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# Ensuring Social Success: Assessing the Factors that Affect the Social Experiences of International Students at a Large, Urban Community College in Texas

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**Ensuring Social Success: Assessing the Factors that Affect the Social Experiences of  
International Students at a Large, Urban Community College in Texas**

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PIM 73

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of  
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

May 18, 2015

Advisor: Dr. Sora Friedman

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Student name: Sharon Miller

Date: May 18, 2015

*Thank you to all my friends and family for your support and encouragement throughout this journey.*

*Special thanks to my son, Caden, for your never ending belief that I could do it! All I can say is "It'll all be over soon, it'll all be over soon."*

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### **Abstract**

According to the 2014 Open Doors report published by the Institute of International Education, 87,963 international students enrolled in community colleges and/or associate's degree granting institutions during the 2013-2014 academic year. Community colleges offer many benefits to international students, such as lower tuition, less restrictive English proficiency requirements, smaller class size, and transferability of credits to four-year institutions.

Past studies have found connections between social relationships and the ability to manage acculturative stress and student satisfaction. Nevertheless, international students attending a community college face different social challenges than those who choose to attend a residential four-year university. Lack of student housing and common areas, campuses spread across large metropolitan areas, and large non-traditional student populations are just some of the factors that may affect an international student's ability to develop a social support network while attending a community college.

Focusing on the individual experiences of international students at Austin Community College (ACC), this study utilized both qualitative face-to-face interviews and a quantitative Likert-scale survey to identify key factors that affected the international students' abilities to develop friendships and participate successfully in the social aspects of a community college. Although each individual's experience varied, cultural differences, perceptions of English speaking abilities, and willingness to engage with domestic students all emerged as common threads in the students' experiences. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that international student advisors be located at every campus, and if possible, a single advisor works with a specific international student, taking them through the transition. It is also recommended that changes be made to the international student orientation, such as seating students according to country of origin, and having representatives of the various campus organizations present.

## **Introduction**

According to the 2014 Open Doors report published by the Institute of International Education, the number of international students enrolling for the first time at a U.S. institution rose by 7.5 percent from the fall of 2012 to the fall of 2013, while the total number of international students enrolled for the 2013-2014 academic year increased by 8.1 percent to 886,052 students. Of those, 87,963 enrolled in community colleges and/or associate's degree granting institutions (Institute of International Education, 2014), which is almost 10 percent of the entire international student population.

The advantages to hosting international students are undeniable. The presence of international students at U.S. institutions brings a global perspective to the campus and classroom and provides many opportunities for cross-cultural interaction between domestic and international students. This interaction can increase the intercultural competence of domestic students and help prepare them for global careers by allowing them an international experience, even if they do not have the time or financial means to study abroad (Witherell & Clayton, 2014). In addition, if the international student has a good experience at the host institution and in the host country, he or she may return home as an ambassador for his or her adopted country, strengthening the diplomatic relations between the two, while also serving as an "ambassador" for his or her school (Adrian-Taylor, Noels, & Tischler, 2007).

The economic benefits of hosting international students are another reason that universities and institutions throughout the United States have increased their recruitment efforts. Not only does the host institution gain financially from the increased enrollment, the entire community benefits as well. Last year, the U.S. Department of Commerce reported that international students added over \$27 billion into the economy of the United States (Witherell &

Clayton, 2014). Just in Texas alone, during the 2013-2014 academic year, international students injected approximately \$1.5 billion into the Texas economy and indirectly supported almost 20,000 jobs (The International Student Economic Value Tool, 2014). The fact that almost three-quarters of international students obtain most of their funding from places outside of the United States increases this economic impact exponentially (Witherell & Clayton, 2014).

Retaining international students is necessary in order for all of these benefits to be maximized. If the student does have a bad experience and decides to leave, the institution loses that revenue, the students lose the opportunity of cross-cultural interactions, and at the national level the reputation of not only the school, but the United States as a whole, could suffer, and that could be detrimental to the country's ability to remain the top destination for international students (Rubin, 2014).

Prior research has indicated that when international students develop close personal relationships with people from the host culture they are better equipped to manage cultural stress (Olaniran, 1993). However, Olaniran (1993) also found that even casual, acquaintance type interactions have a positive impact on the international students' abilities to manage adjustment into the host culture. In other words, both the quantity "and quality of relationships an international student has with host country nationals is positively related to his or her adjustment and satisfaction with his or her sojourn" (Adrian-Taylor et al., 2007, p. 92). Therefore, it is imperative that international students at the community college have, not only academic success, but also social success while studying in the United States.

International students attending a community college face different social challenges than those who choose to attend a residential four-year university. First, unlike four-year universities which typically have on-campus housing and on-campus locations in which international



students can gather and meet other students, community colleges, especially Texas community colleges, such as Austin Community College, Houston Community College, and Lone Star Community College, often have several different campuses spread across the metropolitan area, catering specifically to students who commute from their own homes. Second, a lack of convenient and affordable public transportation can frustrate an international student's attempt to engage with a professor who might hold offices hours at a campus different than the one the student usually attends, or deter a student from seeking assistance from an international student advisor if the advisor's office is not conveniently located. Third, community colleges also serve large non-traditional student populations, like older students, students with families, and students who work full-time, which means that many students have other obligations that keep them from hanging out on campus once their classes are complete. In addition, the students who are of traditional college age most likely grew-up in the area and already have an established social group, making it more difficult for international students to develop friendships with these students. These are just a few of the many factors that may affect an international student's ability to engage on a social level with local students and truly become part of the community that the college serves. How do these and other factors contribute to or detract from an international student's ability to meet local students and develop relationships?

This study seeks to understand the individual experiences of international students attending a large, urban community college in Texas, specifically, the factors that affected their ability to form relationships and participate successfully in the social aspects of the college community.

## **Situating the Research Question**

Austin Community College (ACC) boasts 11 separate campuses spread across the entire greater-Austin metropolitan area. Based on the most recent data certified by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), 37,294 students enrolled at ACC during the spring of 2014, 1,755 of which were classified as international students. Like most community colleges, ACC does not offer any on-campus residential areas, meaning that all students commute to and from the different campuses. Over 77 percent of the students attend part-time and only one-quarter are in the traditional college age bracket of 19 to 21 years old (Student Demographics, 2014).

Although each campus contains an admissions office with at least one advisor trained on F-1 visa requirements, the International Students' Office (ISO) is located on only one campus. Currently, the ISO's main purpose is to assist incoming international students with visa and immigration issues and provide an international students' orientation at the beginning of each semester. Neither ACC nor the ISO provide any housing assistance for incoming students beyond basic tips on choosing the appropriate type of housing, precautions on lease negotiations, and a link to apartment locators around the city. Students can purchase the ACC Green Pass for \$25 per semester which provides unlimited use of the rudimentary public transportation system that Austin offers. ACC Student Life, which is present on every campus, hosts a variety of events throughout the semester, yet, of the 60 clubs ACC offers on-campus, only six have any sort of international component.

ACC provides many of the benefits that international students look for when choosing to attend a college in the United States, such as lower tuition, less restrictive English proficiency requirements, smaller class size, and transferability of credits to four-year institutions (American

Association of Community Colleges, 2008). Nevertheless, as ACC increases its efforts in international student recruitment, it is necessary to determine how international students develop the social support networks that they need in order to have a truly successful sojourn.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review focused on three key areas of previous research. First, it explored the social experiences of all students, both domestic and international, at community colleges and examined possible factors that may influence a student's development of social networks. Second, the literature review examined how developing social relationships affects an international student's ability to manage acculturative stress and assimilate into the college environment and how this impacts the student's connection to and persistence at the college. The final area of focus looked at the connection between an international student's satisfaction with his or her social experiences and his or her willingness to recommend the institution to others and examined the importance of ensuring positive social experiences as part of a community college's international recruitment efforts.

### **Social Experiences at Community Colleges**

Using Tinto's integration framework (1993), Karp, Hughes, and O'Gara (2010-2011), explored how social and academic integration affected a student's persistence at a community college. Karp et al., found that students who developed "information networks [defined] as social ties that facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge and procedures" (p. 76) reported feeling more comfortable in the campus environment, thus causing them to be more persistent through their second year of community college. These information networks benefited the students by providing them with "campus connections, social contact, and personal resources" (p. 80).

Through their research, Karp et al. found that information networks developed through the classroom environment were more positively related to student persistence than networks developed through purely social means, such as joining student clubs. For community college students, in particular, academic integration and social integration are linked. In other words, friendships that started in the classroom seemed to have a great impact on the student's connection to and persistence in the college.

On the other hand, when looking specifically at the international student population at a community college, Mamiseishvili (2012) discovered that frequent and meaningful interactions with faculty and academic advisors had the most significant impact on international student persistence from the first year to the second year of community college. Nevertheless, Mamiseishvili also noted that social integration did not seem to affect persistence. This study also compared the social and academic "integration patterns" (p. 22) of international students attending a two-year college and those attending a four-year university and found significant differences in the frequency with which international students met with their academic advisors. In fact, the study revealed that "39.6 percent of international students never met with the academic advisor in their first-year" (p. 22). This is important considering the study showed the importance of faculty and advisor interactions in student persistence. The study went on to note that although the majority of foreign students "at both two-year and four-year institutions did not participate in fine arts activities, school sports, or school clubs" (p. 22), the percentage was much lower in students attending a community college. In fact, less than 30 percent of international students at a community college answered that they participated in any of the aforementioned social activities.

Hagedorn (2005) noted that there were significant differences in the demographics between international students and domestic students that attended the Los Angeles Community College District. She found that less than six percent of international students were over the age of 35, over 85 percent were single, almost 95 percent were childless, and 83 percent were enrolled full-time, whereas, domestic students were almost evenly spread amongst different age ranges, only 65 percent were single, over one-quarter had children, and they were almost equally divided between part-time and full-time status. These types of demographic differences could explain why international students attending community college depend more on faculty and advisor interactions than on traditional social outlets, as Mamiseishvili (2012) reported.

Another possible explanation for the dependence of international students on faculty and advisor engagement is the lack of on-campus housing at community colleges. Past research has shown the benefits of living on-campus for domestic students. Citing several different studies (Newcomb, 1962, Dressel and Lehman, 1965), Chickering (1967) posited that living arrangements for students in college could have a significant effect on how and with whom they develop friendships. Chickering stated it is only natural that students develop relationships with the people they are in consistently close proximity, i.e. roommates and dormitory mates, and that these friendships then influence both educational and social development. Through a study of over 25,000 students from 213 institutions, Astin (1973) discovered that living in a dormitory affected the educational and social experiences of those students. He found that students, who lived in a dormitory, as opposed to a private residence or at home with their parents, reported more positive “perceptions of their own interpersonal competencies, as indicated by their self-ratings of popularity, self-confidence, and public speaking ability” (p. 207). He also noted that living in a dormitory tended to increase a student’s overall satisfaction with his or her experience

at the institution especially “in the area of interpersonal contact with faculty and other students” (p. 207). The students felt that by living on campus they had easier access to professors, which allowed them to seek guidance and discuss their schoolwork more frequently. If the effects of living on-campus were so beneficial for domestic students, it makes sense that the effects would be at least equally, if not more, beneficial for international students, who are seeking to completely reestablish their social relationships.

