

LOST OR FOUND:
EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-YEAR CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
WHO ARE ON ACADEMIC PROBATION AFTER THEIR FIRST SEMESTER

By

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ABSTRACT

LOST OR FOUND: EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-YEAR CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WHO ARE ON ACADEMIC PROBATION AFTER THEIR FIRST SEMESTER

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In recent years, the number of Chinese international undergraduate students sharply increased in higher education institutions in the U.S. Meanwhile, this student population experiences challenges in their transition in U.S. colleges, and academic probation is one challenge that Chinese international undergraduate students have. Being on academic probation has negative impacts on students' persistence and retention rates and 4,5,6-year graduation rates, and the increasing number and percentage of Chinese international students also bring challenges to U.S. higher education institutions.

To explore the reasons for being on academic probation of Chinese international undergraduate students, this research studied the experiences of the first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation after their first semester in a Research I public university. This mix-method study collected data of students' educational records, survey, and interview, in order to explore the trends among first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation after their first semester, the correlations between their TOEFL, SAT, ACT scores and first semester GPAs, their academic performance in each course they enrolled in their first semester, and how those students perceived and made sense of being on academic probation.

The data analysis demonstrated that the most reasons for being on academic probation after their first semester are in socio-emotional engagement, not in academic proficiency. The top

2 main reasons for being on academic probation identified by interviewees are not taking their study seriously and not studying (hard). Different from many studies about (Chinese) international students, the language barrier was not identified as one top reason for being on academic probation by survey respondents and interviewees. The main finding of this study is the goal of participants was to get an admission letter from a U.S. college. Participants actually only prepared for the study abroad tests, such as TOEFL, SAT, and ACT, and did not prepare for knowledge, skills, and abilities that are essential to survive and thrive in the academic learning at U.S. colleges.

This study also found being on academic probation is actually an issue caused by the study abroad craze that driven by policy and capital, and it needs the effort and input from Chinese international students, Chinese parents, and U.S. higher education institutions in order to solve this problem. Therefore, this study provided recommendations to Chinese international students and Chinese parents, as well as faculty, staff, and administrators in U.S. colleges at the individual level, institutional level, and policy level, in order to support the academic learning and transition of Chinese international undergraduate students.

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This dissertation is dedicated to a higher ideal, a broader vision, and a wider world.

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

Tony (pseudonym) grew up in a city with more than ten million people near Beijing, China. His parents had very high expectations for him ever since he was born and sent him to a variety of tutoring classes to learn Olympic Mathematics and Chinese Painting. His parents had their second son when Tony was in middle school. Since then his parents shifted their focus from Tony to his younger brother and did not pay as much attention to Tony. Tony started to become apathetic toward studying, frequently skipping many classes in middle school. He did not go to school for three months before taking the entrance exam for high school. Using his connections, Tony's father sent Tony to one of the strictest residential high schools in the province, which is famous for training students to be test-taking machines. In the second year in high school, Tony's father arranged for Tony to go to the international division in his high school to prepare to study abroad in the U.K., even though Tony did not want to study abroad. Almost all of Tony's classmates in the international division selected to study in the U.S., so Tony's father changed his mind about his son's destination. Tony's mother took Tony to a study-abroad application agency in order to apply to U.S. colleges.

In Fall 2013, Tony came to Ocean Deep University (ODU, pseudonym of the research site) as an international student with a business preference major. His three roommates were also from China and all of them were from very wealthy families. One of his roommates purchased a brand new Bentley a few weeks of arriving at ODU. They often skipped classes and flew to California and New York to party. Tony did not want to study and his roommates paid for his trip so he traveled for two months with his roommates, skipping classes the whole time. Tony was on

academic probation after his first semester at ODU. Tony did not tell his parents about his academic standing, so they believed that everything was fine and kept sending him money.

In the summer of 2016, Tony's family came to the city where ODU is located to visit Tony and found there were no books or even pens in his apartment. His parents started to doubt if he was still at school, and the doubt grew when Tony avoided talking about topics related to school. Although Tony took a picture of an admission letter on letterhead from the ODU Business School and sent it to his parents on WeChat after they returned to China, his parents were still worried. Finally, Tony's father concluded that there must be something wrong and flew to ODU on September 15, 2016. His father was shocked when he found out that Tony had been recessed in Fall 2015, and that he had not been in school for nine months. Tony had to leave the U.S. immediately and he may not be able to ever come to the U.S. in the future because he overstayed in the U.S. without legal status for such a long time. After thinking about the option of going to a community college and transferring to his original college later, Tony's father still decided to take Tony back to China based on his experience and behaviors. Only holding a high school degree is impossible to find a good job in China, so Tony's father arranged him to work at the company that his father owns. For other family members, Tony spent a lot of money to study abroad but he was recessed by the college and came back to China without a college degree.

When they talked about Tony's study abroad experience to other people, it totally became a joke.

Tony's experience is extreme, but not an isolated case; there are many Chinese international undergraduate students at ODU with similar experiences. These Chinese students were on academic probation after one semester at ODU, and quite a number of them were ultimately recessed and did not come back to ODU at all. Many recessed Chinese international students kept this information secret from their families. Some of them remain in the U.S.

illegally, working in California and cannot go back to China to meet their families again because of the shame of seeing their families and immigration issues.

This phenomenon does not only happen at ODU. Although there is no scholarly work touched on this topic, a number of anecdotal articles and reports in Chinese media demonstrated this phenomenon in other universities in the U.S. For example, *Degenerating at Iowa*, an article from Nebular (2017), a Chinese international students' media based online and WeChat, described the stories of two Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at University of Iowa. One student who majored in Business was recessed after his/her second semester, he/she paid a Chinese agent to transfer to a community college but failed the F-1 student visa interviews three times and may not be allowed to enter the U.S. again in ten years. The other student used enrolling in the easy-pass courses to improve GPA, and he/she also revealed that other Chinese international students via buying exam answers, course-taking, and paper-writing services to pass the courses.

Tony's experience illustrates that today's Chinese international students have different characteristics relating to their academic performance. Their learning behaviors, compared to those of Chinese international students of previous generations, demonstrate a different pattern in Chinese international students' academic success. Traditionally, Chinese international students did well in the U.S. education system (Liu, 2016). For example, the first-generation Chinese immigrants perceived that success in school resulted from their personal efforts (Kaufman, 2004). In recent years, the situation is changing and ensuring international student success has become a challenge for U.S. higher education institutions. Fass-Holmes and Vaughn (2014, 2015) argued that the increase in international students has been accompanied by a campus-wide generalization that these students are struggling academically and are increasingly at risk of

academic probation, disqualification, and/or dismissal from the university. For example, at the University of Oregon, international freshmen had higher academic probation rates (10.5%) than in-state domestic freshmen (7.7%) and domestic freshmen from other states (4.7%) in Fall 2011 and Fall 2012 (Ward, Jacobs, & Thompson, 2016). Research and media reports also have documented that Chinese international students are now facing a variety of difficulties in their education in America (FlorCruz, 2013; Liu, Brancato, & Da, 2014, Luo, 2013), which hinder their academic success in college.

The facts about recent Chinese international undergraduate students' experiences at ODU can provide some evidence for the ways that this populations' experiences have changed over time, and can help to illustrate some of the factors that have coincided with the downward trend of Chinese international students' academic performance. When the enrollment of first-year Chinese international students increased sharply since 2008, the percentage of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation also increased sharply. From 2009 to 2012, the percentage of first-year Chinese international undergraduate students on academic probation after their first semester nearly doubled compared to the year before. Since Fall 2013, when the numbers of enrollment of Chinese freshmen turned to stable, the rates of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation were also stable, which was about 20% for each year.

Significance

It is critical to note that increase in academic probation of first-year Chinese international undergraduate students after their first semester is just one dimension of the larger landscape of student success, retention and persistence, and graduation rates at ODU. This phenomenon affects ODU's financial resources as well as to the economic development and employment

opportunities in the local community.

