International Student Recruitment and Retention
Webinar Q&A
Q: Is there any evidence that students want to study overseas as a step to seeking permanent residence in the country of study?

A: Several countries have established policies that allow international students to remain in the host country to work. These policies have become a critical route to high-skilled migration, though, until now, little data has been collected on the number of students who take advantage of this option. With the publication of its 2010 International Migration Outlook, the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), a group of governments from 33 member countries committed to democracy, financial stability, and world trade, has begun to track student to migrant conversion. The estimated “stay rates” range from 15 to 35 percent, with an average of 21 percent. While, overall, only about one in five students remains in the host country to pursue work, the figure is higher for certain countries, such as France and Germany, in which nearly one in three students converts to migrant status.

One article describes the variation seen among countries as follows:

The number of student-to-worker status changes ranges from fewer than 300 in Austria and Belgium to almost 13,000 in Canada, 14,700 in France and 10,000 in Germany and Japan respectively. The figures, based on 2007 status changes, are incomplete but provide a snapshot of the importance of international students for high-skilled migration.

Most students who become migrants (61 percent) are motivated to stay for work-related reasons. Germany sees a larger share of students who remain in the country due to marriage, while Canada sees a larger share of students who stay on for humanitarian reasons. Notably, the data do not capture accurately the number of students who plan to permanently reside in the host country, and the stay is not definitive for many students who will later encounter limited advancement opportunities and return to their home countries. Furthermore, as the data suggest, most international studies intend to stay only to complete their education and return home upon graduation or the conclusion of their designated period abroad.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, while in the past, Indian students have often been inclined to continue residence in Western countries in the hopes of higher salaries

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1 Member countries include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israël, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.


and better professional prospects, many do not now feel the pressure to do so. As India’s economy grows, they see greater appeal in returning to their home country.\(^4\)

**Q: What are the socioeconomic characteristics of international students in the United States?**

**A:** Our search for data on the socioeconomic status of international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities suggests that this is an area that is understudied. The Institute of International Education’s Open Doors project, a valuable source for information on international student demographics, does not appear to collect data on socioeconomic status. In regard to students’ financial situations, the Open Doors project collects information on the primary source of funding used to support education abroad. Data from the 2009-10 academic years reveals that most international students (61.9 percent) are primarily supported by personal and family funds, while 24.1 percent are primarily supported by the U.S. college or university they attend. Less common sources of financial support include the home government or university (4.6 percent), the U.S. government (0.7 percent), a U.S. private sponsor (1.0 percent), a foreign private sponsor (1.4 percent), an international organization (0.3 percent), or current employment (5.2 percent).\(^5\)

Even anecdotal evidence on the topic is minimal. One author suggests that the high price tag associated with an American education can deter Indian students from lower and working-class families.\(^6\) However, as another suggests, due to the decreased role of the caste system and new emphasis on globalization, the availability of opportunities to earn postsecondary degrees has become an increasing priority for Indian families in the middle class and rural and urban poor.\(^7\)

**Q: How can institutions manage conditional acceptance within the application process to meet the requirements of visa apps at the same time as meeting the needs of the institution?**

**A:** In order to increase the international student applicant pool, many institutions have established conditional admissions policies, in which otherwise highly qualified foreign students receive a letter of acceptance that is contingent on their completion of an intensive English language program. Scott G. Stevens, director of the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Delaware, notes that conditional admissions have been a crucial component of his institution’s initiative to increase enrollment of Chinese students at the undergraduate level. The available numbers speak to how such policies can advance the international student recruitment goals of...

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\(^6\) Ibid. 19.

\(^7\) Ibid. 21.
colleges and universities. At the University of Delaware, the number of Chinese undergraduate students who have completed the ELI program has risen from just five in 2008 to 162 in 2010.\textsuperscript{8} And at Iowa State University, which has maintained a conditional acceptance policy for three decades, enrollment in the English language program has tripled in recent years.\textsuperscript{9}

Conditional acceptance of international students is unquestionably on the rise. ELS Educational Services, Inc. reports that the number of ELS conditional admits has more than doubled each year since 2008.\textsuperscript{10} Conditional admission is typically honored for a period of one year. Upon completion of either a homegrown or contracted English language program, students commonly must retake and pass a language proficiency exam and, sometimes, an institution-specific placement exam. The programs appeal to international students, who see the conditional admission offer as advantageous in the visa application process. This perception, however, is not entirely accurate; in the United States, officials stress that they do not discriminate against foreign students who seek visas for language study only.\textsuperscript{11}

In Canada, international students can apply for a study permit once they have received a letter of conditional admission. The letter allows the government to open a file for the student, though a final decision is not made until he or she has gained final acceptance to the college or university.\textsuperscript{12} International students can participate in an English language program for up to six months without a study permit, but must obtain Student status (as opposed to Temporary Resident status) for longer periods of study – a transition which must occur when the student is outside the country. Given these restrictions, the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of British Columbia (UBC) recommends that foreign students who anticipate they will need more than six months to fine-tune their English language skills apply for a Study Permit prior to their entrance to Canada. In order to allow students to obtain Study Permits, the ELI at UBC furnishes students with a Letter of Acceptance to the ELI program once an application form, application fee, and program deposit has been received.\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{10} Harris, M.W. et al. 2010. “International Student Recruitment in China, Turkey & Viet Nam: Fastest Emerging New Markets.” 10. ELS Educational Services, Inc.\n\texttt{http://www.internationalstudentrecruitment.org/downloads/ELS%20Global%20Partner%20Session%20NAFSA%202010%20Presentation%205%2026%202010.pdf}
    \item \textsuperscript{12} “Study Permit.” Government of Canada. \texttt{http://www.canadaemergency.gc.ca/tunisia-tunisie/visas/study_permit-permis_etude.aspx?lang=eng}
    \item \textsuperscript{13} “English Language Institute: Frequently Asked Questions.” University of British Columbia. \texttt{http://www.eli.ubc.ca/about/faq.html}
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