### **Social Ties, Acculturative Stress, and Assimilation into U.S. Institutions**

Past studies (Olaniran, 1993, Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013) have found connections between social relationships and ability to manage acculturative stress and student satisfaction. Olaniran (1993) found that international students who developed both personal and acquaintance style relationships were better able to manage cultural stress, which he defines as the “tension and uneasiness that accompanies encounters with a new environmental culture” (p. 70). Jackson et al. (2013) found that “social support acted as a mediator between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms” (p. 23). They also mention that when international students experience high levels of acculturative stress, they often “utilize their social supports less” (p. 24). Finally, Jackson et al. noted that frequent use of coping strategies indicated that international students would experience higher levels of depressive symptoms, and that it is possible that their coping techniques could cause further isolation from peers.

Hayes and Lin (1994) noted the fact that when international students move away from their home country, they are forced to leave behind their social networks of friends and family and often suffer a “profound sense of loss” (p. 1). These feelings of loss can exacerbate the acculturative stress that international students experience and cause more barriers to adjustment.

Using social capital theory as a basis for her study, Trice (2004) discovered that the “extent to which international students are engaged with the campus community will help predict their level of interaction with American students” (p. 684). Trice posits that students who actively seek to expand their understanding of other cultures by attending special events around campus and by developing relationships with other international students possess the knowledge and skills, or social capital, necessary to interact with local students as well. These findings are consistent with the results of the study by Gomez, Urzúa, and Glass (2014), which suggest that acculturation by international students is “positively related to both On-Campus Sports participation and Off-Campus Socialization” (p. 20). Participation in social and leisure activities help mitigate acculturative stress thereby allowing them to adjust to the social aspect of the institution.

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) focused on four general areas of international student adjustment, initial transition, academic life, social life, and psychological experiences. They found that international students are most in need of support during the initial transition to their institution in the United States and argue that institutions must evaluate the “entire context into which they recruit and educate international students” on a regular basis and make note of the “different parts of the social system that foster or inhibit these students’ adjustment” (p. 2). In other words, institutions need to focus on the factors that create barriers to international students’ abilities to adjust to the host culture, as opposed to assuming that it is a problem that the individual, him or herself, must solve.

In her study focusing on international students at a single four-year university, Lee (2010) found that “encountering social and financial difficulties and experiencing difficulties with adjustment are negatively associated with recommending a university” (p. 74). Furthermore, Lee

discovered that students who come from countries that are not predominantly White, reported less satisfaction especially in being “treated equally and fairly” and experienced greater difficulty with social adjustment. Lee explains that students from predominantly non-White regions “felt less accepted by faculty, staff, and fellow students and experienced more unequal treatment within and outside the classroom (p. 73). This supported a qualitative study by Lee and Rice (2007), which looked at international student experiences through the lens of neo-racism and concluded that there is a “divide in the experiences of White international students and those of color” (p. 393).

### **International Student Recruitment at Community Colleges**

The implications of Lee’s (2010) study are far-reaching, especially in a time when many institutions are focusing on international student recruitment. Community colleges face a different set of challenges in international student recruitment because other countries do not have equivalent institutions, so explaining the concept can be extremely difficult (Kisch, 2012). In his research on the decision making process that international students go through when choosing a community college, Bohman (2010) discovered that the “influence of a local contact was so powerful, that other resources were not considered even when the local contact was not well informed” (p. 72). Clearly, word of mouth marketing, or having the college recommended by a current or former student, must be a necessary part of the community college recruitment strategy. If international students are less likely to recommend their host institution because they perceived they were treated unfairly, or they experienced difficulties adjusting socially to the university, that could negatively impact the institutions recruitment efforts in those regions from which the students come. And, if students from mostly non-White countries report significantly higher instances of being treated unfairly this could decrease the racial diversity of international



students on U.S. campuses, therefore removing many of the benefits of hosting international students in the first place. As Lee (2010) concludes, it is not the responsibility of the international student to assimilate, but the responsibility of the faculty, staff, and domestic students at the host institution to provide a more welcoming environment.

Looking at past research, it seems clear that developing social relationships and networks is an important part of an international student's experience while studying in the United States. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that the way in which international students develop these networks differs between students studying at community college and students studying at four-year universities. There has been very little qualitative research into the factors that affect an international student's ability to develop friendships and fully participate in the social aspects of a community college.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) defined a transition as any "event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 39). Due to the fact that an international student's arrival on a U.S. campus would constitute a significant transition, Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Goodman's 4 S's (Situation, Self, Support, Strategies) provide two theoretical frameworks through which to explore the factors that affect an international student's ability to develop relationships and form a social support network.

#### **Schlossberg's Transition Theory**

Schlossberg's Transition Theory suggests that when examining an individual's movement through a transition, it is necessary to look at not only the type of transition (anticipated or unanticipated event or a non-event) but also the perspective of the individual, the context in which the transition takes place, and the impact the transition has on the individual.

The perspectives of the international students can vary based on a number of factors, such as their country of origin and their perceptions of cultural differences. For example, the perspective of a student coming from Western Europe may be completely different than of a student from Asia or the Middle East. The contextual factors not only include individual characteristics like gender, financial resources, and ethnicity or race, but also external factors such as the expectations of the student's family or even larger political issues like cultural diversity and foreign relations. The impact of the transition refers to the level to which a transition changes an individual's daily life. Clearly, the impact for an international student is significant, due to the fact that these students leave home and most support networks behind. The bigger the impact the transition has the greater the amount of coping resources will be necessary to manage the transition, and the longer it will take for the individual to assimilate and/or adapt to the change (Anderson et al., 2012).

### **Goodman's 4 S's**

As previously stated, the quality and quantity of relationships can assist the international student in coping with cultural stress, a term that is used to define the difficulties international students face when "they find themselves in unfamiliar cultural settings" (Olaniran, 1993, p. 69). Cultural stress is something that international students face when managing the transition of arriving on a U.S. campus. While Schlossberg's Transition Theory seeks to understand the factors that can affect how an individual manages a transition, Goodman's 4 S's can be adapted to help identify the factors that could impact a student's ability to develop relationships that can help mitigate this cultural stress, allowing him or her to more effectively manage the transition to life at a U.S. institution. An "individual's effectiveness in coping with transition depends on his

or her resources in these four areas - in other words, his or her assets and liabilities - at the time” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 216).

Similar to context in Schlossberg’s theory, situation refers to the external factors surrounding the transition. Although most international students’ arrivals on campus would be classified as an “anticipated transition, which occur predictably” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 215), meaning the students were aware the event was going to take place, they might face “unanticipated transitions, which are not predictable or scheduled” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 215) upon their arrival, which could cause cultural stress and create barriers to adjustment. Some potential unanticipated situations could include:

- issues with housing, especially because most community colleges do not offer on-campus housing,
- a lack of convenient, reliable, and affordable public transportation (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007), and
- racial discrimination from local students and professors (Chen, 1999, Lee and Rice, 2007).

Self relates to the factors that are attributed specifically to the individual and can be divided into two classifications, “personal and demographic characteristics” and “psychological resources” (Evans et al., 2010, p.217). “Socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity/culture” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217), are factors that would fall under the personal and demographic characteristics classification. For the purposes of the current study, ethnicity and culture and perceived language proficiency comprised the main areas of research. “Psychological resources” refers to mental characteristics that can help the individual cope with a transition. These can include whether the students views themselves as an introvert or an

extrovert, whether they are optimistic or pessimistic about the transition, and whether or not they believe they can effectively manage the transition on their own (Evans et al., 2010).

According to Goodman, within the context of this model, support refers to “social support, and four types are cited: intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and institutions and communities” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 217). Applying Olaniran’s (1993) findings to this model, networks of acquaintances (such as classmates) can also be included as another type of potential social support. Unlike many community college students who attend a college close to home, therefore, retaining their existing support networks, international students often leave their social support networks behind when they depart from their home country to make the transition to the United States. This may cause the international students to “feel unsettled” and reluctant “to become involved in social situations and make new friends in the host culture” (Chen, 1999, p. 55). This current research focused on how the international students began to develop their new social support networks once they arrived on campus. With whom did they develop their first casual relationships and/or their first intimate relationships? Did they turn to their international student advisors, their professors, and classmates? Or did they seek out other international students from a similar region? Finally, did the students have family or relatives who live in the area, and if so, how much of a social support system do they provide?

Strategies refer to the responses an individual may employ in order to manage a transition and can be divided into three categories (Evans et al., 2010):

- Strategies that modify the situation - does the student have any plans to create situations that could assist him or her in making friends and developing a social network, such as joining a club or attending an event?

- Strategies that control the meaning of the problem - the meaning of friendship varies between different cultures and can often cause confusion and frustration for international students attempting to develop relationships (Lacina, 2002). What actions does the student take to make sense of and understand the differences so that he or she can effectively develop friendships with domestic students?
- Strategies that help manage the stress of the transition - it has already been discussed that developing relationships with host people in any capacity can help alleviate some of the cultural stress that international students face, but what strategies do the students have to help manage the stress of developing these relationships? Entering into new social settings is stressful for anyone, but can be even more stressful for international students due to a variety of factors, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and racial discrimination.

This current research study explored the strategies that international students used to manage the transition of entering into a college community and whether or not those strategies proved effective and/or were successful.

### **Research Methods**

Utilizing the database of the International Students' Office at Austin Community College (ACC), the researcher, the Coordinator of International Programs at ACC, sent a recruitment letter containing a link to the Letter of Informed Consent and an online survey, to 284 international students who have been attending ACC for at least one full semester. The survey (see Appendix A) contained questions to gather basic demographic information, as well as a Likert-scale survey intended to gauge opinions about the student's social experiences as international students at ACC. The survey contained 39 statements about a student's experience

both at ACC and within the Austin community, with possible responses ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 meant the student completely disagreed with the statement and 5 meant the student completely agreed with the statement. The statements were based on the theoretical framework outlined above and written in such a manner that high levels of agreement with the statement would indicate a more positive experience with that aspect of the community and/or college. At the end of the survey, the students were asked to indicate whether or not they were willing to participate in the face-to-face interview. Due to time constraints on this research study, the first 13 students who responded to the survey and indicated that they were willing to take part were invited to participate in the face-to-face interview.

