designed to benefit something. Well, thank you for your time!

Prof. Rudolph: Good luck, I'd be interested in reading your paper when you're finished.

APPENDIX B: PROFESSOR TOM THOMSEN INTERVIEW

Interview Subject: *Professor Tom Thomsen*

Interviewed by: *Greg Overton*

Interview Date and Location: *27 February 2013, Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

Introduction: *Tom Thomsen is the Director of International House at WPI, an organization that assists domestic and international students when they are traveling abroad, whether into or out of the United States. Mr. Thomsen also assists with the Danish IQP Project Center.*

Greg Overton: My IQP is a paper on the influx of Chinese students into American universities and a state of affairs analysis of WPI with regard to how well they are being integrated and acclimated. Also, how the application process works and whether or not cross-cultural competence is being observed or not observed by the student body in general. Do the Chinese students get cultural awareness training when they arrive?

Tom Thomsen: Some of them do, yes.

Greg Overton: One of things that I like to cite as an example is that the application process isn't tailored to how a Chinese student would have grown up.

Tom Thomsen: You mean for grad school?

Greg Overton: This would be for either undergraduate or graduate school. I know that in the application process we ask for a personal statement and after talking with Professor Rudolph, I understand that a personal statement is something that a Chinese student may not have written in his or her entire life. Asking them to write one might be pretty strange to them, foreign. I think the application process could seem strange to many international students but I chose to study Chinese students simply to narrow my focus and increase the feasibility of my project. My ultimate question is whether or not the application and acclimation process is effective or ineffective and if there is something I can suggest to make it more effective. There are three parts to my project, the childhood before they get here, the application process, and what occurs once they get here. Professor Rudolph was able to provide a lot of insight into the childhood aspect, admissions can answer my questions about the application process, and prof. Rudolph directed me to you to find out about what happens once they arrive here.

Tom Thomsen: Well unfortunately, with regard to the undergraduates, a vast majority of them are using agents. They produce statements that say whatever you want, and they aren't that meaningful because they aren't done by the students. The students don't really understand that the way to stand out in the crowd is to do it on their own, and it might not be as nicely written, but I can guarantee that any admissions officer that's worth their five cents will notice anybody who has done it on their own. Everybody else, you can see by the way they're done that they were using

agents. Another way is that they use the agent's email to communicate with the school. Once an application has been submitted, the agent wipes his hands and says 'my work is done'. So we might be trying to send information or communications to the email that was on the application but the agent is not forwarding it to the student. As far as what's done once they arrive, it depends again. For the undergraduate students, we have a pretty comprehensive three-day orientation program, as for all undergraduate international students and you can actually go on the international house web page and see the dates. We basically cover issues like some immigration rules, cross-cultural issues, safety in Worcester and on campus, we have someone from food services come and talk about meal plans and what they can do for foreign students as far as special needs and special requests. We have social activities when we bring back 15 or so international students who work with these students. So there's this three-day orientation and then during A-term, peer mentors do activities with them and we provide opportunities for them to go shopping in case they came from a long way away and couldn't bring much with them. At the graduate level it's a little different. Graduate student government does put on an orientation program and there's several orientation programs for the graduate students that are going to be Teaching Assistants. For the TA's, through International House, we do provide some cross-cultural training. There isn't much of that in the general graduate orientation. There is one general presentation when they arrive, it takes two hours and covers finding off-campus housing, what to look out for when signing a lease, and so we do that. Now for graduate students, they often need to shop for their apartments, so we have one trip that goes out to Ikea, and then all international graduate students have to take a language test, English test. Those who end up in the ESL classes, which teaches language, also receive a cultural component. So they get a little more throughout the first semester.

Greg Overton: Now is that only done for graduate students or both for undergraduate and graduate?

Tom Thomsen: It's only done for graduate students, some undergraduate students arrive earlier to do a five-week intensive ESL summer institute. At the undergraduate level, there are some classes that count towards the Humanities and Arts requirement, some writing and speech courses. Those are much heavier, they are not really ESL, but are heavier on the academic writing and they are credited towards the HA requirement.

Greg Overton: Do you believe it's effective to test for English competency at the graduate level when they arrive? You said that they take another test when they get here, is that the TOEFL?

Tom Thomsen: No, the TOEFL is taken as part of the application, it's called the Versant.

Greg Overton: And that's pretty effective at determining skill level?

Tom Thomsen: It has some biases, it's done on a computer, so right there, there is some biases towards students whose English vocabulary is actually fine and sentence construction might be fine, but have a heavy accent. We have some Indian

students who scored low on the Versant but when you meet with them and speak with them, they speak well. Of course, there's a certain Indian accent and we try to adjust for that. It's not a perfect test, but it does give us an idea of who would benefit from a more intensive ESL course.