As the largest international student population in U.S. higher education, in the 2015/2016 academic year, 328,547 Chinese international students studied abroad in U.S. higher education institutions, which made up 31.5% of all international students in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2017b). In Fall 2015 and Fall 2016, 3,857 and 3,687 Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in ODU, which means 76.5% in Fall 2015 and 76.1% in Fall 2016 of the international undergraduate students were from China. As a result, the persistence of Chinese international students contributes a lot to the student success of international students at OCU. However, the first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at OCU had significantly lower persistence rates than first-year Chinese international students who were in good standing in Fall 2008 to Fall 2015, which was about 20% lower.

Related research approved that first-semester GPA was a significant and positive predictor of the graduation rates of low-income and underrepresented students (Delaney, 2008; Gershenfeld, Hood, & Zhan, 2016; Jesse & Ellersieck, 2009; McGrath & Braunstein, 1997; Yizar, 2010). Similarly, being on academic probation after their first semester not only has negative impacts on the persistence of first-year Chinese international students, but also has an influence on their 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rates at ODU. While the 4, 5, and 6-year graduation rates of Chinese international students who had good standing after their first semester increased, the respective graduation rates of Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester decreased, which are significantly lower than the graduation rates of international students at ODU in four years, five years, and six years are 40%, 62%, and 68%, overall graduation rates at ODU which are 52%, 75%, and 79%.

Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) reported that of the 45% of students who start college and fail to complete their degree, less than 25% of them are dismissed for poor academic performance. At ODU, not all first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation can successfully return to good standing ($GPA \geq 2.0$) at the end of their second semester, and quite a number of them actually are recessed or dismissed after attending ODU for one year. Meanwhile, another trend which also requires attention is the number of first-year Chinese international students who earn a 0.0 GPA after their first semester is increasing sharply since Fall 2011. According to the academic status policy at ODU, earning a 0.0 GPA could lead to recess, which means students cannot return to ODU within one full calendar year. All of these facts demonstrated that first-year Chinese international students at ODU have a much higher rate of academic probation, earning 0.0 GPA, and being recessed after their first semester.

Although there is no national data available on Chinese international students on academic probation, the rise of businesses that cater to Chinese international students in the U.S. to deal with dismissal issues, such as WholeRen Education which was founded in 2010, provides some evidence of the scope of Chinese international students who have problems with academic performance when they study abroad in the U.S. WholeRen Education estimated that in 2014, 8,000 Chinese international students were expelled from American universities, and the main reasons were poor academic performance and academic dishonesty (Zhao, 2015). By March 2016, WholeRen Education's client database showed 2,914 Chinese international students affected by dismissal issues. Among those 2,914 students, 42.75% were undergraduate students and about 40% of them were dismissed within one year of their arrival in the U.S. 73.79% of these students were from the top 100 U.S. universities in U.S. News and QS Ranking systems

(WholeRen Education Research Center, 2016). The reasons for dismissal of Chinese international students, as revealed by WholeRen Education (2016), are: poor academic performance (39.86%), academic dishonesty (32.57%), attendance issues (8.14%), behavioral misconduct (7.00%), incomplete understanding of academic policies (6.00%), mental health issue (3.43%), “Pay to Stay” Scheme and other (3.00%).

As with U.S. domestic students, the first semester GPA plays a vital role in international students’ academic success and retention. In their study that included 6,051 international students at Thompson River University, Hamilton, Kennedy, and Crespín-Mueller (2010) found that students’ first term GPA was the most significant factor affecting their cumulative GPA and cumulative GPA was the most significant factor affecting their retention. At ODU, on average only 12% of the freshmen placed on academic probation in their first semester will graduate in four years, and only 36% of them will graduate after six years. In Fall semesters in 2006 to 2017, totally 1,130 first-year Chinese international students were on academic probation in their first semester; as a result, academic probation will postpone the graduation of least 723 first-year Chinese international undergraduate students in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017. Chinese international undergraduate students constituted 76.5% of all the international undergraduate student population at ODU, and their graduation rate had a huge impact on the graduation rate of international students and the overall graduation rate of all ODU students. The State Government of the state where ODU located includes the six-year graduation rate as one of the six performance metrics to allocate the balance of the funding to higher education institutions in the fiscal year 2016-17. Thus, lower six-year graduation rates could negatively influence the funding ODU obtains from the State in the future.

The academic performance, retention and persistence, graduation, and state funding also

have an impact on the national ranking of ODU. As one of the generally recognized U.S. College ranking systems, U.S. News weighs graduation and retention rates at 22.5%, undergraduate academic reputation at 22.5%, graduate rate performance at 7.5%, and financial resources at 10% in its indicators to calculate the rankings of U.S. colleges (Morse, Brooks, & Mason, 2016). Poor academic performance, higher academic probation rates, and the lower six-year graduation rate of Chinese international students may cause a decline of ODU's ranking, and could impede the application and admission of prospective international students. This ranking is one of the most important indicators for international students and their parents to select the universities where they want to study abroad.

Compared to domestic in-state students, international students at ODU pay twice as much for tuition, which is about \$1,300 per credit hour. According to ODU's policy, recessed students have to leave ODU for at least one full calendar year, and dismissed students have to leave ODU for at least two full calendar years. Considering international students at ODU must have at least 12 credits in Fall and Spring semesters to maintain their full-time F1 student status, the estimated tuition lost of those 162 first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation at the end of their first semester and then were recessed or dismissed at the end of their second semester is at least \$6.0216 million. If those students did not apply readmission to ODU after one or two years and assume they are in college for four years, the estimated tuition lost is at least \$9.1416 million.

More than tuition, in 2015-2016, international students at ODU contributed \$310.2 million to the local economy and supported 4,675 jobs (NAFSA, n.d.). Chinese international students are the largest international student population and represent about 10% of the students at ODU, and decreasing prospective students from China will not only harm ODU financially but

also affect the local community.

Research Questions

This study focuses on the shift of the academic probation rates of first-year Chinese international undergraduate students at ODU. For this purpose, this study will use the Neighborhood Student Success Collaborative (NSSC) Student Success Model as the conceptual framework to analyze the issues related to the academic performance of first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who are/were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU. The NSSC Student Success Model addresses three variables, namely academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement (Royal, Noto, High McCord, & Pitcher, 2015).

In order to explore and explain why those first-year Chinese international students ended up on academic probation after their first semester at ODU, this study proposed the following four questions, which include both quantitative and qualitative questions.

1. What are the trends in first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester?
2. Are there correlations between their academic performance and their English proficiency (TOEFL scores) and pre-college knowledge (SAT/ACT scores)?
3. How were their academic performances in the courses (grade in each course) they enrolled in their first semester?
4. How do first-year Chinese international undergraduate students perceive and make sense of being on academic probation after their first semester at ODU?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Student success is a broad concept. The indicators of student success include academic achievements, students' satisfaction with their college experience, personal and professional development of students, students' retention and persistence, career after graduation, and so on. Kuh et al. (2006) defined student success as academic achievement, engagement in educationally purposeful activities, satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence, attainment of educational objectives, and post-college performance.

Academic performance is vital in student success. U.S. higher education institutions usually place undergraduate students whose cumulative GPA is below 2.0 on academic probation, which is a sign that those students have low academic achievement. Academic probation is a pan-institutional issue affecting a significant portion of college students in the U.S. (James & Graham, 2010). Related research revealed that college students on academic probation tended to be younger than the general population and included a disproportionate number of male students, students of color, first-generation students, and international students (Spurling & Gabriner, 2003; Tovar & Simon, 2006). In order to understand and explore the issues explaining why first-year Chinese international undergraduate students end up on academic probation after their first semester at ODU, the literature review focuses on the subjects related to the research questions; that is, student success, the reasons that undergraduate students are on academic probation, the experiences of Chinese international students in the U.S., and the underlying issues of Chinese international students in the U.S.

Student Success

Key Factors of Student Success

Kuh et al. (2006) pointed out that pre-college experiences, students' behaviors and institutional conditions, student engagement, outcomes and post-college indicators are key factors of student success. The effects of academic preparation in K-12 schools, family background, enrollment choices, and financial aid and assistance policies can have an impact on students' pre-college experiences (Kuh et al., 2006). Students' behaviors include such things as the time and effort students put into their studies, interaction with faculty, and peer involvement, as well as institutional conditions which include resources, educational policies, programs and practices, and structural features (Kuh et al., 2006).