The interview (see Appendix B) was designed to elicit a deeper understanding of the experiences of international students meeting domestic students and developing friendships and/or relationships. The 13 interviews were audio recorded for accuracy. From the audio recording, the researcher created a typed transcript and combined the data from the interview with the data from the preliminary survey and Likert-scale questionnaire. Finally, the researcher analyzed and coded the data identifying themes that emerged concerning the factors that contributed to or detracted from the international students' social experiences while attending community college.

There are potential limitations to this research study. First, the response rate to the online survey was 14 percent of potential respondents. Although that response rate is enough to be statistically significant for the purposes of this study, it is impossible to draw definite conclusions. Second, the face-to-face interview section of the study only included 13 participants. The 13 participants represent just over four percent of the international students who met the criterion to be included in this study (F-1 visa holders, who were currently attending

ACC and had been attending for at least one full semester), yet they represent less than one percent of the 1,755 students that the THECB certified as international in 2014 (Student Demographics, 2014). As before, such a small number of participants makes it difficult to generalize for the entire international student population at ACC. In addition, 38 of the 40 respondents to the online survey came from countries where English is not the native language, and all but one of the participants in the interviews spoke English as a second language. Both the online survey and the interviews were conducted entirely in English, which may have resulted in misinterpretation of certain questions and may have limited the interviewees' ability to fully express their true feelings about the subject.

### **Presentation of Data**

Utilizing the database of international students from the International Students' Office at Austin Community College (ACC), a recruitment letter and online survey was sent out to 284 international students who were currently enrolled at ACC on F-1 student visas and had been attending ACC for at least one full semester. Of those 284 students, 40 responded to the online survey, a response rate of 14 percent. Of the 40 respondents, 25 were female (63 percent) and 15 were male (37 percent). Twenty-three (57 percent) of the respondents to the online survey fell within the traditional college age group of 18 to 21, seven (18 percent) were between the ages of 22 and 25, six (15 percent) were between 26 and 30, two (five percent) were aged between 31 and 34, and two (five percent) were between 41 and 50 years of age. Sixteen (40 percent) of the respondents identified as Asian, ten (25 percent) identified as Hispanic or Latino, seven (17 percent) as White, two (five percent) as Black or African-American, two (five percent) as Two or more races, two (five percent) as Other, and one (three percent) respondent chose No Response. Fifty percent of the respondents (20) had completed between one and two semesters at ACC, 40

percent (16) had completed between three and four semesters, three percent (one) had completed between five and six semesters, and seven percent (three) had been studying at ACC for more than seven semesters.

As mentioned above, the survey contained 39 statements regarding the international students' experience both at ACC and within the Austin community. The respondents were instructed to rank each statement on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 meaning they completely disagreed with the statement and 5 meaning they completely agreed with the statement. Each statement was written in such a way that a high level of agreement indicated a positive experience with that particular aspect of the college or the community.

The statements were based on Goodman's 4 S's and can be divided into the aforementioned categories of Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies (see Appendix C). Each category can then be further divided into more specific subsections. The statements pertaining to the situation surrounding a student's transition to Austin focused on accommodations, transportation, and discrimination. In regards to accommodations, the survey contained three statements: "I did not have any difficulty finding accommodations upon my arrival," "I consider my roommate(s) to be my close friend(s)," and "My roommate(s) help me if I have a problem." Nevertheless, due to the fact that many participants revealed during the interviews that they did not have roommates, it is necessary to remove two of the statements ("I consider my roommate(s) to be my close friend(s)" and "My roommate(s) help me if I have a problem") because if a student did not have a roommate there would be no way to accurately rank these statements. In response to the first statement, 7 respondents gave a score of two or less, 16 provided a score of four or higher and 17 gave a score of three, indicating that while many students did not find it extremely easy to find housing, very few faced major difficulties.



Three statements were provided that pertained to a student's ability to access transportation. The first statement "It is easy to get around the city on public transportation" only received an average ranking of 2.93, with 15 students giving it a score of two or less, 11 students giving it a score of three, and 14 students giving it a score of four or more. The second statement regarding public transportation, "I do not have difficulty using public transportation to meet friends or classmates" did not do much better, only receiving an average ranking of 3.00. Similar to the first statement, the responses were almost evenly divided with 14 ranking it two or less, 11 ranking it with a three, and 15 giving a ranking of 4 or better. On the other hand, 30 students gave the statement "I am able to use private transportation, such as my own car or a friend's car, to meet friends" a four or higher, with 19 ranking this statement with a five, meaning they completely agreed with it. This suggests that although many students seemed to have issues with the public transportation system in Austin, most were able to find other means to get around the city.

The final subsection of the Situation category focused on whether or not the students felt like they had experienced discrimination. The statement "I have not experienced any form of discrimination from my classmates or peers" received the highest average score of the entire survey, 4.13, and had 29 students give it a ranking of four or more, with 22 ranking it a five. This highest average score was followed closely by "I have not experienced any form of discrimination from my professors" at 4.03, with 27 students giving a ranking of four or more, and of those 22 were a five. For both statements the lowest rankings were given by two students who identified as Hispanic/Latino, two who identified as Asian, one who identified as two or more races, but whose country of origin was Spain, and one who identified as White, but whose country of origin was Iran. Although it is clear that most international students have not

experienced any overt discrimination, it is troubling that any international students feel that they have been discriminated against, especially by an ACC faculty member.

The questions related to Self focused on three different areas; culture, English speaking abilities, and personality traits. The statements about culture examined the different expectations of class participation and the students' perceptions how cultural difference affected their experience. In response to the first statement, "In my home country, students are expected to contribute to classroom discussions," only six students somewhat or completely disagreed, four of whom identified as Asian, while 28 somewhat or completely agreed. The second statement, "The cultural differences I have experienced have not affected my ability to meet people and make friends" received eight rankings of two or less, ten rankings of three, and 22 rankings of four or more.

Instead of looking at the international student's ESOL test scores, this survey focused on the students' perception of their English speaking abilities and contained four different statements. The first statement, "I feel confident in my ability to communicate using English" received the fourth highest average score of the entire survey with a 4.00, followed closely by both "I do not have many problems speaking in English to my professors," and "I feel that it is easy to communicate with my friends and classmates using English," which both received average scores of 3.90. Interestingly, although most students who gave high scores for the first three statements also somewhat or completely agreed with the statement "I do not believe my English speaking abilities have affected my ability to meet people and make friends," five students ranked this final statement significantly lower than the previous three. This indicates that despite feeling confident in their abilities, these five students still believed that speaking English as their second language negatively affected their abilities to develop friendships.

The final subsection of the Self category looked at the students' perception of their own personality, specifically whether or not they believed they were shy, whether or not they considered themselves to be optimists, and whether or not they found it easy to make friends. In response to the statement, "I do not consider myself to be shy," 13 of the participants somewhat or completely disagreed, while 18 somewhat or completely agreed. The other nine participants were neutral on the statement. The responses to the second statement "I find it easy to meet new people and make friends," were much more evenly divided amongst agreement and disagreement, with 12 students somewhat or completely disagreeing, 16 students feeling neutral, and 12 students somewhat or completely agreeing. In contrast, 28 participants somewhat or completely agreed with the statement "I consider myself to be an optimist" while only four somewhat or completely disagreed. This suggests that feelings of shyness have a greater impact on social relationships than an optimistic outlook on life.

The first set of statements that focused on the support networks that students develop were based on Mamiseishvili's (2012) study which found that international students at community colleges were positively affected by meaningful interactions with both their professors and academic advisors. With this in mind, four statements were written focusing specifically on how respondents felt about their international student advisors. The first statement "My international student advisor is easy to talk to" received the highest average score of 3.75, with 25 students somewhat or completely agreeing. Only seven students somewhat or completely disagreed, while eight students remained neutral. The second statement "I feel like I can go to my international student advisor for support beyond visa and immigration issues" received 19 rankings of four or more, 13 rankings of three, and seven rankings of two or less. The responses to the third statement, "I would consider my international student advisor as a

friend,” were evenly divided between agreement and disagreement, with 15 students falling on both sides of the spectrum, while only 10 students remained neutral. The final statement, “I have remained in close contact with my international student advisor after the initial transition period to ACC,” received the lowest average score of these statements, with a 2.75. Half of the respondents somewhat or completely disagreed, while 11 somewhat or completely agreed, and nine remained neutral. This indicates that while most of the respondents felt comfortable with and supported by their advisors, other factors kept them from developing and continuing a relationship after the initial transition.

The next three statements looked at the interactions between the respondent and the faculty members. Seventy-five percent of the respondents somewhat or completely agreed with the first statement, “I find it easy to talk to my professors.” Yet, over half (21) of the participants somewhat or completely disagreed with the statement “I meet with my professors outside of class on a regular basis,” while only nine somewhat or completely agreed. In addition, almost half (19) somewhat or completely disagreed with the final statement “I often talk to my professors about topics not related to class,” whereas 10 students somewhat or completely agreed. This indicates that while the students seemed to feel comfortable speaking to their professors during class about schoolwork, few felt confident approaching them in other situations.

According to the research completed by Karp et al. (2010-2011), social relationships that start in the classroom have a greater impact on students attending community college. Therefore, two statements were included to examine how international students developed relationships inside the classroom. The first statement, “My professors provide many opportunities for me to work in groups with other students in my class” received 15 rankings of four or more, 16

rankings of three, and nine rankings of two or less, which indicates that most students had, at some point, been assigned group projects. However, the second statement “I have developed friendships with classmates while working in groups with other students in my class” was evenly divided amongst the responses, with 15 students scoring it at a four or higher, 11 students scoring it at a three, and 14 students giving it a two or lower. This suggests that although many of the students had participated in group work, not all of them developed any sort of relationship from it.

The next two statements of the survey examined what kind of support the students had off campus. The first statement, “I have relatives who live in the area that provide me with assistance when needed,” focused on potential existing support networks that the students might have already had prior to their arrival. Fourteen respondents completely disagreed with this statement which indicates that they had no familial support upon their arrival in Austin, while six somewhat disagreed. Seventeen students somewhat or completely agreed, while only three students remained neutral. The second statement “I have developed a network of friends and acquaintances that can provide me with support if necessary,” examined the social support networks that the students developed upon their arrival. Twenty-seven students somewhat or completely agreed with the statement while seven somewhat or completely disagreed. Six respondents remained neutral. This suggests that whether or not students had familial support, most were able to develop some sort of social support network on their own.