Greg Overton: So they complete a semester of ESL, do they then take the test again at the end of it?

Tom Thomsen: The basic requirement for them is to have a TOEFL score, that the official one. The reason for this test is that we've seen, and mostly in Chinese students, when students arrive they don't know any English I mean honestly I can't understand a word of what they are saying. They still had a high TOEFL score. There's been evidence shared in the community that there has been some cheating on the TOEFL in China. So the ESL program is to support the student, we try to explain it to them. This isn't something we do to penalize them, it's to make your studies at WPI more successful. At the school of business there's a separate test, we use the speak test. It's very accurate, the problem is that it's not done on a computer, it takes about half an hour, and you're watching the student and asking questions, the student has to listen to a tape and you score them. We simply do not have the capacity to do this for all graduate students. So that's why we have to go to our process. It's a requirement to take the course and it's pass/fail for zero credit. Passing is basically based on attendance. If you come and you make your best effort you'll pass. There's no test, we're not going to say you didn't improve enough, but if you blow it off you won't pass.

Greg Overton: I've been talking to students as well as part of my paper-

Tom Thomsen: Graduate students or undergraduate?

Greg Overton: Two undergraduate, one graduate. One of the undergraduates was an American students in the BME program, who attended a help session for a class. What she said is that most of the students at the help session were Chinese-speaking so the TA conducted the help session in Chinese. What do you think about that?

Tom Thomsen: In my opinion that's unacceptable, but that goes back to the faculty. The TA works for a faculty member, and the students should immediately have told the faculty member and the TA should be told to stop doing that. That's my view. You have the problem then, you go over to the materials lab where there are many Chinese students and a couple Chinese faculty members. In their lab, they mostly speak Chinese and the students get these mixed messages. Obviously, for a TA- and even if all the students in the room are Chinese- to conduct a help session in Chinese is unacceptable. The school of business does things a little differently, they have one lecture with all its new Chinese students, they bring all the Chinese students into a classroom the day before classes start and they give them a talk-to from the Chinese faculty in Chinese. They're told this is the first and last time we're going to speak Chinese to you and they basically read them the rules about plagiarism, academic honesty, not speaking Chinese in class and they do that in Chinese to make sure they understand it. They say that's the last time you're going to hear us speak Chinese to you in the School of Business.

Greg Overton: Okay, the other scenario is one that I experienced personally. I had a professor, first day of class last semester, say 'I wanted to use one book, it would be a little better for class, but instead we're going to use a different book because I think it will be a little easier to understand for all the students'. So my immediate understanding was that the book we were using in class wasn't the optimal book for learning the course material. What do you think about that? Is that a situation where it might be appropriate to compromise?

Tom Thomsen: It's too bad that it's come to that, I would say, but if a professor has a high number of Chinese students in class, it's a tough call to make. I have a slightly different issue with the School of Business. If you look at their marketing video, and there are a lot of scenes from classrooms, you can only find one Chinese student. So it's very staged. Have you ever heard the term 'truth in advertising'? If you came to this program and assumed it's very diverse, there are equal numbers of American, Chinese, Indian, or any other nationality, your reality is going to be very different. The other thing about the School of Business is that it's very content based. They use a lot of case studies and group projects. Obviously, one goal of that is to make the Chinese students into more active class participants. This is a major cultural difference, because the Chinese culture has a very passive learning style. That style works well if you're in, say, applied math but it's different from a business curriculum. A business class is an interactive environment and if you have 80% of your students just used to listening and taking in but not participating, it's not fair for the other students. That's really why we started our summer program. We are hearing from faculty members that it's helping. Of course, you don't change cultural behavior overnight. Some, I see them as they come in, and you really see improvement as far as their outgoingness and their ability to carry on a conversation.

Greg Overton: Do you think the situation could be helped by adding some cross-cultural training for American students at WPI? When I did my original study-abroad in Germany, I took a class in Intercultural Management, and it was very enlightening.

Tom Thomsen: Yes, I think that for the undergraduate students what I would like to see is some more courses on multicultural, global, issues for all students. These would be courses where the faculty could draw on the international students in class. This would be a program for all students in the beginning of their schooling, probably during orientation, that facilitated some more interaction between domestic and international students. I would love to see more of that. I don't think it could be made a requirement in the curriculum, but there are definitely things you could do with orientation. Then you're setting a standard. Sometimes you see a large amount of involvement among the undergraduates, like at the international food festival.

Greg Overton: So you think there would be a lot of benefit but it isn't necessarily feasible as a class. During orientation though?