Kuh et al. (2006) believed colleges and universities can only intervene with student engagement and institutional performance when students are on campus, whereas many other factors such as students' precollege characteristics are typically beyond the direct control of higher education institutions. As shown in the literature, high levels of student engagement were associated with a wide range of educational practices and conditions, including purposeful student-faculty contact, active and collaborative learning, and institutional environments perceived by students as inclusive and affirming and where expectations for performance are clearly communicated and set at reasonably high levels (Astin 1991; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Finally, the outcomes and post-college indicators included preparing students to live productive, satisfying, responsible and economically self-sufficient lives (Kuh et al., 2006).

Major Theoretical Perspectives on Student Success

Based on Tinto's (1993) and Braxton's (2003) framework of college student departure,

Kuh et al. (2006) summarized that the sociological, organizational, psychological, cultural, and economic theoretical perspectives contribute to student success in higher education institutions.

Sociological perspective. Attending college is a process where students separate from the group and environment with which they were formerly familiar and associated, and transition to a new environment and build connections with new members. During the college years, students need to adopt and adapt to the new normative values and behaviors of the new group in order to integrate into the new environment (Tinto, 1993). In this process, the level of student commitment to the institution is related to the level of academic and social integration. Some scholars observed that in Tinto's (1993) model, the support of social integration actually was the more robust predictor of performance, retention, and engagement than academic integration (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997). Thus, students' abilities to negotiate foreign environments and communicating effectively with strangers and their interpersonal relationships both on and off-campus are essential for college student success (Kuh & Love, 2000; Kuh et al., 2006).

Organizational perspective. The institutional structure and processes both influence student performance (Kuh et al., 2006). In his student attrition model, Bean (1983) posited students' beliefs shape their attitudes, students' attitudes shape their behaviors, and behaviors signal intents. The structures and practices that institutions are notorious for often called "the bureaucracy", also have effects on first-year students' retention and learning (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Because students' beliefs are affected by their experiences with the institution, such experiences will ultimately determine students' sense of belonging or if they fit in the institution.

Psychological perspective. Bean and Eaton (2000) presented a psychological model of college student retention. This model indicated that a student enters an institution with psychological attributes shaped by his/her particular experiences, abilities, and self-assessments.

The most important psychological factors in this model include self-efficacy assessments, normative beliefs, and past behavior (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Bean and Eaton (2000, 2001) viewed academic and social integration as outcomes of psychological processes described in the model, and they believed the processes in this model operate regardless of gender, ethnicity, or age.

Cultural perspectives. Cultural perspectives remind us to consider students' cultural background when discussing student success for different student groups. Kuh et al. (2006) argued that historically underrepresented students usually have challenges in colleges that hinder them from taking advantage of resources and services for learning and personal development that are available on their campuses. It is vital to include indicators related to cultural perspectives in the study of international student success because a large number of international students come from cultural backgrounds that are very different from American culture. The cultures in international students' home countries shape their social norms and values as well as their attitudes toward education and knowledge, and these all may have an impact on their success in U.S. higher education.

Economic perspectives. Weighing the costs, benefits, and future returns of staying in college also influences student retention in U.S. higher education. The increasing tuition and other fees make people view going to college as an investment. As Braxton (2003) suggested, if a student perceives the cost of staying in college is less than the return on investment, they will forgo the opportunity and leave college prematurely. As international students pay higher tuition than domestic in-state students, economic consideration may influence their motivation in learning, which is one of the important indicators in student success.

Student Success of International Students

Today, the pool of students is wider, deeper, and more diverse than ever, thus, student

success indicators must be broadened in order to pertain to different types of students (Kuh et al., 2006). The increasing enrollment of international undergraduate students in U.S. higher education has brought some scholars' attention to the student success of international students. International students face dual transitions; one from high school to college and one from their home countries to the U.S., which may make their journey toward student success more challenging.

Many research articles point out that students' characteristics and behaviors, as well as students' expectations and effort, play important roles in student success and retention of first-generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Pike & Kuh 2005; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). This may apply to international students as well because many international students are also first-generation college students and most are the first in their families to attend university in another country.

Telbis, Helgeson, and Kingsbury (2014) found that international students' confidence level in their social adaptability, language abilities, academic ability, and financial need positively influenced their academic success. Social networks of friends, family members, faculty, and administrators stress the different needs and challenges that international students have, and thus play an important role in their academic success and adaptation to a new environment (Kisang, 2010).

After examining the relationship between student engagement, student satisfaction, and academic success of international students and domestic students through using 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement data, Korobova and Starobin (2015) found that level of academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, supportive campus environment/quality of relationships, and supportive campus environment/institutional emphasis

are the five benchmarks of effective educational practice that can measure the entire college experience and academic success.

In their study at the University of Oregon, Ward, Jacobs, and Thompson (2016) compared new first-time freshmen between 2002 and 2012 in three groups: international students, in-state domestic students, and out-of-state domestic students. They found that compared to high school GPAs, TOEFL scores had a significant positive correlation with first-year international students' GPA, and English proficiency in speaking and writing is more closely correlated with international students' academic success than their proficiency in listening or reading (Ward et al., 2016). They also suggested that international freshmen success may be related to characteristics such as motivation, familiarity with U.S. culture and teaching styles, family values in support of educational acquisition, English comprehension beyond that measured by the TOEFL, and individual goals (Ward et al., 2016).

Li, Chen, and Duanmu (2010) found that a family's attitude toward learning success, English proficiency, and social communication with compatriots were the most significant predictors of academic performance of all international students at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom. They also reported that for Chinese international students, those who never studied abroad before were likely to have higher academic achievement in their current studies than their peers who had studied abroad before (Li et al., 2010). In addition, they found Chinese international students had poorer English writing skills than international students from other countries, which explained their lower academic performance in comparison to other international students (Li et al., 2010).

Through interviewing eight Chinese international students enrolled in English as a second language program, Ota (2013) determined the five factors that influenced their social, cultural,

and academic transition in U.S. higher education, which included study-abroad preparation for U.S. K-12, parental social capital and instant social connections, the social value of cultivating American friendships, intra-group hierarchy and collectivist social pressure undermines English acquisition, and Chinese community at the university.

Reasons for Academic Probation

Research suggests that the reasons students end their first semester on academic probation are various and broad; the most common reasons include family responsibilities, work obligations, financial difficulties, lack of motivation, transition issues, class attendance, and unsuitable program or major choices (Codjoe & Helm, 2005; Dixon, 2002; Holland, 2005; Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Proctor, Prevatt, Adams, Hurst, & Petscher, 2006; Tovar & Simon, 2006; Trombley, 2001). Students who have weak academic skills, challenging personal circumstances and difficulties in adapting to the college environment are at risk for failure (Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007).

Students usually reported multiple reasons that led them to academic probation (James & Graham, 2010). Study participants listed emotional issues, time management skills, course selection, problems with teachers, and keeping a balance between social life and school work as the reasons that caused them to be placed on academic probation (Holland, 2005). Tovar and Simon (2006) also identified that academic preparation, financial resources, and family obligations were main barriers for students to successfully complete their program of study in community college.

Academic Preparation

Some researchers proposed that many students begin their higher education journey unprepared for the independent, self-directed learning that is required (Ross, 2012), and those

students can be classified as “educationally at-risk” due to lacking the important educational skills that are essential for academic success when they enter college (Aldrige, 1992; Braunstein & McGrath, 1997; Carpenter, Corbitt, Kepner, Lindquist, & Reys, 1980; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Smith and Winterbottom (1970) found that academic probation students at Princeton University often attributed their poor academic performance to academic factors. Holland (2005) reported that probationary students usually cited that they did not have a good preparation for their academic work (Holland, 2005). Academic probation students were not ready for completing basic academic tasks, which predict success in their college lives, such as attending class regularly, communicating with professors, and completing required readings and employing minimal study (Renzulli, 2015).

In James and Graham’s (2010) study, many academic probation students admitted that they were not academically prepared for university-level courses. They usually referred to a weakness in English or Mathematics courses and identified that they did not have enough background knowledge in other subject areas such as science courses (James & Graham, 2010). For international students, they have more challenges in English. They learn English as a second language, their speaking and writing skills are usually not as good as their reading and listening skills, and they have difficulties in academic writing.