The final of Goodman’s 4 S’s, Strategies, examined the possible tactics that international students could utilize to manage the transition and were divided into three categories. The first category focused on the resources students employed to modify the situation by creating circumstances in which they could interact with others. The first statement “It was easy to learn

about student clubs that I could join” received one of the lowest average rankings of 2.73. Fifteen students somewhat or completely disagreed, while 17 remained neutral and only eight students somewhat agreed or completely agreed. Learning about events on-campus and around the community, on the other hand, proved much easier for most of the students, with 22 respondents somewhat or completely agreeing that they could easily learn about events on-campus and 24 students somewhat or completely agreeing that they could easily learn about events in the community. Nevertheless, whether they found it easy to learn about the clubs or events or not, most students did not join any clubs, and few attended events on-campus or around the community. In fact, the statement “I have joined clubs that connect me to other people who share interests with me” received the lowest average ranking of all the statements, a 2.35, with over half of the respondents somewhat or completely disagreeing. In response to the statement regarding attending events on-campus, 18 participants somewhat or completely disagreed, while 13 somewhat or completely agreed. The response to attending events off-campus was more evenly divided with 18 participants somewhat or completely disagreeing and 16 somewhat or completely agreeing. It is clear that joining clubs and attending events on-campus were not major strategies that students employed to modify their situation, however, especially in regards to joining clubs, it is difficult to determine if this was because the students did not know that student clubs and organizations existed.

Lacina (2002) posited that the differences in the meaning of friendship in various cultures can create confusion and frustration, and cause stress for students trying to develop relationships and build social support networks. The statement “The differences in the way American students develop friendships has not affected my ability to make friends” looked at the students’ perceptions of how these differences affected the development of their friendships. For one-

quarter of the students, who somewhat or completely disagreed with this statement, it seems that these differences did have a significant impact, whereas 14 respondents felt neutral toward the statement, and 16 somewhat or completely agreed.

The final four statements on the survey looked at the way the students managed the stress of meeting new people and their perceptions of what might cause problems with this initial interaction. The statement, “I have not experienced too much stress when trying to meet new people or make friends” had the lowest average score of the four statements, with 3.13. Only three students completely agreed with the statement, 14 students somewhat agreed, 12 remained neutral and 14 somewhat or completely disagreed. Of the three statements that explored potential factors that affected the students’ abilities to develop friendships, “Cultural differences have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends” received the lowest average score of 3.23, with only six participants completely agreeing with the statement, 12 students somewhat agreeing, 10 students remaining neutral, and 12 students somewhat or completely disagreeing. In response to the statement “Language barriers have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends” 12 participants completely agreed, 14 somewhat agreed, five remained neutral, and nine somewhat or completely disagreed. Finally, the statement “Racial discrimination has not affected my ability to meet new people or develop friendships” had the highest average ranking in this category at 3.93. Seventeen respondents completely agreed, nine somewhat agreed, nine remained neutral, and five somewhat or completely disagreed.

Of the 40 respondents to the survey, 23 (58 percent) indicated that they would be willing to participate in the face-to-face interview, nevertheless, only 13 (33 percent) responded to follow-up emails within the timeframe allotted for this research. Of the 13 students who participated in the face-to-face interviews, eight (62 percent) were female and five (38 percent)

were male. Six participants identified as Hispanic/Latino, three as White, two as Asian, one as two or more races, and one as other. Ten of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 21, one was between 22 and 25, one was between 26 and 30, and finally, one was between 41 and 45.

The interview was divided into three sections (see Appendix B). During the first section, the questions focused primarily on the students' experiences upon their arrival into Austin and onto campus at ACC. The researcher asked questions about settling into the community, registering for classes, attending the international students' orientation, and experiences with discrimination.

When asked who helped them settle into the community, eight of the 13 participants claimed that they had family members or close friends already living in the area. Two of the participants, although not having family or friends already living in the area, came to Austin with at least one good friend or family member. For many of these students, the fact that they already had a social connection to Austin was the reason that they chose to study at Austin Community College. As one student said;

That's something, like that pushed me to come here to Austin, my dad wanted me to study abroad but go to a place where I knew somebody, like he didn't want me to go to just Philadelphia, you're not going to Philadelphia, you need to know, like you have, like you need to have a friend there. It was going to be a big change, so he didn't want me to be by myself (Participant 510, personal communication, March 27, 2015).

Only three of the 13 respondents arrived into Austin completely on their own, with no social support networks already in place. Nevertheless, one of these students chose Austin because her grandfather had studied at the University of Texas (UT) years before and although she did not



have the familial support upon her arrival, she had the familial connection to Austin. The other two respondents reached out to people in the community in order to begin developing a social support network. One contacted Korean churches in the area while the other connected with a host through the website, AirBnB.

In regards to working with advisors and registering for classes, five of the 13 respondents said that their advisors helped them through the process and provided them with an adequate amount of assistance. The others felt that the location of the international students' office was too far and didn't feel that regular admissions advisors could help in their particular situation, especially when dealing with TSI assessment test scores. One respondent explained, "I failed the TSI but passed the ESOL, so, and like only international advisors know what's the deal when that happened, so talking to a regular advisor doesn't help that much" (Participant 216, personal communication, March 17, 2015). Two participants described situations in which they felt their advisors did not want to help them causing them to seek assistance elsewhere. In describing her interactions with an international student advisor specifically, one student said;

Well, basically, she just tried to finish her task as soon as possible, so she didn't have to listen to me, even when I have a question, and I ask her something, she just gave me the very cold answer, like, oh, you can just look it up or something like that. And I look it up, but I don't understand and that is why I am asking you. But she just, look here, you don't read enough, or something like that (Participant 227, personal communication, March 17, 2015).

Another student detailed her experience working with a general admissions advisor;

So for my second semester, the summer, I was trying to figure it out, again, what classes should I take now and how is the register process, so I went to talk to the same counselor,

you know you feel like that connection, like she already knows you, so she might be able to guide you easier, but for some reason she didn't want to see me, and this other lady comes outside, like she didn't take me to the office, but she talked to me in front of everyone, and she was like you just need to go to like the next classes, obviously this and this and this, and I was like so, how do I register? And she was like, well, you just do, whenever you see the courses. But, I had that weird experience of not that friendly the second time, so I just changed the counselor, I went to a different campus, and that was way better (Participant 271, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

No matter their experiences working with general admissions advisors or international student advisors, none of the 13 participants said that they contacted the international students' office or an advisor for any issues beyond paperwork, immigration and visa issues, or finding legal employment.

Although all the respondents attended the international students' orientation prior to the start of their first semester and believed it provided necessary information about attending ACC, only a few of the participants believed it assisted them in developing friendships with other students. Several students mentioned a particular activity during which a microphone was passed around the room so that each student could introduce themselves; by telling their name, their country of origin, and their area of study. Two students explained how this activity made them feel at ease by having the opportunity to "get a sense of all the places, all the diversity there is" (Participant 271, personal communication, March 16, 2015). Another student described how this activity provided a sense of connection to the other international students.

When I arrived there it was my first time at ACC before I started my first semester, and I was surrounded by other ACC students who were also international students like me, and

that helped me gain some courage, because I wasn't the only international student there and I felt like everyone in the room felt the same feeling I had which is living abroad and studying abroad in a very different environment than where we are supposed, than where are used to be, and that helped me the most, feeling a little warm and from that point, after the orientation finished I wouldn't say I made friends from that orientation but I became conscious and I knew, now I feel familiar with most of those people that I saw in that orientation (Participant 499, personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Another participant believed knowing this information about fellow international students helped him move past small talk and engage in true conversation. Nevertheless, other students felt that more could have been done to encourage interactions amongst the students attending the international student's orientation. One student suggested that time be allowed for students to walk around after the introductions were completed, so that they could talk to people from similar regions. Another suggested that upon arrival students be grouped by nationality or country of origin, not just for the social aspects of being able to converse in the same native language, but also so that students who spoke better English could help explain things to those who were struggling to understand. Two students suggested that the orientation provide more information about student groups or clubs that could provide opportunities to meet other people outside of the orientation.

Out of the 13 respondents in the interview, three participants described situations in which they felt they experienced discrimination. One student revealed an incident involving a professor who was unwilling to discuss the reasons why she received a failing grade on an assignment. The other two students described situations in the community (not at ACC) in which they experienced discrimination. The first student, who identified as Asian, described a

situation in which an individual became frustrated with her inability to understand quickly spoken English. The second student expressed feelings of discrimination while driving because her “car has Mexican plates on it so sometimes I’ll get gestures” (Participant 164, personal communication, March 23, 2015) and also described a situation in which a taxi driver, upon hearing her speak Spanish, actually told her that he didn’t like Mexicans. Nevertheless, these incidents seem to be the exception to the rule, especially when taking into account the fact that in response to the statement “I have not experienced any form of discrimination from my classmates or peers” only five students (12.5 percent) responded with a rating of two or below, to the statement “I have not experienced any form of discrimination from my professors” only seven students (17.5 percent) responded with a rating of two or below, and to the statement “Racial discrimination has not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends” only three students (7.5 percent) responded with a rating of two or below. None of the students who participated in the interviews felt, however, that feelings of discrimination affected their desire or ability to meet people in Austin. One student claimed she was mentally prepared to experience discrimination in Austin, because she had experienced racial discrimination in her home country, yet, upon her arrival, she realized that “there are so many different people they don’t pay attention to you” (Participant 510, personal communication, March 27, 2015).

The second part of the interview focused on how the participants developed friendships and relationships. The researcher asked questions about how the students’ met friends, how often they participated in group work in classes, what factors affect their ability to meet up with their friends on a regular basis, and whether or not they had joined clubs or attended events.

When asked how they met their first friend at ACC, seven of the 13 participants claimed they met them in a class, two responded that they had met their friend during the international

student orientation, one met her first friend through her brother, one met her first friend at a party that she heard about in one of her classes, and two claimed that they hadn't met really any friends at ACC. One of the students said,

I don't feel that I socialize a lot at ACC, because mainly I just go there, do the class, and then leave, you know what I mean, like a lot of people do that, I mostly just make friends out of class (Participants 132, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

Another interviewee noted,

I don't think it's like really easy to meet people and the reason why is because umm, you don't really see the same people you are in class with often, like, I see my math class like two times a week for six months only, so that's it, I may never see those people again, so, people don't, I don't see people, like forging a lot of relationships inside ACC (Participant 593, personal communication, March 26, 2015).

