



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

Assessing the Co-Curricular Needs of
International Students on Campus:
Three Lessons Learned



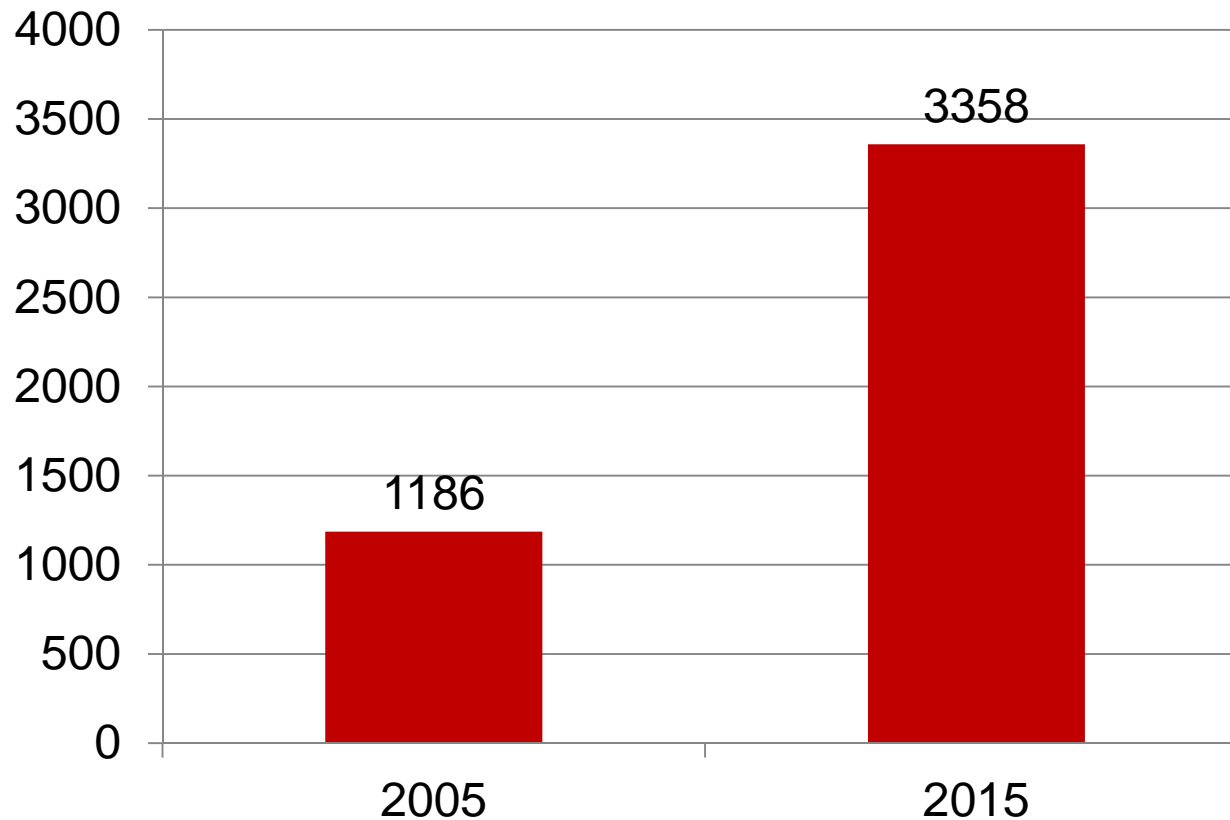
Presenters

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The Context at Ohio State

Increase in international undergraduate students





Learning Outcomes

To understand how to use qualitative methods in needs assessment.

To explore ways to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods to identify student needs.

To understand the complexities of assessing the needs of diverse students.

To consider how to apply key lessons to your own contexts and purposes.



Needs Assessment . . .

- “...used to determine constituents’ desired services and programs as perceived by the constituents included in the assessment process” (p. 21, Bresciani, Gardner, Hickmott, 2009).
- “...helps define problems so that they can be acted on” (p. 129, Shuh, Upcraft, and Associates, 2001).