Knowledge About Academic Policies

Academic probation students often lack knowledge about academic policies in their institutions. Among academic probation students, many of them had unrealistic, or optimistic, expectations concerning grades (Smith & Winterbottom, 1970). James and Graham (2010) reported that 72% of interviewees did not appear to understand their situation after receiving the academic probation notice letter.

The most often mentioned reason from students for why they are on academic probation is unsuitable majors, programs, or courses. Students thought their majors, programs, and courses were different from their expectations, and some students felt that not having a clear goal led them to select the wrong programs or courses (James & Graham, 2010).

Socio--emotional Integration

Although some researchers reported that academic difficulties led students to end up on academic probation (Austin, Cherney, Crowner, & Hill, 1997), social integration is the key to sustained academic success (Tinto, 2000). Isaak, Graves, and Mayers (2006) found that academic probation students actually identified the same number of study skills problems as non-probation students and they actually had more motivational and stress problems than non-probation students. For example, many academic probation students cited in Smith and Winterbottom's (1970) research attributed their academic failure to a lack of positive motivation for academic work.

Students with marginal achievement were identified with higher test anxiety than other students (Driscoll & Holt, 2012). Cassady and Johnson (2001) found that students with higher test anxiety performed about 12 percentile points below their low test anxiety peers, and have less confidence and lower morale. Dynarski and Gleason (2002) found that the personal qualities of the student, chiefly attitudes and expectations, were highly related to persistence and salient predictors of attrition and retention rates. Holland (2005) pointed out that self-effectiveness, self-discipline, and mental health issues were also the reasons that caused poor academic performance, but only a few students who had mental health problems used the counseling center in his study.

Other Skills for Success

Research has found that the presence of certain skills such as time management skills, test-taking skills, and good study habits, served to buffer academic stress (Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, & Phillips, 1990; Misra & McKean, 2000). There was an inverse and significant relationship between time management and perceived stress (Khatib, 2014). Students on academic probation often reported lacking necessary skills for success such as time management (Astin et al, 1997; Isaak et al, 2006; James & Graham, 2010; Preuss & Switalski, 2008; Renzulli, 2015) and seeking help (Brost & Payne, 2011); they typically did not seek out or use services and resources that could be of assistance (Hanger, Goldenson, Weinberg, Schmitz-Sciborski, & Monzon, 2011).

Many college students exert control over their own time management and course work schedules to achieve academic success (Pintrich & de Groot, 1990), and students who manage their time and learning have higher GPAs (Zimmerman, 1989). However, 67% of undergraduate students identified time management as their most pressing problem, and self-reported time management predicted academic achievement (Britton & Tesser, 1991). Therefore, Misra and McKean (2000) suggested faculty and counselors should emphasize the participation in time management seminars to improve the academic success of students.

Differences among Student Groups

The research demonstrated the differences among student groups based on demographic information. Male students, more than females, tended to cite personal reasons, older students have more personal struggles such as family and work responsibilities than younger students, and international students have more challenges in language and cultural transition than domestic students (James & Graham, 2010). First-generation students who have been dismissed due to

poor academic performance cited wrong course choices, inability to examine personal strengths and weaknesses, and not seeking academic help (Brost & Payne, 2011).

Monzon (2003) pointed out that colleges and universities need to reexamine current models of student persistence that relate to the quality of support systems for ethnic minority students and implications for social and academic integration. Thayer (2000) argued that a sense of belonging, cultural differences, financial disparity, and unfamiliarity with academic culture and norms should be addressed in the specific needs of students of color and first-generation students. Thayer did not have international students in the study; however, it is important to consider these findings as they may apply to this population too.

Experiences of Chinese international students

Heikinheimo and Shute (1986) determined that the most difficult adjustment areas for international students are language skills, academic issues, and social interaction. Bevis and Lucas (as cited in Pandit, 2013, p. 133) documented that the main problems for international students in the U.S. are social withdrawal, depression, academic difficulty, and loss of self-esteem. Skinner (n.d.) indicated that international students often are unaware of the immense hurdles in adjustment they must overcome to be successful in American higher education. These hurdles include English-language acquisition and adaptation to differences in education systems, in the philosophy/purposes of education, in learning styles in their home countries and in the U.S., and in the challenges of other social, religious, and economic values. Sun and Chen (1999) identified language ability, cultural awareness, and academic achievement as three dimensions in the process of cross-cultural adjustment for Chinese students from mainland China.

Difficulties in Language Skills

Much research has been done on the language barrier for Chinese students in English

speaking countries. International students from mainland China are the largest single group of English as a Second Language (ESL) students studying abroad in higher education institutions in North America (Huang & Brown, 2009). Yu (n.d.) argued that for Chinese international students, one vital role in the process of their transformation is language ability. Lost in translation is the first challenge when mainland Chinese students arrive in the U.S., even when they have gotten high scores on the TOEFL and SAT. The national Chinese language is very different from English, and it causes some negative shifts when Chinese students learn English as a second language. The structure of the national Chinese language exacerbates Chinese international students' insufficient English proficiency, because the national Chinese language does not translate directly into English, and it also has very limited morphological differences (Roy, 2013).

Confucianism, for thousands of years the most powerful philosophy in China, has links with education and learning, and its traditional educational methods are still having an impact on teaching and learning in China today (Chan, 1999). For example, one can see Confucian philosophy in the text memorization pedagogy and the exam-centered assessment system in K-12 and higher education in China. Such pedagogy and assessment in China lead to both advantages and disadvantages for Chinese students (Ding, 2007; Wong, 2004). The language training most Chinese international students received in China often failed to adequately help them to meet the academic requirements of their programs in U.S. higher education (Wang, 2002). Most Chinese students who learn English through text memorization and recitation believe it is the least efficient but also the most effective way to learn English because it helps them get high scores on exams in China (Ding, 2007). However, when they study in the U.S., this learning strategy does not work well as it did in the past. As the U.S. system has embraced more integrative and cross-

disciplinary learning, rote or repetitive learning does not achieve the same results as it did for Chinese students from previous generations. In addition, ESL classes in China, with their emphasis on writing and grammar, rather than on listening and speaking, can, at least initially serve to inhibit a students' understanding (Wong, 2004).

The difficulty of acquiring proficiency in English is an obstacle to success in academic learning for Chinese students (Orleans, 1988). They may have problems in taking notes and answering questions in class, as well as in writing essays (Heggins III & Jackson, 2003). Chinese students in the U.S., especially first-year students, have the feeling that professors speak so fast that they can only understand a small proportion of the lectures; the students usually have a Chinese accent when they speak English; and when they tend to talk fast, and some words or syllables are blurred or swallowed (Huang, 1997). This language insufficiency not only hinders academic success but also definitely has an impact on international students' interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions (Misra & Castillo, 2004), as well as affects the self-esteem and confidence of Chinese international students (Devlin & Peacock, 2009).

It should be noted that much research on the language barrier for Chinese students has analyzed problems in listening and speaking, but some researchers have also noticed that many faculty members are concerned that international students collectively have deficient English writing skills, which are inadequate to meet their academic requirements and challenges (Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2015). In Yan and Berliner's (2009) study, a participant from China described that except for Chinese students enrolled in English majors in universities in China, most Chinese international student have little systematic training in English, especially in speaking and writing; and in a non-English-speaking environment, the preparation for English academic writing is obviously inadequate. Therefore, academic writing is the most difficult challenge for

Chinese students, including the use of vocabulary and grammar, and the western style of logic to develop an argument.

While related research has emphasized text memorization in English education in China, this is not the only reason leading to Chinese students' difficulties with English skills. The English textbooks through K-12 and higher education in China seldom involve academic articles (except for textbooks for students majoring in English). When Chinese students sit in classrooms to learn science in English, they are always lost. Chinese international students who study in the humanities and social sciences also encounter the difficulties posed by academic papers (Yan & Berliner, 2009). Even in a class on Asian history and literature, due to the lack of attention to humanities education in China, Chinese students cannot understand when professors are teaching in English.