The fact that many students change campuses, take different classes, transfer to another university, or graduate and move away, seemed to be a large barrier for international students developing deeper friendships. One participant said,

I would like to point out that I made some friendships, but I find it really hard to keep them, my friends, like, I lose a lot of friends because they just disappear, because they move to a different state or they move to a different country, uh, a different city, and we just lose contact (Participant 499, personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Nevertheless, five of the participants did develop and maintain close friendships with students they met in their classes and that continues to be one of the main ways they meet new people and develop new relationships. When asked about participating in assigned group work during classes, all but one of the interviewees agreed that assigned group work helped them build some

type of relationship with the other students in their class. Although for several of the respondents these types of friendships might never move beyond acquaintances, the ability to acknowledge and wave to these classmates while on campus did provide a connection to ACC. As one student explained:

If we see each other on campus, we say hi, it's just like you know who you're sitting in a classroom with, that's basically, and I like that it's kind of closer. Last semester, we didn't have any group work in my classes so it was still in the end of the semester, half of the class you never spoke a word to, because when the class over, everybody like gone (Participant 238, personal communication, March 19, 2015).

One of the most common factors affecting the participants' ability to meet up with their friends was a lack of time. Seven of the participants stated that keeping up with their classes and homework kept them from going out with friends on a regular basis, especially during the week, while one participant said that being a mother and needing to be home with her son kept her from joining friends for an evening out. Two other participants cited the fact that most American students must juggle both work and school as a reason they do not hang out with domestic students as often as other international students, while others mentioned a lack of common interests with students of their same age. One participant said

I am kind of feeling like people here, it's very little interesting, you know, and having conversations with Americans, they all talk about video games, or high school, chick flick stuff, and I don't really relate, so yeah, with Americans is hard in that aspect (Participant 153, personal communication, March 17, 2015).

Distance between campuses and residences, and a lack of reliable transportation were also cited as factors that affected the participants' abilities to meet up with friends. However, participants

who reported living in heavily student populated areas seemed to have an easier time meeting other students who live in the same area. For example, Participant 132 lives in University Estates, which is a student complex. Although many of the students living there attend UT, this respondent was able to meet several people because the complex held parties and meetings for residents. Three other students reside in West campus, another student dense area, which enables them to easily meet up with friends who live there as well.

Joining different clubs at ACC was one way that half of the participants attempted to engage with other students on-campus. One participant managed one of the larger international student organizations at ACC and developed most of her close friendships through her organization. She said

I have a group of friends, like girlfriends, we have a group of five and I met them through my organization and a UT organization called START. So, that is like my closest group of girlfriends. So, yeah, it's kind of through my organization, everyone, since they are international, they present me to another group and I become really close to them

(Participant 216, personal communication, March 17, 2015).

Another student joined clubs off-campus in hopes of meeting people and improving her English. Both she and another participant stated that they were completely unaware that the ability to join clubs on-campus at ACC was even an option. Participant 499 said "I didn't know that Austin Community College had clubs, you know, where you join, you make friends there" (Participant 499, personal communication, March 25, 2015).

Although a majority of the participants had attended events on-campus only one of them felt her attendance encouraged her to engage with other students at the event. Nevertheless, this

engagement did not develop into a close personal friendship. In regards to an individual she met at one such event, she did state, however,

we still talk, you know, but we haven't really ever met up. It's still nice talking to people at ACC because you feel a little more comfortable (Participant 132, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

The third part of the interview focused on how the participants perceived themselves and how that may affect their desire and ability to develop friendships. The researcher asked the participants if they believed themselves to be introverts or extroverts, if they found it easy to meet people, if it was easier to meet domestic or international students, how they felt their English language abilities affected their desire to meet people, and how the cultural differences affected their ability to meet domestic students.

Three of the participants identified as extroverts, five identified as introverts, and five believed they were a little bit of both depending on the situation. Nevertheless, they offered mixed responses on whether or not they found it easy to meet new people. Five of the respondents (two of which identified as extroverts) explained that it was difficult to start a conversation, but generally, once the conversation was going it came easily. Two of the introverts said that they found it easier to meet new people now than they did when they first arrived. Conversely, one student claimed it was more difficult now, because unlike when she first arrived and didn't have many friends, she now has her core group of friends and does not feel the need to meet more. One participant who identified as an introvert and one who identified as an extrovert both stated that it was easy meeting people as long as they had a reason to speak to someone. One student who claimed she would never start a conversation herself, still believed



it was easy to meet people because “everybody talks to you...everywhere I go people start talking, people are interested” (Participant 238, personal communication, March 19, 2015).

The responses to the questions about whether or not it was easier to meet domestic or international students seemed to split along racial or ethnic lines. Four of the six respondents who identified as Hispanic or Latino claimed that it was easier for them to meet other international students. All four of these participants noted language as one of the main reasons that they felt more comfortable meeting other international students. Participant 510 explained that “if you hear someone speaking Spanish then you go and speak to them, like, oh, you speak Spanish” (Participant 510, personal communication, March 27, 2015). Another participant explained it another way:

I think the language has something to do, not from me, particularly, but I think for the other international students I think they are a little bit afraid of their English so I think they feel like more confident speaking English to other people who are not English speakers, because for a little bit, you know afraid of getting judged, umm, I think maybe that's why I've met more international students because once they know I'm not a native, maybe they feel like okay, maybe I can try to talk to this guy, because his English is like, not his native language, so he won't judge me if I like screw up or something (Participant 593, personal communication, March 26, 2015).

This student went on to state that “since the international students are less, once you pinpoint one of them, it’s like you create a network of all the rest of them” (Participant 593, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Another Hispanic participant explained that it had a lot to do with the way Americans communicate. He said,

when I approach an American like to hang out or like making conversation, most of them, not everyone, but most of them, you're trying to like talk and more than like a conversation, it's like an interrogatory, you are always like so what's your name, where do you live, and they say my name is, I live here, and they don't like continue

(Participant 153, personal communication, March 17, 2015).

The only non-Hispanic participant to state that he had an easier time meeting international students believed it had more to do with interests and conversation topics. International students, he said, "know a little more about the outside world, and they are kind of interested to know, kind of meet people from other countries as well. I think we, international students, would want to talk about international stuff" (Participant 185, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

There were several different reasons provided as to why five of the participants believed it was easier to meet domestic students as opposed to international students. Two mentioned that they felt international students were less common than domestic students, which made it more likely to meet and interact with domestic students. Participant 499 explained:

Starting from last semester when I really started taking my college classes that I should be taking to graduate, I met a lot of local students, and a lot of friends, and I think meeting local friends is actually easier, than meeting international people, why, first of all, because, if you want to meet international people, where would international people usually hang out, is around international ESOL sections, where the second language speakers go for language or for events, for example, that's where you would meet international students in those particular places, but local students and local friends, you can meet them anywhere in Austin, I mean, we are in the United States (Participant 499, personal communication, March 25, 2015).

The only participant who identified as Hispanic/Latina and also stated that it was easier to meet domestic students believed that the reason was due to the fact that many international students, especially Mexican students, only want to engage with locals so they tend to avoid interacting with other international students. Another student, who identified as White, expressed this same sentiment from her own viewpoint, she explained

I think it's probably also a little bit mentality thing, so Americans are kind of open in first moments and I mean I came here to meet Americans and not to meet other Europeans or wherever they're from so it's probably also what I am looking for (Participant 238, personal communication, March 19, 2015).

Another student, who identified as White, explained that because she lived in an apartment complex that catered primarily to American college students, her living situation was a primary factor in meeting mostly domestic students. Two students, one who identified as Hispanic/Latina and another who identified as two or more races, believed that it was equally easy meeting international or domestic students.

For seven of the 13 participants their perception of their English-speaking abilities had at least some effect on their desire and ability to meet new people and develop friendships. Of these seven, five identified as Hispanic/Latino and two identified as Asian. Most believed the longer they stay in the United States the better their English becomes, however, they mentioned that during their first few semesters their perceived inabilities to speak English well kept them from interacting both in social and academic settings. One Hispanic student said,

I am still working on it and it's still, it definitely affects friendships or just talking to people or even in class, you know that type of, I want to say something but I don't know

how, so I am just not gonna say it (Participant 271, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

Another Hispanic student explained it like this:

It affected me a lot because I knew English, but I didn't feel comfortable at all speaking English, so if I wanted to say something even stupid, I had to think, a lot about it, and like, and then after I thought about how to say it, and how to word it and something, I was like, yeah, but should I tell it, should I say it, should I not say it, and then I missed the moment, the opportunity to talk (Participant 510, personal communication, March 27, 2015).

Two other students, one who identified as Asian and another who identified as Hispanic/Latino, felt issues arose more with domestic students' inability to understand their accents when speaking English, which would make them uncomfortable.

The other six participants expressed complete confidence in their English-speaking skills. Of these six, only one identified as Hispanic/Latina and her confidence stemmed from the fact that she lived in New Zealand for several years prior to her arrival in the United States.

In regards to cultural differences influencing the participants' abilities to interact and develop friendships with domestic students, four of the six participants who identified as Hispanic/Latino mentioned their perception that Americans were much more reserved or closed than their home culture. One student explained, "in my culture people are very open and kind of like really friendly and stuff, you can just kind of be loud, and here I guess people are just a little more closed to themselves" (Participant 164, personal communication, March 23, 2015). For these four students, this difference often caused confusion about how to approach a domestic

student for the first time or what is appropriate when greeting a friend or an acquaintance.

Participant 271 explained it this way:

I don't know what's appropriate with an older person or with a younger person, uhh, I am still trying to figure that one out. Especially like handshakes, okay, not everyone likes handshakes, kisses no, like that's, I only have like a couple friends that I can do that with, or hugs, like when it's appropriate, but that is more like friendships, only meeting people is I guess is just like about how greeting someone or how, how like eye contact or your body language, is very different, is very different (Participant 271, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

Conversely, two of the participants that identified as White and came from Western European countries felt the exact opposite about domestic students. Both found Americans to be very open and friendly and far less reserved than their home cultures. One participant stated that,

Americans are lot more kind of full on, not in your face, but like, with the English people, we are really reserved, and we're not quite kind of outgoing, you know, we don't generally talk to people randomly on the bus, or something, we're not very huggy, well, I am not very huggy, at least where I am from in England, we are not very touchy-feely, we are not quite loud and stuff, we are quite reserved, so coming here, it was really refreshing because Americans they are kind of like, they are a little but more open which is nice, you know, you'll talk to them just for a few hours and they'll like tell you about stuff, and it's like wow, you know, you feel pretty trusting, like Americans are a little more trusting than English, so I really like that, but it was kind of hard to grasp at first, because I couldn't get used to it, but, you know, I've got use to it now, but, you know, it's real nice, it's refreshing (Participant 132, personal communication, March 18, 2015).