Tom Thomsen: Yes. Another area that is a little more targeted is the students that are going overseas for their IQPs. For the Danish project center, we do 1/6th unit in B term

on Danish culture. Not involving the project, but only the culture in preparation for the project.

Greg Overton: Well that's all the questions I have, so thank you for your time!

APPENDIX C: KAREN GOUDEY INTERVIEW

Interview Subject: *Karen Goudey*

Interviewed by: *Greg Overton*

Interview Date and Location: *15 March 2013, Worcester Polytechnic Institute*

Introduction: *Karen Goudey works in admissions at WPI and handles a large number of international applicants. The interview was intended to provide insight into the application process for international students and to inquire about red flags that come up with regards to fraudulent applications. Finally, she was asked about any feedback she does/does not receive after the admissions process is complete.*

Greg Overton: I interviewed Tom Thomsen and Professor Rudolph, and they each mentioned that there are flags that you might look for in applications that would indicate that the student might need extra language help or may have used a placement agent to compose their application. Are there things you look for?

Karen Goudey: Really what we're looking for is for students who are using an agent that may be misrepresenting them so we're looking for, kind of, inconsistencies in the application. Students for example, who we can see from their English proficiency test score, may be good enough for admission, but maybe not fluent, but then we see an essay that's something that I couldn't even write. That's to me a red flag that they probably didn't write that essay or if they did they had significant editing help and maybe there's an agency involved. There are certain addresses that I've just come to know are agency addresses. I'll see for example, that the student lives in Shenzhen, the school is there, and yet there's a current mailing address in Beijing. So current mailing in Beijing is probably an agency.

Greg Overton: So using an agent is not necessarily a bad thing as long as it's accurate information?

Karen Goudey: We subject applicants that are obviously using agents to particular scrutiny to ensure that what's being submitted is true because it's hard to differentiate. There are so many different agencies in China, it's hard to differentiate between the ones that may be more scrupulous and the ones that may be less scrupulous. We really, honestly, want to encourage students not to use agents. The tricky thing is, is that in China there's this, from what I've been told, is that they use agents for pretty much everything. You hire someone to help you through, sort of, any bureaucratic process and because they don't really understand the US admissions process, because it's so different from their process, that I think the default has become, well you just hire someone to help you navigate that process. It doesn't make sense to them that we would be asking for all of these quirky things like essays and letters of recommendation. All these things that, to them, you know it's test scores.

Greg Overton: I've read in a few places that what we ask for on applications is not culturally aligned with what they might be able to easily provide, so students are forced to use placement agents.

Karen Goudey: But there is a movement right now that's been building and I think it's finally starting to take shape, where for example, at a conference last fall in Beijing, and the people who organized it are working as guidance counselors in Chinese high schools and they were trying to bring together admissions people and officials from some of the top high schools in China.

Greg Overton: Are you talking about Zinch?

Karen Goudey: No, not Zinch. Anyway, the conference was organized by some guidance counselors to try to get some of the admissions officials and the high school officials to meet each other, talk to each other, to try to discourage students from using agents, encourage them to do it on their own. There are, kind of, do-it-yourself movements among students in China as well. Agents are charging ridiculous fees for something that really the students can handle themselves. I mean, students all across the world are doing this process themselves. Is it confusing and complicated for them? Sure, because it's different from what they're used to, but yes, they can do it themselves. So I think that whatever we can do to try to encourage students who appear to us are doing this process themselves we should. It's not that we're trying to discriminate against students who are using agents, it's that we're trying to encourage the students who aren't, and I think also give more credence to something that's maybe a little more rough around the edges, but is therefore more the student's own work, than something that's really polished, but is the work of a professional.

Greg Overton: Do you think it's reasonable to ask the application requirements we ask, because they're based on American cultural values? Do you think it would be more appropriate to adjust the application requirements to better suit a national culture?

Karen Goudey: I don't think that we need to. We already do have a slightly different set of application requirements for international students than we do for American students anyway. We need things like proof of English proficiency, and we tend to be a little more flexible with regard to the fact that they don't have guidance counselors in their high schools, anywhere in the world. We'll take a letter of recommendation from any school official, tutors, advisors, home room teachers, someone who knows them in the context of a school environment. We already are pretty flexible with the requirements we have, I don't think it makes sense to establish a whole separate set of requirements, they're still having to come into the US construct. They still having to enter that, and some students are already pretty familiar with that. There's a growth in China of these international school programs within the schools themselves so there almost a school within a school, where the students will be studying AP curricula or the British system, or international baccalaureate or you know, some of the curriculum on top of what they're doing on their own. There are a lot of sister school programs cropping up where Chinese schools are partnering with high schools in the US, where teachers

from high schools in the US are going to high schools in China, and teaching classes in English. So students in China can get used to the classroom environment that is more discussion-based, and classroom participation is part of your grade, things they aren't used to. So students who know that they're looking to leave China to do higher education can start already to experience some of what that's like.