Difficulties in Academic Learning

Many scholars pay attention to the differences in teaching and learning styles between Chinese and American education. Ballard and Clanchy stated that Asian cultural system and education system emphasize conversation about and reproduction of knowledge, while Western education systems focus on a speculative and questioning approach (as cited in Wong, 2004, p. 156). Dunbar, Reid, Ashman, and Conway argued that one general perception that Chinese students have is that cultural elements of learning methods and style in China make them inadequately prepared for critical and analytical thinking in universities in western countries (as cited in Sovic, 2008, p. 5).

The teaching style in China is teacher-centered and test-driven; teachers give all or most of the information from textbooks to students, which makes learning for students easier because they do not need to look for more knowledge themselves, even though this teaching style is

regarded as spoon-feeding by some scholars (Wong, 2004). In China, the teacher is the only authority in the classroom; the teacher-centered pedagogy teaches students to obey and respect authorities and to consider it rude to ask the instructor questions during class (Huang, 2009). The dominant approach is very different in classrooms in the U.S. Among American teachers, it is common to help students learn rather than actual lecture, because they believe that students master information by discovering it for themselves; as a result, learning occurs through the process of challenging old ideas and asking questions (Barnes,1991). Chan (1999) partly attributed the classroom setting in China to the influence of the value and educational ideology in Confucianism. Conrad and Coleman (2011) discussed this in the context of the public administration sector; they argued that centralized management and policy-making are the rules, and this authorizes teachers to be at the center in classrooms.

While these scholars criticize the disadvantages to Chinese students' learning caused by the teacher-centered teaching style, Forland (2006) noticed that there is little evidence that American institutions are adapting the delivery of the curriculum to consider varied learning styles and to make the most of the previous experiences of their international students in the class. Huang and Brown (2009) demonstrated that the informal teaching styles of some American professors may also cause learning difficulties to some Chinese international students. For example, some American professors do not summarize and write key concepts on the blackboard or on PowerPoint slides, which causes difficulties for Chinese international students to summarize key points in their non-native language. Chinese international students can become confused when their American professors do not follow the textbook closely and go off on tangential topics that students may not be familiar with. Chinese international students may also find that working in teams and groups is challenging, as this is not the norm in Chinese

classrooms. They may also feel uncomfortable with open-ended class discussions, due to their lack of familiarity with this approach in China (Huang & Brown, 2009). In addition, Chinese international students may also be uncomfortable with the body language of some American professors. For example, making eye contact with one's professors is common and sub-conscious in the classroom of many American professors; however, this action is regarded as disrespectful to professors and challenging professors' authority in China (Huang & Brown, 2009).

One aspect of the differences between the Chinese and U.S. classroom which has not been discussed enough is how Confucianism and the teacher-centered teaching style actually shape the relationship between teachers and students in China, and how this relationship can affect students' learning. Confucianism believes that being a teacher is for one day, being a father is forever. Teachers in China are not only instructors or lecturers; they often take more responsibility for students than teachers in America. Jin and Cortazzi (1991) described that in China, teachers are experts who know everything in students' specific area and who can plan for and instruct students, and the relationship between a teacher and a student is seen in paternalistic terms. It is teachers' responsibilities to tell students what is what and how to process, to be sensitive to any student problems and be helpful in social and everyday issues arising out of the daily living (Jin & Cortazzi, 1991).

Briefly, teachers in China are in effect second parents for students who take care of students in academic study and social living. They supervise and spur students' learning closely; for example, if a student's GPA is going down, they will contact the student's parents immediately to talk about this situation and discuss ways to help this student. Teachers who serve as a class cohort mentor in China also need to know personal information about students, such as their family background and parents' jobs, in order to deeply understand their students.

From the very start of their education, Chinese students get used to learning under the direct supervision of their teachers; it is believed that if they do not, they will not be as motivated and active in learning. In U.S. higher education, blind discipline is devalued and self-directedness is encouraged (Yan & Berliner, 2009), learning usually relies on students' internal motivation and conscientiousness; professors do not supervise students every minute. As a result, Chinese students may come to U.S. higher education unfamiliar with the fact that they must discipline themselves for academic learning in this loose learning environment and will not have the scrutiny from teachers and parents that they are accustomed to in China.

Difficulties in Cultural Adaptation and Social interaction

Cultural and social issues in adaptation and transition are a huge challenge for Chinese students in higher education. As Klein, Miller, and Alexander (1981) pointed out, compared to the U.S., China is fundamentally different in language, culture, social structure, and political ideology, and China was also isolated from the rest of the world for almost a quarter of a century, all of these made Chinese international students' cross-cultural experiences in the U.S. were highly likely to be stressful. Although the internet and media help international students know American culture and life before they come to America, this does not mean that international students fully understand and are well-prepared for campus life in the U.S. (Eland & Thomas, 2013). Sun and Chen (1999) pointed out that most Chinese students who participated in their research indicated that differences in cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs severely affect their academic and daily life. The cross-cultural experience of most Chinese students is confusion, uncertainty, and hastened adjustment (Yan & Berliner, 2011). Integration into mainstream campus culture is difficult for international students. While large numbers of foreign students participate in one or more non-academic activities, such as student organizations, relatively few

are members of an American fraternity or sorority (Cieslak, 1955).

Many Chinese students express their willingness to interact and make friends with the American people, but they find that building real friendships and a social identity is difficult due to their not knowing how to behave properly in social events, to differences in concepts of friendship and interpersonal relations, to conflicts with Confucian virtues such as indirectness, and direct criticism (Yan & Berliner, 2011, 2013). American undergraduate students are likewise reluctant to engage with international students in other countries, partly due to nervousness about their ability to be understood (Pandit & Alderman, 2004). Chinese students' social communications and interactions with American people are limited. They speak Chinese and associate mainly with Chinese students (Tsai, 1986), and they immerse themselves in abstract technical learning (Chen, 1979). Many Chinese students suffer frustration in learning and living in the U.S., including discrimination due to their looking and speaking differently from American people (Wan, 2001).

Another reason attributed to the difficulty of adaptation for Chinese students, but not mentioned in previous research, is the different roles of academic advisors in China and America. In China, people describe an outstanding teacher as a good teacher and friend to students who can influence students throughout their whole life. Therefore, academic advisors always play multiple roles as instructors, surrogate parents, consultants, career designers, and life guides to students. Interpersonal relations between students and their advisors are very close in Chinese higher education; for example, it is very common that academic advisors invite their students to have dinner at their home, especially during traditional festivals. For students from other cities, these social events can be like a reunion and can give them a strong sense of belonging. The work of academic advisors in the U.S. is classified into four clusters of job

activities that have to do with helping students with (1) special academic, social, or financial problems; (2) psychological or emotional concerns; (3) academic and career guidance problems; and (4) administrative activities (Biggs, Brodie, & Barnhart, 1975). Compared to advisors in Chinese higher education, advisors in American higher education focus more on academic issues, and students have a less personal connection with their academic advisors off-campus.

Underlying Issues of Chinese International Students in the U.S.

Reasons for Study Abroad

Besides difficulties and challenges Chinese international students have in their adaptation and transition to U.S. higher education, some researchers have also noticed that the motivations for study abroad and the preparedness of Chinese international students in recent years are also factors to study. Compared to older generations of Chinese international students, from 1980 to 2000, today more Chinese international students in the U.S. are millennial generation members who are pursuing bachelor degrees. There are many potential reasons or enabling factors for these Chinese international undergraduate students to study abroad in western countries. These include: studying abroad provides students with an opportunity to be educated for a globalized market; more Chinese families have the funds for study abroad than ever before due to a rising middle class in China; some Chinese think higher education in China is inflexible and dated with limited creativity, and study abroad can forge a potential path for immigration and an opportunity for a better lifestyle (Lin, 2010). Luan (2012) divided contemporary Chinese international students into two subgroups: one is exceptionally capable students with strong academic backgrounds and who get into elite Chinese universities based on their good grades and go to study abroad to pursue advanced degree; the other is exceptionally rich students with poor grades and low academic preparedness and most of them are unable to test into a Chinese university and

their parents pay their way into a mediocre university usually in the U.K., Australia, and the U.S. Chang, Shulmann, and Lu (2014) also pointed out that many Chinese international undergraduate students regard studying abroad as a typical bypass of the very competitive national Chinese college entrance exam, the *gaokao*. In his article, Crawford (2015), a American who believes that he talks to more Chinese high school students than anyone else in the world because he operates a company in China that interviews students on behalf of selective U.S. colleges and boarding schools, reported that in his thousands of conversations with Chinese high school students about why they want to go to the U.S. for school, almost every interviewee responded that they do not like the *gaokao*, and even more, they do not like the prospect of their major being determined by their *gaokao* score.