The two participants who identified as Asian had very similar experiences in the cultural differences they faced. Both mentioned feeling unsure about what was considered polite and not polite. Participant 405 mentioned specifically that before she interacted with a domestic student that she would first “consider is it polite or impolite to say it” (Participant 405, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Participant 227 mentioned that fact that her culture is much more indirect than American culture and would often find herself thinking American students were being rude or offensive when they asked her questions in a more direct manner. On the other hand, Participant 499, mentioned that he was often unsure if domestic students wanted to be friends, because domestic students would share phone numbers but not call or text back.

Two other participants, one who identified as Hispanic/Latina and another who identified as White, cited the difference in conversation styles and topics of interest as major cultural differences that affect their desire and ability to develop friendships with domestic students. The only participant to claim no cultural difficulties was a participant who identified as Hispanic/Latino, but admitted that he had spent a significant amount of time in the U.S. prior to coming to Austin, so he had become accustomed to the cultural differences.

### **Discussion**

Utilizing both Schlossberg’s Transition Theory and Goodman’s 4 S’s as theoretical frameworks, this study sought to understand the factors that affected an international student’s social experience while attending a large, urban community college in Texas. As mentioned above, Schlossberg’s Transition Theory encourages exploration of an individual’s movement through a transition by looking at the perspectives of the individual, the context of the transition, and the impact the transition may have on the individual’s life (Anderson et al., 2012). Although all of the participants were experiencing an expected transition, their perspectives, contexts, and

the level of impact were all different. A number of home countries and racial or ethnic groups were represented in the sample of student participants and it became clear that the students' perspectives and contexts were different and did have an effect on how they moved through the transition. For example, students coming from Latin American or Asian countries seemed to struggle more with cultural differences than students coming from Western European countries. Perceived language issues also had a greater influence on students from non-Western European countries. In terms of impact, all of the participants moved away from home leaving the majority of friends and family behind, yet eight of the 13 interviewees choose to come to Austin because they had friends and family living in the area, meaning that they had at least a small social support network already in place. This fact lessened the intensity of the impact because they had someone who could assist them in settling into the community.

Goodman's 4 S's (Situation, Self, Support, Strategies) provided the theoretical framework through which to identify the factors that affected the students' ability to meet people and develop friendships. Four major themes, which fall into the categories of Situation and Self, seemed to emerge from the data gathered from the qualitative interviews.

Similar to context in Schlossberg's theory, situation refers to the external factors surrounding the transition. Many participants mentioned the fact that all students attending ACC commuted to and from campus negatively impacted their ability to develop friendships, especially close personal relationships. Unfortunately, the international students entered a situation in which most students attending ACC arrive on campus for class and then leave immediately after. In addition, the lecture format of most classes did not provide any opportunity for the participants to connect with their classmates, and if the participants did have the chance to start conversations and begin to develop a relationship during class once the

semester ended, the likelihood that those students would attend another class with the participants or even stay on the same campus as the participant was slim. This had a greater impact for students who did not have access to a social support network through other means, such as living situation or membership in a club or organization. One student, who came to Austin with his cousin and who lived in a student dormitory in the West Campus area of the University of Texas, equated ACC to a workplace environment, saying “you go there to work, you go there to study, you go, study, get out” (Participant 593, personal communication, March 26, 2015). He went on to explain that this did not bother him because he was able to meet people in his dorm and through his personal social network in Austin. He was able to depend on several friends, including his cousin and another friend who came from his home country, for support and companionship. On the other hand, one of the participants who lived alone with her son, found it frustrating that after one semester all of the students went in separate directions, even those with whom had managed to develop a relationship. At the time of the interview, she did not feel she had a single person who she could call a friend.

Goodman’s Self relates to the factors that are attributed specifically to the individual, such as gender, ethnicity and culture, perceived language abilities, and personal outlook. Many of the participants attributed unwillingness to approach domestic students and start conversations as factors that affected their ability to develop friendships. For some, this was specifically a personality trait, such a shyness or introversion that kept them from making initial contact. In fact, almost one-third of the respondents to the survey somewhat or completely disagreed with the statement “I do not consider myself to be shy.” In addition, even the students who identified as extroverts or felt that they could be categorized as either an extrovert or an introvert, depending on the situation, confessed to finding it difficult to approach new people. One student



explained that it was the natural desire to surround oneself with similar people, such as people from the same region or who speak the same language. For others, at least at the beginning of their stay in the United States, it was their own perception of their English language abilities. Their fear that they would be unable to adequately express their thoughts in English kept them from speaking to native English speakers. For others, it was cultural differences that caused them not to pursue friendships with domestic students. Cultural differences and language issues were more likely to create significant barriers for students coming from Latin American or Asian countries, than the participants who identified as White and came from Western European countries. Despite the fact that only three of the 13 participants mentioned experiencing any sort of discrimination, and the three statements pertaining to discrimination in the Likert-scale survey received average scores of 3.93 or higher, this finding supports Lee and Rice's (2007) qualitative study that found that a divide exists between "experiences of White international students and those of color" (p. 393). When asked if there were any major factors that affected their abilities to develop friendship with domestic students, both participants who identified as Asian and all but one who identified as Hispanic/Latino cited cultural differences and language issues as primary factors, yet the two students who identified as White and came from Western European countries stated that there were no factors, at all, that influenced their ability to meet American students.

As previously mentioned, 10 of the 13 participants of the face-to-face interviews either had friends or family living in the area or they arrived with a friend or family member, so they already had some sort of social support network in place. This is in contrast to the results of the survey, in which half of the respondents (20) indicated that they somewhat or completely disagreed with the statement "I have relatives who live in the area that provide me with

assistance when needed.” However, the international students’ disagreement with this statement could mean that they do not have any relatives in the area or that any relatives they have in the area would not provide support if needed.

Nevertheless, past research has shown that for international students attending community college frequent and meaningful interactions with faculty and advisors had a significant impact on the students’ connection to and persistence in the college (Mamiseishvili, 2012). Although on the Likert-scale survey, the statements “My international student advisor is easy to talk to” and “I feel like I can go to my international student advisor for support beyond visa and immigration issues” received average scores of 3.75 and 3.66 respectively, the statement “I would consider my international student advisor as a friend” received an average score of 3.00, while the statement “I have remained in close contact with my international student advisor after the initial transition period to ACC” only received an average score of 2.75, with 50 percent of the respondents giving it a two or below. None of the 13 participants in this study said that they visit their international student advisor or general admissions advisors for anything beyond paperwork, immigration status, or registering for classes. This suggests that, in contrast to previous studies, most international students at ACC do not view their advisors as an integral part of their social support network. The interactions with professors were even less meaningful. Although the statement “I find it easy to talk to my professors” received an average score of 3.95, the two statements “I meet with my professors outside of class on a regular basis” and “I often talk to my professors about topics not related to class” received average scores of 2.65 and 2.50, respectively, some of the lowest scores on the entire survey. During the interviews, only one participant mentioned becoming friends with her professors and only with the professors of the classes in her major area of study.

The participants in this study seemed to employ a number of different strategies in order to manage the transition and build a social support network. As previously mentioned, half of the participants in the face-to-face interviews reported joining a club or student organization in order to connect with other students, and one respondent joined a club not associated with ACC. Whether or not they actually joined a club, however, five of the students interviewed mentioned that they either did not know the option to join clubs existed, or that it was difficult and frustrating to find information regarding clubs that were currently active on campus. Not knowing about the different clubs on-campus or not knowing where to find information on joining these clubs was a common issue experienced by many of the respondents to the survey as well, because the statement “It was easy to learn about student clubs that I could join” only received an average rating of 2.73 indicating that most respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed.

That being said, Karp et al., (2010-2011) posited that networks developed in the classroom created stronger ties than those developed by joining student clubs. For many of the participants, developing friendships with classmates was difficult and they often attributed that fact to cultural differences (i.e. domestic students are more reserved and quiet) or to the commuter campus situation of ACC (i.e. students attend class and leave). Nevertheless, for 12 of the 13 participants in the interviews, having the chance to participate in group work during class allowed them to develop relationships, which helped mitigate some cultural stress, even though the relationships developed during group work were mostly acquaintance style friendships. The results from the survey were not as strong in this regard, with only 38 percent of the respondents indicating that group work had allowed them to develop relationships with their classmates.

However, this discrepancy could be related to the fact that the survey did not differentiate between developing a close friend or an acquaintance.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As mentioned in Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the perspective, context, and impact of a transition will differ depending on the individual experiencing that transition. It is no different for international students attending Austin Community College. Each student faced a unique set of challenges and had a unique experience based on many factors, such as their country of origin, their age, their level of English, and whether or not they had a support network living in the Austin area. Nevertheless, there were specific factors that seemed to influence most of the participants' social experiences at ACC. Cultural differences, perceptions of English speaking abilities, and willingness to engage with domestic students all emerged as common threads in the students' experiences.

Although every student faced different challenges, there are policy and programming changes that ACC could incorporate that might mitigate some of these challenges and assist international students in developing larger and deeper social support networks. First, locating an international student advisor at every campus, who could help international students through the entire process of arriving on-campus, taking assessment tests, and registering for classes would be beneficial to the students, especially if each student could be assigned to a single advisor prior to their arrival. Working with the same advisor through recruitment, admissions, arrival, registration, and beyond would provide each international student with a sense of what Schlossberg called *mattering*, or the "need to be appreciated, noticed, and acknowledged" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 153). If the organizational and personnel structure of an institution negates the ability for a single advisor to take an international student through the entire process,

than an efficient, information-sharing pipeline could be developed that would enable any new advisor to access important details about the student. At the very least, this would remove the need for the student to repeatedly explain his or her situation, and provide the sense that he or she mattered to the institution, if not a specific individual.

Second, the international students' orientation could be redesigned to include time for engaging with other international students, beyond simply passing the microphone around for basic introductions. Also, if the students were sat in a specific way, according to country of origin for instance, this could provide students with an immediate connection to those around them. In addition, if the students were grouped according to their country of origin, the students who speak better English could assist those who were struggling, so that all of the students would obtain the necessary information presented during the orientation. Not having a language barrier to manage would also help the students engage on a deeper level so that they could begin developing friendships more quickly. Student representatives for the various clubs on campus should be present at the orientation, so that international students who were interested in joining could meet with current members and learn about the different activities that the club hosts. This would also ensure that all international students were made aware of the possibility of joining clubs to connect with other students and make friends.

In the classroom, professors could assign group work more often, especially if they have a lot of international students in their class. Not only would this provide opportunities for the international students and the domestic students to engage in cross-cultural interactions, which is beneficial to everyone involved, but it would provide non-native English speakers a support system to turn to, if they needed assistance in their English only class.