Greg Overton: This is more of a question for Tom Thomsen, but do you think there is an adequate amount, or lack of, cultural training for our students – the American students?

Karen Goudey: Well I guess this probably varies widely depending on the students and what their experiences are. To my knowledge, WPI hasn't done any training to sort of prepare them for interacting with their international counterparts. Would that be a good idea? Probably, especially with all the project-based and group-based things the students are doing, and not just the big ones, the IQP and the MQP, but earlier on with the Great Problem Seminars and in classes that have project work, embedded in them. I think that probably some sort of cross-cultural communication training would be a good idea for everybody concerned. The expectation is there, to communicate across cultures and the cultural divides don't just happen internationally, they can happen between kids from the Bronx and the kid from rural New England just as easily as they can between international students.

Greg Overton: Do we accept the TOEFL exam?

Karen Goudey: Yup, and I'll give you the guidelines for what we ask for from students. In terms of proving English language proficiency we give them a variety of different ways they can do that. The TOEFL is one, the IELTS which is sort of the British council version of TOEFL, more prevalent in the former British colonies of the world and places like that, tends to be a little cheaper than the TOEFL as well, that's another option. We also accept, if they are doing a British curriculum within their high school, we'll accept an English grade of A or B in certain courses as demonstrating prof. We do tend to waive the English proficiency requirement if they ask us to, if they've been educated in an English-medium high school for the full four years of high school although we typically discourage students from that because honestly it helps them to prove their English proficiency. It's one more way they can demonstrate their strengths if they have been educated in English, then their English is probably pretty good and it looks good. We also accept the Pierson test of English which is a fairly new test, it's one that the ACT organizers are offering so it's gaining some traction but we don't see those very often. So there are a few different English proficiency tests they can do. The TOEFL is the most common.

Greg Overton: Do you know what happens once they arrive here, if they are retested again?

Karen Goudey: Typically students are not retested, and there are some students across the board who will be conditionally admitted, like if we see an applicant who is a very strong applicant for WPI and their only negative is that they aren't meeting the English proficiency requirement, maybe they're close but not quite there yet, there is a handful of students we'll conditionally admit, who are required to attend our summer ESL institute. Those students who progress through the institute are re-

evaluated to make sure they're ready to enter the classroom here. If a student is meeting the prof req., and they're being admitted to WPI then they're being admitted based on the assumption that they'll be successful based on the English prof they already have. Now I know at the graduate level they are retesting students, all of the non-native grad students – all of the non-native English speaking students last fall were given a modified version of the speak test to test their English proficiency level, kind of, on the ground here after they arrived. That's not something that I've heard talk of doing for the undergrads. I think it has to do with number of students and I don't think we've necessarily seen as much of a need on the undergraduate side. I think on the grad side the concern, as I understand it anyway, is students who may be eventually taking on a TA-ship, that those students have a certain level of proficiency because they can't be understood in a classroom. In any case, there's some research being done to determine if there's a correlation between English proficiency level at the point of admission and their success – their academic success – once they arrive. I know there's some institutional research being done to see if there is a correlation, and if so, does it make sense to either increase our minimum or to look at other factors, to take a look at our admissions review to see are we admitting the right students. Are there students who maybe shouldn't have been admitted who were or are we being too hard or too easy on them as far as the English proficiency requirements that we already have.

Greg Overton: Do you get any feedback after the admissions process?

Karen Goudey: Like I said we're looking at that on sort of the institutional research side, here in the management division, but I do get sort of anecdotal feedback. Tom Thomsen will let me know if there are students – we have conversations pretty frequently on the phone- and he will let me know typically the end of A term and again at the end of B term if there are students who are struggling we'll hear about it. He'll let me know or sometimes the feedback come through professors who've noticed something. It's not very common that we have problems so that's reassuring on the one side because that tells me that on the one side we're choosing the right students.

Greg Overton: Do you know roughly what percent of applicants you red flag during consideration or clearly identify as having used agents?

Karen Goudey: Actually, detecting a fraudulent document is pretty rare. That doesn't they aren't there, it means we're not necessarily detecting them. In terms of the use of agents, I haven't actually sat down to figure out how many students I've flagged for that. This year it's more of a case-by-case basis as we're reviewing applications. I don't really have a good number.