Academic Preparation of Chinese International Students

Bai (2008) stated that compared to the Chinese international students studied abroad in the 1980s and 1990s, Chinese international students study abroad in the 21st century, mainly students pursue undergraduate degrees in Western Countries, are with less academic preparation for study abroad and did not go through competitive selective procedures and examinations. A survey conducted by World Education Services found that about 50% of Chinese international students come to U.S. higher education with low academic preparedness based on the Academic Preparedness Index created by using English proficiency and other criteria (Choudaha, Orosz, & Li, 2012). Rawlings and Sue (2013) argued that for Chinese international students who study aboard in the U.S. for the first time, when they enter the U.S. they are often unprepared for the challenges and difficulties they will face associated with cultural differences and communication. What they learned about the English language and American culture in their classrooms in China did not adequately prepare them for the reality of communicating in English and participating in

American culture. Crawford (2015) observed that in order to study abroad in the U.S., a large number of international students from China just simply stop attending their regular high school classes and instead enrolling in private cram schools, which are often run by the same companies that run the international high school divisions. Some may spend two years of high school time focused on cramming for the English tests and the SAT and ACT, and this absence of two years of regular high school education causes Chinese international students to be less prepared in their future academic learning in U.S. higher education.

Financial Support From Family

In their study, Bodvarsson and Walker (2004) revealed that students who receive at least partial tuition coverage from their parents failed their courses more often than self-financed students. They were at higher risk of being placed on academic probation, and earned a lower GPA, because students receiving parental financial support may have had less motivation to work hard because they know their parents will absorb the financial cost of failure. This could be one reason that first-year international students, especially Chinese international students, have a higher rate of being on academic probation after one semester at ODU, in recent years. Because now, as compared to previous generations, international students usually have full financial support from their parents. As the statement from Bai (2008), Chinese international undergraduate students are more likely to come from wealthier families in China and their parents are willing to invest in the cost for their study abroad.

Academic Performance and Experiences of First-year Chinese International Students

As the only study that focused on the academic experiences of first-year Chinese international students in the U.S. I can find in current literature, Ma (2014) conducted his research at University of Utah. His study results demonstrated that the cumulative GPA of first-

year Chinese international students significantly associated with gender, high school academic achievement (class rank), English language proficiency such as IELTS scores, the initiation of the idea to study abroad, and absence from class.

Ma (2014) had academically low-achieving participants in his study and six of 26 interview participants earned a GPA below 2.0 in their first year. Through interviewing those low-achieving first-year Chinese international students and asking the opinions about the low-achieving Chinese international students from other participants, Ma's (2014) interviews revealed the following experiences and observations from the participants:

Many Chinese undergraduate students were not doing well in academic learning in their first year at University of Utah, and at least 50% of Chinese international undergraduate students were low-achieving students there. Many low-achieving Chinese international students were relatively young, they immediately studied abroad after graduating from high schools. Many low-achieving students were not prepared well for their study abroad. For example, some interview participants admitted that they never did well in school or never like studying.

Thus, Ma (2014) concluded that the lack of appropriate academic preparation to study abroad at the college level in the U.S., good study skills and study habits, time management skills, academic motivations, and self-control skills caused low-achieving in academic learning of some first-year Chinese international students at University of Utah. Moreover, Ma (2014) was surprised during the interviews when he learned that some participants did not take their study seriously, even including failing a class.

Course Failing Issue of Chinese College Students in China

Having low academic performances not only happens to Chinese international students in U.S. colleges but also happens to Chinese colleges students in China. Colleges in China usually

do not have academic probation policies, but failing courses is becoming a more and more serious issue among Chinese college students in China. Related research in China discussed the reasons caused students to fail courses. College students in China have a very high fail rate in math courses, and students' *Gaokao* scores and gender were significant to it (Zhang et al., 2014). Students' study habit also contributed to course failing. Wei (2016) found students who did not review, always played with their cell phones in class, and did not ask for help when they did not understand course content contributed to their course failing. No clear study goal, web-addiction, distraction caused by part-jobs, and distractions caused by romantic relationship caused students to fail courses (Li, 2015). In her study, Chen (2016) found low self-control was the most significant to course failing, along with poor class attendance, no clear study goals, and the impact of unhealthy social ethos were other significant contributors. Zhang (2009) stated the two main reasons caused students failed courses were not knowing what to do during free time and no sense of belonging in class. Luo (2010) pointed out the main reasons were material and spiritual temptation, web-addiction, romantic relationship, unclear goals, and poor learning attitude. Gao and Qi (2016) found that adapting to a new environment and lacking goals also led to course failing.

Summary

Student success is a broad concept and academic achievement plays an important part in it. Academic performance is not only related to students' learning experiences and transition to college but also related to their pre-college experiences such as K-12 academic preparation and the level of students' cognitive and psychological development. The sociological, organizational, psychological, cultural, and economic perspectives also emphasize the importance of academic preparation and the quality of student experiences in student success.

Compared to domestic students, international students usually have more challenges due to the dual transition process that includes the transition from high school to college and the transition from their home country to the U.S. Some scholars suggest that a family's attitude toward learning success, English proficiency, and social communication play a vital role in the academic performance of all international students. For Chinese international students, English skills, especially writing, preparation for study abroad in the U.S. higher education system, parental social capital, and the Chinese community at their U.S. university are also important factors for their success in U.S. higher education.

Although scholars have studied the reasons causing undergraduate students to be on academic probation, most of those studies focused on domestic students. Very few studies have international students as their main participants. Scholars assume that international students have a higher risk of academic probation, and the potential reasons could be that international students have more challenges in language and cultural transitions. Current literature, however, rarely discusses why Chinese international undergraduate students have a higher rate of academic probation, and this is one area for more in-depth research in the future.

Chinese international students usually have challenges in language skills, academic learning, and cultural adaptation and social integration, which can have an impact on their academic performance. Most studies used Chinese international graduate students as participants, and Chinese international undergraduate students are certainly at a different developmental stage and may have different experiences within these challenges due to their younger age and may be less mature than graduate students. Quite a number of articles in the literature are out of date, some of them written 30 to 40 years ago. A further consideration is that these challenges are not necessarily new for Chinese international students. Therefore, the literature cannot explain why

first-year Chinese international undergraduate students at ODU (and other large public U.S. universities) have much higher academic probation rates after 2010 than first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who came to ODU before 2010 when it is likely they had the same challenges. Meanwhile, research about Chinese college students in China found low self-control, no clear learning goal, poor study attitude, low class attendance, poor learning habit, and college entrance exam (the *Gaokao* score) contributed to students' course failing. This may provide a new view to study Chinese international students who are on academic probation.

The underlying issues of Chinese international undergraduate students is another area with very little research in the literature. The current literature also does not specify the differences between Chinese international undergraduate students and Chinese international graduate students, and most articles are news reports from the media rather than academic research articles. Although the literature touches a little on the underlying issues of Chinese international students, they do not fully discuss the underlying issues of Chinese international undergraduate students on academic probation and how those underlying issues can affect the academic performance of Chinese international undergraduate students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research method, conceptual framework, and research site and participants in this study. The data collection and analysis part introduces the data collection and analysis in three phases, as well as the survey and interview protocol designs.

Research Method

As a worldview, pragmatism arises out of actions, situations, and consequences (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatism is oriented toward solving practical problems in the real world (Feilzer, 2010). Therefore, this study uses the pragmatic paradigm to explore and understand why those first-year Chinese international students finished their first semester on academic probation at ODU, and makes recommendations for practices to prevent and intervene with Chinese international undergraduate students.