As mentioned above, there are numerous benefits to hosting international students on a community college campus, yet, it is imperative that steps be taken to assist them in developing the support networks necessary for managing cultural stress and having a successful sojourn. Providing international students with ways to connect with other individuals as soon as possible after their arrival into Austin is vital, because as one student said “when you come here, the only thing is, you don’t want to be alone” (Participant 216, personal communication, March 17, 2015). Although every international student’s experience is different, there are ways to facilitate engagement with both international and domestic students which would go a long way to ensuring their social success.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As mentioned previously, this research was limited in that it focused on a small population of international students at Austin Community College. In order to truly gain insight into all the possible factors that affect an international student’s social experiences while attending a community college several more studies, which include larger sample sizes and cross several different institutions, would need to be conducted. In regards to ACC specifically, this research brought up interesting questions about the role that race and ethnicity plays in international student social interactions. A study that focused on the social experiences of the various racial and ethnic groups that attend ACC could further assist the institution in developing programming that provided opportunities for more meaningful cross-cultural interactions.

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**Appendix A**  
**Data Collection Method**  
**Online Likert Scale Questionnaire**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. Your perspectives are very important.

The first section of this survey asks for basic demographic information. If you do not want to answer a specific question, please write “No response.”

Please note that your identity will remain confidential.

**Name:**

**Email address:**

**Age:**

**Gender:**

**Country of Origin:**

**Ethnicity/Race:**

**Number of semesters completed at Austin Community College:**

Below are series of statements regarding your experience at Austin Community College. Please read each statement carefully and then indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Please use the following scale to indicate your response:

**1 = completely disagree**

**2 = somewhat disagree**

**3 = neither agree or disagree**

**4 = somewhat agree**

**5 = completely agree**

I did not have any difficulty finding accommodations upon my arrival.

1      2      3      4      5

I consider my roommate(s) to be my close friend(s).

1      2      3      4      5

My roommate(s) help me if I have a problem.

1      2      3      4      5

It is easy to get around the city on public transportation.

1      2      3      4      5

I do not have difficulty using public transportation to meet friends or classmates.

1      2      3      4      5

I am able to use private transportation, such as my own car or a friend's car, to meet friends.

1      2      3      4      5

I have not experienced any form of discrimination from classmates or peers.

1      2      3      4      5

I have not experienced any form of discrimination from professors.

1      2      3      4      5

In my home country, students are expected to contribute to classroom discussions.

1      2      3      4      5

The cultural differences I have experienced have not affected my ability to meet people and make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

I feel confident in my ability to communicate using English.

1      2      3      4      5

I do not have many problems speaking in English to my professors.

1      2      3      4      5

I feel that it is easy to communicate with my friends and classmates using English.

1      2      3      4      5

I do not believe my English speaking abilities have affected my ability to meet people and make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

I do not consider myself to be shy.

1      2      3      4      5

I find it easy to meet new people and make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

In general, I consider myself to be an optimist.

1      2      3      4      5

My international student advisor is easy to talk to.

1      2      3      4      5

I feel like I can go to my international student advisor for support beyond visa and immigration issues.

1      2      3      4      5

I would consider my international student advisor as a friend.

1      2      3      4      5

I have remained in close contact with my international student advisor after the initial transition period to ACC.

1      2      3      4      5

I find it easy to talk to my professors.

1      2      3      4      5

I meet with my professors outside of class on a regular basis.

1      2      3      4      5

I often talk to my professors about topics not related to class.

1      2      3      4      5

My professors provide many opportunities for me to work in groups with other students in my class.

1      2      3      4      5

I have developed friendships with classmates while working on group projects for class.

1      2      3      4      5

I have relatives who live in the area that provide me with assistance when needed.

1      2      3      4      5

I have developed a network of friends and acquaintances that can provide me with support if necessary.

1      2      3      4      5

It was easy to learn about student clubs that I could join.

1      2      3      4      5

It was easy to learn about events at the college that I could attend.

1      2      3      4      5

It is easy to learn about events in the community that I could attend.

1      2      3      4      5

I have joined clubs that connect me to other people who share interests with me.

1      2      3      4      5

I have attended events at the college that allowed me to connect with other people.

1      2      3      4      5

I have attended events in the community that allowed me to connect with other people.

1      2      3      4      5

The differences in the way American students develop friendships has not affected my ability to make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

I have not experienced too much stress when trying to meet new people or make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

Language barriers have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

Cultural differences have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

Racial discrimination has not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.

1      2      3      4      5

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this online survey. Please indicate below whether or not you would be willing to participate in the face-to-face interview portion of this research study.**

I am willing to participate in the face-to-face interview portion of this research study. If selected, I understand that the researcher will contact me via the email address I provided at the beginning of this survey.

I am not willing to participate in the face-to-face interview portion of this research study.

## **Appendix B Data Collection Method**

### **Face-to-Face or Skype Interview Questions**

Before beginning the interview, read the “Introduction to the Interview” (See Appendix C).

**In the first part of this interview, I want to talk with you about your experiences when you first arrived into Austin and on campus.**

- When you first arrived into Austin, who helped you find housing and get settled into the community?
- What kind of support did you receive upon your arrival to Austin?
- Who provided the most support upon your arrival to Austin?
- What other support would you have found helpful?
- Who helped you decide which classes you needed to register for?
- How did the international student orientation help prepare you for life at Austin Community College?
- In what ways did it provide you the opportunity to meet other students, both domestic and international?
- How often do you see/meet with your international student advisor? What kind of topics do you discuss when you meet with him or her?
- Do you feel like you have experienced any sort of discrimination at Austin Community College?

**Now, I want to talk to you about your friendships/relationships.**

- How did you meet your first friend at Austin Community College?
- How did you meet the person you would consider to be your best friend?
- Where did you meet most of the people with whom you have become friends?
- How often do you participate in group work in your classes? How do you feel group work affects your relationship with your classmates?
- Do you have roommates? If so, would you consider your roommates as close friends?
- Do you feel like you have a lot of friends? How do you typically meet people who become your friends?
- How often do you meet up with your friends to hang out?
- What factors affect your ability to meet up with your friends on a regular basis?
- What types of clubs have you joined that have allowed you to connect with people who share similar interests with you?
- What events have you attended that have allowed you to connect with other people?
- How did you find out about these events or clubs?



- How has joining these clubs or attending these events provided opportunities for you to develop friendships?

Now, I want to talk to you a little bit about what you think of yourself.

- Do you consider yourself to be a very outgoing, extroverted person, or more of an introvert?
- Why do you consider yourself to be that way?
- Do you find it easy to meet new people? Why?
- How much do you believe your English-language speaking abilities affect your desire to meet new people and develop friendships?
- Have you found it easier to meet domestic students or other international students? Why?
- How do you think the cultural difference between your home country and the United States has affected your ability to develop friendships with American students?
- In your opinion, what factors have affected your ability to meet domestic students and develop friendships with them?
- How satisfied are you with your social experiences at ACC and in Austin, in general?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences meeting new people and developing friendships while at Austin Community College?

That is the end of our interview. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. If you have any questions or think of anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences here at Austin Community College, please contact me via email.

### Appendix C Survey Results

Id	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Country of Origin	Number of semesters completed at Austin Community College	I did not have any difficulty finding accommodations upon my arrival.	I consider my roommate(s) to be my close friend(s).	My roommate(s) help me if I have a problem.	It is easy to get around the city on public transportation.	I do not have difficulty using public transportation to meet friends or classmates.	I am able to use private transportation, such as my own car or a friend's car, to meet friends.	I have not experienced any form of discrimination from classmates or peers.	I have not experienced any form of discrimination from professors.	
271	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	3-4	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	2	
132	Female	18 - 21	White	United Kingdom	1-2	3	5	4	2	3	4	4	5	
153	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	3	1	4	2	4	1	1	2	
164	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	3	4	4	2	2	5	3	5	
185	Male	18 - 21	White	Egypt	1-2	4	3	3	4	2	4	5	5	
216	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	3	5	5	2	2	2	4	5	
227	Female	18 - 21	Asian	Japan	1-2	2	5	5	2	3	3	4	4	
238	Female	22 - 25	White	Switzerland	1-2	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	
249	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Jordan	3-4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	
350	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	3-4	3	3	3	4	4	5	3	3	
361	Male	31 - 34	White	Canada	1-2	2	4	4	2	2	4	5	5	
372	Female	18 - 21	White	Ukraine	1-2	3	3	3	1	1	4	5	5	
383	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	3	5	5	3	2	5	5	5	
405	Female	41 - 45	Asian	South Korea	3-4	1	1	4	1	1	5	2	3	
416	Female	26 - 30	White	Iran	1-2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	
437	Female	31 - 34	Two or More Races	Spain	3-4	3	5	5	1	1	5	2	1	
448	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Cambodia	1-2	4	1	2	4	3	5	5	5	
499	Male	18 - 21	Other	North Sudan	3-4	4	3	3	5	4	5	5	5	
510	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	5-6	5	1	1	4	4	3	5	5	
521	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Malaysia	3-4	5	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	
542	Male	26 - 30	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	2	3	4	3	4	5	2	3	
593	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	5	1	1	3	4	3	5	5	
624	Male	22 - 25	Asian	China	1-2	4	3	4	2	2	5	4	2	
665	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	1-2	3	1	3	4	3	1	5	4	
706	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	3	5	1	2	2	3	3	2	
717	Female	18 - 21	Asian	CHINA	1-2	3	4	5	3	4	5	5	5	
738	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Bolivia	3-4	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	3	
759	Female	26 - 30	No Response	Eritrea	7+	5	5	5	3	4	5	5	5	
770	Male	26 - 30	Two or More Races	Israel	1-2	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	
801	Male	22 - 25	Black or African American	Angola	3-4	1	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	
822	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	1-2	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	2	
833	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	7+	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	
844	Male	18 - 21	Black or African American	Senegal	1-2	3	1	4	4	2	1	5	5	
855	Female	22 - 25	Asian	South Korea	3-4	5	5	4	1	1	5	3	5	
866	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Malaysia	1-2	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	5	
877	Female	18 - 21	White	Kazakhstan	3-4	2	5	5	1	2	5	4	3	
888	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	
909	Male	22 - 25	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	7+	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	
910	Female	46 - 50	Asian	South Korea	3-4	4	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	
921	Female	18 - 21	Other	Nigeria	1-2	3	3	3	3	3	4	5	4	
					Total		135	132	144	117	120	165	161	
					Average		3.375	3.300	3.600	2.925	3.000	4.025	4.125	4.025