Kuh's (1982)

5 Purposes of Needs Assessment

1. Generate ideas and document perceptions about various issues
2. Collect information to support likely alternatives
3. Estimate relative acceptability of various alternatives
4. Select the most acceptable policy or program from alternatives
5. Determine whether needs have been met



Lesson #1:

Using qualitative methods to inductively assess needs



Qualitative Study Participants

- **Recruited primarily from introductory English as a Second Language course**
- **8 undergraduate students from China**
 - **7 females; 1 male**
 - **3 students who transferred from an institution in China; 1 student who completed high school in the U.S.**
 - **6 STEM majors; 1 Social Science major; 1 Business major**



Qualitative Study

- **Purpose:** To examine the international undergraduate student experience at Ohio State.
- **Focus Area:**
 1. Students' expectations and motivations for their college experience
 2. The ways students' personal characteristics/ backgrounds influence their engagement
 3. Students' perceptions of challenges and supports for their learning and development



Qualitative Study Methods

Journal Entry (i.e., Introductory Letter)

- Students' expectations and motivations for college
- Students' personal characteristics/ backgrounds

Daily Activity Log for One-Week Period

- Basis for students' perceptions of challenges and supports for their learning and development

Semi-structured, One-on-One Interviews

- Greater depth for all three focus areas



Journal Entry Prompt

Imagine that it is your first day in a new course or at a new co-curricular activity. The faculty or staff member has asked you to write a letter to introduce yourself so she or he can get to know you and can tailor the learning experience to meet your needs and interests. Your letter can be as long or as short as you want, but please address the three main areas listed below.

1. Begin your letter by introducing and describing yourself...
2. Next, think about your decision to attend Ohio State...
3. Finally, imagine an environment either inside or outside the classroom when you would be highly motivated to learn...



Activity Log

Time	Brief Description of Activities (e.g., Attended Intro. to Physics class, Wrote essay for English class, Attended Zumba group fitness class, Ate dinner, Looked at Facebook statuses, Skyped with Mom, etc.)	Location of Activities	[OPTIONAL] Notes about Activities (Record any aspects of an activity and/or your participation in it that you want to discuss during your one-on-one interview.)
1:00 AM			
2:00 AM			
3:00 AM			
4:00 AM			
5:00 AM			
6:00 AM			
7:00 AM			
8:00 AM			
9:00 AM			
10:00 AM			



Semi-Structured Interviews

How did you describe yourself in your journal entry?

Was the week you kept your activity log typical? Why or why not?

What has been your best experience at Ohio State?

What is important for educators to know about you?

What activity from your log would you like to discuss first?

What has been your worst experience at Ohio State?



Analysis of Qualitative Data

Verbatim transcription of interviews

Line-by-line coding of interviews (journal entries and activity logs used for context)

Grouping of codes into categories (e.g., Academic Transition, Peer Interactions)

Consideration of how categories related to University departments/units



Insights from the Qualitative Process

- **Open-ended nature of interviews helped with building rapport with participants.**
- **No “one-size-fits-all” when it came to interview strategies.**
- **It was important to pay attention to silences and gaps in the data.**
- **Recruitment of males proved challenging.**



Lesson #2:

Using qualitative data to develop a more inclusive survey



Quantitative Study

- **Purpose:** Add questions to existing survey on student engagement to gain insights into international student experiences
- **Why mixed methods?**
- **Methods**
 - **Online survey**



Quantitative Study Participants

- **Random sample of 4,000 undergraduate students**
- **Oversample of an additional 1,000 international undergraduate students**



Designing an inclusive survey instrument

1. Identify themes from qualitative research
 - What were the key themes?
 - What don't we understand?
 - Who do we need broader representation from?
 - How can we move from themes to concepts?



Designing an inclusive survey instrument

1. Identify themes from qualitative research
2. Outline key concepts to be covered
 - Students' time use
 - Lack of co-curricular involvement
 - Goals for their college experience
 - Parents' messages about college



Designing an inclusive survey instrument

1. Identify themes from qualitative research
2. Outline key concepts to be covered
3. Review literature on concepts



Designing an inclusive survey instrument

1. Identify themes from qualitative research
2. Outline key concepts to be covered
3. Review literature on concepts
4. Explore how existing surveys measure concepts



Designing an inclusive survey instrument

1. Identify themes from qualitative research
2. Outline key concepts to be covered
3. Review literature on concepts
4. Explore how existing surveys measure concepts
5. Take the perspective of multiple students



An example

Theme – Chinese students suggest goal of college is to get a job

Concept – College values orientation

Measure – *From your perspective, how important is it to gain the following as a result of attending college:*

- **To master the material being taught in my classes**
- **To gain a better understanding of who I am**



Insights from the Quantitative Process

- Use existing literature and surveys to identify concepts and questions
- Get help from content experts to check language
- Think of analyses when designing the survey
- You can't always cover ALL themes!



Discussion

Thinking about a group on your campus that you would like to better understand, what would you ask? How would you make these questions inclusive?



Lesson #3:

**Decide how to
effectively and ethically
respond to students'
needs**



Responding to Students' Needs

1. Privacy and confidentiality
2. What is in your control? What is not?
3. How to share the results (students, campus partners, the community)
4. Be careful not to essentialize population
5. Check your biases



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Discussion