The research method of this study is a mixed method. Spector (1994) pointed out that the methodology used and the research questions asked should match. The research question of this study is to explore and understand why those first-year Chinese international students were on academic probation (GPA<2.0) after their first semester at ODU. Mixed-method is appropriate to use when the research problem incorporates the need to explore and explain (Creswell, 2003). In order to explore and explain why those first-year Chinese international students ended up on academic probation after their first semester at ODU, this study proposed the following four questions, which include both quantitative and qualitative questions.

1. What are the trends in first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester?

2. Are there correlations between their academic performance and their English proficiency (TOEFL scores) and pre-college knowledge (SAT/ACT scores)?
3. How were their academic performances in the courses (grade in each course) they enrolled in their first semester?
4. How do first-year Chinese international undergraduate students perceive and make sense of being on academic probation after their first semester at ODU?

The advantage of the quantitative methodology is that it measures the reactions of many participants to a limited set of questions in order to facilitate comparison and aggregation of data (Barkman, 2002). The first three research questions can be answered by quantitative data such as students' GPAs and pre-college test scores.

Qualitative research aims to understand how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methods provide a vast amount of detailed information about small numbers of people and cases, and individual or group interviews is one of the three primary methods to collect qualitative data (Barkman, 2002). Personal interviews are a way to gather in-depth and comprehensive information, which is difficult to obtain in a survey (Walonick, 2010). Qualitative interviewing collects rich and detailed information about how individuals experience, understand and explain events in their lives, and interviews can be tailored specifically to the knowledge and experiences of the interviewees (Clifford, n.d.). Thus, this study used interpretive research in qualitative research and collected qualitative data through interviews to answer the fourth research question: how they perceive their experiences of being on academic probation.

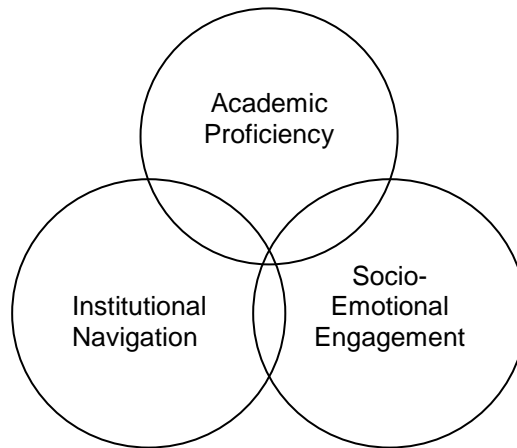
Conceptual Framework

Based on the academic performance of Chinese first-year international undergraduate

students who are/were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU and the literature review, this study used the NSSC Student Success Model as the conceptual framework (Royal, Noto, High McCord, & Pitcher, 2015).

Figure 1

The NSSC Student Success Model



As shown in Figure 1, the NSSC Student Success Model is a holistic model that addresses three variables, including academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement. Royal et al. (2015) defined each variable has the following factors:

- Academic proficiency: enhanced academic performance, understanding learning styles/strategies, and early knowledge/use of academic resources
- Institutional navigation: understanding policies related to academic standing and time to degree, knowledge of policies/procedures, and confidence to seek resources
- Socio-emotional engagement: balanced involvement, sense of belonging, reflection and self-assessment, sense of purpose, and intercultural awareness and engagement

Research Site

This study was conducted at Ocean Deep University (pseudonym), a large public Research I university in the North, as the research site. The total number of students enrolled at

ODU is about 50,000, and around 10% of the student population at ODU are international students from China. About 80% of Chinese international students at ODU are undergraduate students that presented nearly 10% of the total undergraduate student population at ODU.

Open Doors data shows that in academic years 2015-16 and 2016-17, the state where ODU is located ranked in the top 10 states in the U.S. for the enrollment of international students, and 34.0% and 34.5% of international students in that state in 2015-16 and 2016-17, respectively, were from China (Institute of International Education, 2017c; Institute of International Education, 2018). ODU is one of the top universities that enrolled the most Chinese international students, and most universities on this list are large public Research I universities. As a result, using ODU as the research site can represent the situation in large public Research I universities that enroll a large number of Chinese international students.

Participants

The research is interested in the first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation after their first semester in U.S. higher education institutions. In the 2015/2016 academic year, 135,629 Chinese international students were pursuing undergraduate degrees in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2017a). Due to a large number of Chinese international undergraduates and lack of national data on Chinese international students who are on academic probation, it is difficult to collect data from the entire population.

As described in the research site section, ODU is one of the top universities with the most Chinese international students; thus, ODU can represent universities that enroll a large number of Chinese international students. Chinese international students at ODU could represent Chinese international students who study in universities with a large enrollment of Chinese international

students.

This study used convenience sampling to select participants. Remler and Van Ryzin (2011) described convenience sampling as a situation in which a researcher takes advantage of a natural gathering or easy access to people they can recruit into a study. Due to the fact that first-year Chinese international students on academic probation in U.S. higher education institutions are a relatively new phenomenon and the enrollment number of Chinese international undergraduate students started to increase in 2008, this study selected first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017 in order to explore the trends among them, the correlation between their first semester GPAs and TOEFL scores, between first semester GPAs and SAT or ACT scores, and their grades in each course they enrolled in their first semester.

Since 2011, the enrollment of Chinese international students, Chinese freshmen, and the percentage of first-year Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation has increased significantly during Fall 2011 to Fall 2017. Some of those students, especially students in Cohort Fall 2011 to Cohort Fall 2015, may have already graduated, transferred to other institutions, or been recessed, and they may not be able to recall their experiences of being placed on academic probation due to the time that has elapsed. Therefore, participants in the survey and interviews are all first-year Chinese international undergraduate students in Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017 who were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

For mixed method studies, it is important to focus on the research problem in social science research and use pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem (Morgan,

2007; Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). This study used a sequential explanatory strategy, which is characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in the first and second phase of research, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the third phase that builds on the results of the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2009).

The conceptual framework of the study that addresses the factors in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement guided the data collection. Quantitative data in academic proficiency of institutional records such as students' TOEFL and SAT/ACT scores, GPAs, courses they took, and course grades in their first semesters were used to answer the first three research questions. To answer the fourth research question, the study collected survey and interview data in students' pre-college educational background and academic proficiency, institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement with students' experiences of being on academic probation, which is difficult to collect only in quantitative data such as test scores and GPAs. Thus, the study utilized a qualitative priority where greater emphasis was placed on the qualitative methods and the quantitative methods were used in a secondary role (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The entire data collection and analysis included three phases: institutional data collection and analysis, survey data collection and analysis, and interview data collection and analysis. The last two phases were informed by the conceptual framework used in this study.

Phase 1: Institutional Data Collection and Analysis

Institutional data collection. A request of institutional data was sent to the Office of the Registrar at ODU in June 2017 in order to gather the following data of the first-time, first-year Chinese international undergraduate students in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2016:

- The enrollment numbers of all the first-time, first-year Chinese international

undergraduate students in Fall 2006 to Fall 2016, and how many of them were on academic probation after their first semester

- The GPAs, course enrollment (course numbers), and grades for each course
- The TOEFL scores, SAT/ACT scores
- Demographic information including gender, high school names, and their colleges and majors in their first semester
- The numbers of students who returned to good standing (GPA>2.0), were on final probation and were recessed at the end of their second semester
- The 4-,5-,6-year graduation rates of all Chinese international undergraduate students, Chinese international undergraduate students who were on academic probation after their first semester, and Chinese international undergraduate students who were in good standing after their first semester in the fall semesters in Cohort 2006 to Cohort 2016
- The retention rates of Chinese international undergraduate students who were on academic probation and who were in good standing after their first semester in fall semesters in Cohort 2006 to Cohort Fall 2016

After sending the data request, the Office of the Registrar at ODU sent me the data of the enrollment numbers, numbers of students who were on academic probation, numbers of students by different academic status (good standing, final probation, recessed) at the end of their second semester, graduation rates, and retention rates in Summer 2017. For the other data of students' GPAs, grades in each course, course enrollment, TOEFL scores, SAT/ACT scores, and demographic information, the Office of the Registrar sent this data to me in February 2018.

The data request of Cohort Fall 2017 to gather the same category data was sent to the Office of the Registrar at ODU in Spring 2018 because the data was not available until

December 2017. I received that data with the data of Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2016 in February 2018.