Id	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Country of Origin	Number of semesters completed at Austin Community College	In my home country, students are expected to contribute to classroom discussions.	The cultural differences I have experienced have not affected my ability to meet people and make friends.	I feel confident in my ability to communicate using English.	I do not have many problems speaking in English to my professors.	I feel that it is easy to communicate with my friends and classmates using English.	I do not believe my English speaking abilities have affected my ability to meet people and make friends.	I do not consider myself to be shy.	I find it easy to meet new people and make friends.	In general, I consider myself to be an optimist.
271	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	3-4	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
132	Female	18 - 21	White	United Kingdom	1-2	4	3	5	5	5	5	1	3	4
153	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	5	3	4	4	3	3	5	5	3
164	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	5	2	5	5	5	5	1	2	2
185	Male	18 - 21	White	Egypt	1-2	3	4	5	5	5	5	2	2	4
216	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	5	4	3	2	3	4	3	4	3
227	Female	18 - 21	Asian	Japan	1-2	1	1	4	3	4	2	5	2	2
238	Female	22 - 25	White	Switzerland	1-2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
249	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Jordan	3-4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4
350	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	3-4	4	4	3	3	4	2	2	3	4
361	Male	31 - 34	White	Canada	1-2	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	2	4
372	Female	18 - 21	White	Ukraine	1-2	5	1	3	3	3	2	1	3	2
383	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	5	3	5	5	5	5	3	2	3
405	Female	41 - 45	Asian	South Korea	3-4	4	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	4
416	Female	26 - 30	White	Iran	1-2	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	4
437	Female	31 - 34	Two or More Races	Spain	3-4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	2	4
448	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Cambodia	1-2	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5
499	Male	18 - 21	Other	North Sudan	3-4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	2	5
510	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	5-6	2	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	4
521	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Malaysia	3-4	3	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
542	Male	26 - 30	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	3
593	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	3	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	5
624	Male	22 - 25	Asian	China	1-2	5	2	3	4	4	3	2	3	4
665	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	1-2	4	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	3
706	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	2	3	3	2	2	3	1	2	3
717	Female	18 - 21	Asian	CHINA	1-2	4	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	5
738	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Bolivia	3-4	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	3	4
759	Female	26 - 30	No Response	Eritrea	7+	1	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
770	Male	26 - 30	Two or More Races	Israel	1-2	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
801	Male	22 - 25	Black or African American	Angola	3-4	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	4
822	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	1-2	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5
833	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	7+	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	3	5
844	Male	18 - 21	Black or African American	Senegal	1-2	5	3	5	4	4	4	3	2	4
855	Female	22 - 25	Asian	South Korea	3-4	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
866	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Malaysia	1-2	2	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	3
877	Female	18 - 21	White	Kazakhstan	3-4	3	5	4	3	3	2	2	3	4
888	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	4
909	Male	22 - 25	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	7+	3	4	5	4	3	4	4	3	3
910	Female	46 - 50	Asian	South Korea	3-4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
921	Female	18 - 21	Other	Nigeria	1-2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4
				Total		154	140	160	156	156	146	129	125	155
				Average		3.850	3.500	4.000	3.900	3.900	3.650	3.225	3.125	3.875

Id	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Country of Origin	Number of semesters completed at Austin Community College	My international student advisor is easy to talk to.	I feel like I can go to my international student advisor for support beyond visa and immigration issues.	I would consider my international student advisor as a friend.	I have remained in close contact with my international student advisor after the initial transition period to ACC.	I find it easy to talk to my professors.	I meet with my professors outside of class on a regular basis.	I often talk to my professors about topics not related to class.	My professors provide many opportunities for me to work in groups with other students in my class.	I have developed friendships with classmates while working on group projects for class.	I have relatives who live in the area that provide me with assistance when needed.	I have developed a network of friends and acquaintances that can provide me with support if necessary.
271	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	3-4	5	5	5	5	4	1	4	2	5	5	
132	Female	18 - 21	White	United Kingdom	1-2	4	3	2	1	4	4	4	4	1	4	
153	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	5	5	1	2	5	2	3	2	5	4	
164	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	3	3	3	2	3	1	3	2	1	4	
185	Male	18 - 21	White	Egypt	1-2	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	5	3	
216	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	1	5	2	2	4	2	1	3	2	4	
227	Female	18 - 21	Asian	Japan	1-2	2	3	1	1	4	3	5	5	4	3	
238	Female	22 - 25	White	Switzerland	1-2	4	2	2	1	5	2	1	3	2	4	
249	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Jordan	3-4	5	5	5	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	
350	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	3-4	4	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	
361	Male	31 - 34	White	Canada	1-2	2	2	2	2	4	1	2	2	5	2	
372	Female	18 - 21	White	Ukraine	1-2	4	5	5	5	5	5	2	3	5	2	
383	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	5	2	1	2	5	1	1	3	5	5	
405	Female	41 - 45	Asian	South Korea	3-4	3	4	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	3	
416	Female	26 - 30	White	Iran	1-2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	
437	Female	31 - 34	Two or More Races	Spain	3-4	1	2	1	2	4	2	2	2	4	3	
448	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Cambodia	1-2	3	4	3	2	3	4	1	3	4	5	
499	Male	18 - 21	Other	North Sudan	3-4	5	2	5	4	5	2	1	5	2	2	
510	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	5-6	3	3	1	1	3	3	4	4	1	4	
521	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Malaysia	3-4	5	5	3	3	5	3	3	5	5	5	
542	Male	26 - 30	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	3	3	1	3	4	3	5	4	4	4	
593	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	3	5	3	2	4	2	3	3	5	5	
624	Male	22 - 25	Asian	China	1-2	4	3	4	2	4	3	4	3	4	2	
665	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	1-2	3	2	3	2	5	2	4	5	1	5	
706	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	
717	Female	18 - 21	Asian	CHINA	1-2	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	
738	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Bolivia	3-4	4	3	3	1	4	3	1	3	2	5	
759	Female	26 - 30	No Response	Eritrea	7+	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	3	1	3	
770	Male	26 - 30	Two or More Races	Israel	1-2	5	5	3	3	5	2	3	3	2	4	
801	Male	22 - 25	Black or African American	Angola	3-4	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	
822	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	1-2	3	3	4	3	4	2	3	4	1	5	
833	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	7+	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	1	5	
844	Male	18 - 21	Black or African American	Senegal	1-2	5	5	4	2	4	3	1	1	1	1	
855	Female	22 - 25	Asian	South Korea	3-4	1	4	1	4	1	1	2	3	1	5	
866	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Malaysia	1-2	5	3	4	3	5	2	1	4	2	5	
877	Female	18 - 21	White	Kazakhstan	3-4	5	5	5	2	4	5	4	2	1	4	
888	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	4	3	3	4	3	2	3	3	2	4	
909	Male	22 - 25	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	7+	4	3	2	4	3	2	3	4	5	4	
910	Female	46 - 50	Asian	South Korea	3-4	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	
921	Female	18 - 21	Other	Nigeria	1-2	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	4	4	
				Total		150	147	120	110	158	106	100	129	120	112	150
				Average		3.750	3.675	3.000	2.750	3.950	2.650	2.500	3.225	3.000	2.800	3.750

Id	Gender	Age	Ethnicity/Race	Country of Origin	Number of semesters completed at Austin Community College	It was easy to learn about student clubs that I could join.	It was easy to learn about events at the college that I could attend.	It is easy to learn about events in the community that I could attend.	I have joined clubs that connect me to other people who share interests with me.	I have attended events at the college that allowed me to connect with other people.	I have attended events in the community that allowed me to connect with other people.	The differences in the way American students develop friendships has not affected my ability to make friends.	I have not experienced too much stress when trying to meet new people or make friends.	Language barriers have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.	Cultural differences have not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.	Racial discrimination has not affected my ability to meet new people or make friends.
271	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	3-4	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	5
132	Female	18 - 21	White	United Kingdom	1-2	2	3	2	1	1	4	1	5	4	5	
153	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	2	2	2	4	3	2	5	4	3	2	3
164	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	1-2	3	3	3	1	1	2	3	3	5	2	3
185	Male	18 - 21	White	Egypt	1-2	3	3	3	1	4	1	3	4	5	5	5
216	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	3	2	2	3	3	5	2	3	4	3	2
227	Female	18 - 21	Asian	Japan	1-2	2	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	4
238	Female	22 - 25	White	Switzerland	1-2	4	4	4	1	1	4	4	5	5	5	5
249	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Jordan	3-4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
350	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	3-4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	4
361	Male	31 - 34	White	Canada	1-2	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	2	5	4	5
372	Female	18 - 21	White	Ukraine	1-2	2	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	1	3	5
383	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Colombia	3-4	2	3	3	1	1	3	3	3	5	5	5
405	Female	41 - 45	Asian	South Korea	3-4	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2
416	Female	26 - 30	White	Iran	1-2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
437	Female	31 - 34	Two or More Races	Spain	3-4	2	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	4	3	4
448	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Cambodia	1-2	3	4	4	1	1	3	4	4	4	3	5
499	Male	18 - 21	Other	North Sudan	3-4	1	5	5	1	1	1	3	2	5	1	5
510	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	5-6	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	2	2	5
521	Female	22 - 25	Asian	Malaysia	3-4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3
542	Male	26 - 30	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	2
593	Male	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Venezuela	1-2	4	5	5	2	4	4	5	5	5	5	5
624	Male	22 - 25	Asian	China	1-2	3	4	2	3	4	2	4	3	4	2	4
665	Female	26 - 30	Asian	China	1-2	2	5	5	1	5	4	4	4	4	3	5
706	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	3	3
717	Female	18 - 21	Asian	CHINA	1-2	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4
738	Female	18 - 21	Hispanic/Latino	Bolivia	3-4	3	4	4	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	1
759	Female	26 - 30	No Response	Eritrea	7+	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	5	5	5
770	Male	26 - 30	Two or More Races	Israel	1-2	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	4	5	2	5
801	Male	22 - 25	Black or African American	Angola	3-4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	2	3
822	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	1-2	3	4	4	1	2	4	5	3	4	4	3
833	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Kazakhstan	7+	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	3	5
844	Male	18 - 21	Black or African American	Senegal	1-2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	3
855	Female	22 - 25	Asian	South Korea	3-4	1	4	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	4	4
866	Male	18 - 21	Asian	Malaysia	1-2	3	4	4	4	1	1	5	4	5	4	3
877	Female	18 - 21	White	Kazakhstan	3-4	4	3	3	4	5	5	2	1	1	1	4
888	Female	18 - 21	Asian	China	3-4	3	4	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
909	Male	22 - 25	Hispanic/Latino	Mexico	7+	3	3	4	1	3	4	3	4	4	3	3
910	Female	46 - 50	Asian	South Korea	3-4	3	3	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	5	4
921	Female	18 - 21	Other	Nigeria	1-2	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5
				Total		109	135	136	94	105	113	128	125	145	129	157
				Average		2.725	3.375	3.400	2.350	2.625	2.825	3.200	3.125	3.625	3.225	3.925