Institutional data analysis. In order to understand the problem of first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester, this study calculated the institutional data by SPSS in different ways.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics summarize the information in the data using tables, graphs, and numbers, such as averages, medians, standard deviations, and so on (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). To explore the first research questions: the trends of these academic probationary first-year Chinese international students, and the third research question: their academic performance in the courses they enrolled in their first semester, frequency distribution in number and percentage were used to analyze nominal data such as students' demographic information, majors in the first semester, high school names and types, enrollment in different subjects and courses, and numbers of students who earned a 0.0 in at least one course. Means, standard deviation, and range were used to analyze ratio data such as participants' TOEFL scores, SAT/ACT scores, first semester GPAs by gender, grades and fail rates in different subjects and courses. The results were illustrated in line charts, bar charts, stacked charts, pie charts, and tables, and explained by narrative paragraphs.

Inferential statistics. The inferential statistics such as the mean, standard deviation, and probability, allow researchers to make inferences about large populations by collecting data on relatively small samples (Leedy & Ormord, 2010). The distribution of the first semester GPAs of the 1,126 first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU in Cohort Fall 2007 to Cohort 2017 is not normal, the multiple linear regression analysis is not suitable for this study. Due to the distributions of GPAs between

0.0001-0.4999, 0.5-0.9999, 1-1.4999, 1.5-1.9999 are more similar normal distributions, this study categorized students' first semesters' GPAs into five groups: GPA=0, GPA=0.0001 to 0.4999, GPA=0.5-0.9999, GPA=1-1.4999, and GPA=1.5-1.999, and used the One-way ANOVA Analysis in SPSS to determine whether different groups' GPAs have correlations with the TOEFL, SAT, and ACT scores, in order to answer the second research questions: the correlations between students' TOEFL scores and first semesters' GPA, SAT scores and first semesters' GPA, and ACT scores and first semesters' GPA. Tables and Scatter Diagrams are used to demonstrate and explain the results as well as the narrative descriptions.

Phase 2: Survey Data Collection and Analysis

Survey development. One important function of the survey was to recruit interview participants in the qualitative data collection phase. There is no survey instrument available for Chinese international students who are on academic probation, and I developed the survey for this study.

Quantitative data can be collected through a standardized instrument such as a test, survey, and behavior or skill observation checklist (Barkman, 2002). "Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2009, p.12). Designing and implementing a survey is a systematic process of gathering information on a specific topic by asking questions of individuals and then generalizing the results to the groups represented by the respondents (Office of Quality Improvement, 2010). Survey questions frequently capture information in several categories, including but not limited to knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (Colosi, 2006). The survey questions in this study tested the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement described in the

conceptual framework.

Based on the conceptual framework and literature review, the survey focused on the factors in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement, as shown in Appendix A.

One tip for developing good survey questions is to build on what has been done before (Office of Quality Improvement, 2010). There are very few surveys about reasons for being on academic probation, so this survey adapted some survey questions from some existing surveys related to students' academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement. One resource is the Mapworks survey, a survey system that aims to understand the academic and social transition of all first-year undergraduate students at ODU that covers the topics in academic learning, behaviors and activities, socio-emotional integration, performance and expectations, and financial means. ODU Mapworks survey results from Fall 2013 to Fall 2016 identified the top issues of transition for international students: plans to study less than five hours per week, struggling in two or more courses, missing classes in at least one course, test anxiety, homesickness, and low communication skills.

Another existing instrument is the Michigan International Student Problem Inventory (MISPI) (Porter, 1966). The MISPI was first developed in 1962 and revised in 1977, and it was developed to identify the problems international students encounter (Wang, 2004). The MISPI includes 11 problem areas: admission selection, orientation services, academic records, social-personal, living-dining, health services, religious services, English language, student activity, financial aid, and placement problems.

In addition, my direct communication and interaction with first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester in daily work as a

graduate assistant as well as knowledge about the K-12 education system in China were also valuable for developing the survey questions. Through communication with students in daily work, I learned that the most frequent reasons that led them to academic probation were not going to class, not submitting assignments, violating academic integrity policies, having no motivation to learn, never taking learning seriously, spending too much time on non-academic activities, and losing family members. I also observe that peer influence is another reason. Quite a number of first-year Chinese international students are on academic probation along with their Chinese roommates, Chinese high school classmates, and/or Chinese friends. Another factor seems to be what type of high school they attended. Many of them went to non-public high schools in China, such as private high schools, international high schools, or an international section in a private high school or an international section in a public high school. These reasons were not listed in the existing survey instruments but included in the survey developed by myself. All the survey items are listed in Appendix B.

Survey language. Considering the English language skills of participants, the survey was in Chinese, the native language of participants. All survey questions were written in Chinese first and then translated into English. Conducting the survey and interviews in participants' native language will also save time when answering and enhance the response rate. The English version of the survey questions was checked by a staff member and a graduate student whose native language is Chinese. The survey questions in Chinese are listed in Appendix C, and the survey questions that are translated to English are listed in Appendix D.

Survey pilot. Testing the survey before sending it out is important in survey development (Office of Quality Improvement, 2010). I piloted the Chinese version of the survey and with three Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at

ODU in Cohort Fall 2013, Fall 2014, and Fall 2015. I also received feedback from some academic advisors and administrators at ODU who have experience working with Chinese international undergraduate students.

Piloting the survey is also important to establish the validity and reliability of the survey. The validity of an instrument refers to how well the measure represents the things we are trying to measure (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). The pilot process was helpful to see if the survey questions gather the data the author planned to measure as well as the content validity of the survey, which means whether the survey includes all the important dimensions of the construct (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). The three Chinese international students I piloted the survey with provided the feedback that they understood all survey questions easily.

Incentives. Each student who completed the survey received \$5, except for students who voluntarily renounced it.

Survey data collection. The survey was set up on Qualtrics. In Spring 2017 and Spring 2018, an email invitation in Chinese was provided by me with the introduction of this study, and a survey link on Qualtrics was sent to all first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation in Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017 by the Office of the Registrar at ODU. Considering email is not the main daily communication channel of Chinese international students, I sent the survey invitation to the ODU Cohort Fall 2016 Chinese Freshmen Group and Cohort Fall 2017 Chinese Freshmen Group on WeChat, the most popular social media app among Chinese students. I also posted the flyer with the invitation letter and survey QR code at residence halls and their student success centers located in residence halls at ODU in Spring 2017. Because every student who is on academic probation is required to meet with his/her academic advisors, I also distributed the flyers to some academic advisors at ODU to help with

inviting students to complete the survey during their meetings. Some academic advisors posted this flyer in their office as a way to promote.

The experience of assisting Chinese international students who are on academic probation also helped with recruitment. Some ODU Chinese freshmen who were on academic probation in Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017 contacted me for help; thus they were invited directly to take the survey and participate in the interview when they sought help regarding the academic probation and recess issues. I found this was the most effective way to have students take the survey.

There were 46 first-year Chinese international students on academic probation after their first semester in Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017 who completed the survey, and this response rate was about 16% of the total probationary students in these two cohorts.

Survey data analysis. The survey was set up on Qualtrics and the data were collected through Qualtrics, which can generate a report for each survey question, including answers in charts and tables. I analyzed the answers in each survey question and categorized them to academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional navigation, and then presented data by figures, tables, and narrations.

Phase 3: Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used when the author wanted to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided, and in semi-structured interviewing, a guide with questions and topics was used (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). During a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has some discretion about the order in which questions are asked, but the questions are standardized and researchers may provide probing questions to interviewees (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). A semi-structured interview is a

flexible tool that is likely to promote fruitful reflection by the participants (Mill, 2001). The flexibility of this approach also allows researchers to discover or elaborate on information that is important but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

Interview protocol development. Interviewing can gather different kinds of information: one is to gather opinions, perceptions, and attitudes from interviewees; the other is to gather background information including expert knowledge and/or facts and descriptions of processes (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The interview questions for this study intended to collect two kinds of data in order to gather more detailed and in-depth data. The interview questions were developed from the survey results as well as the conceptual framework. These questions focused on participants' educational background, decision making, and preparation for study abroad, as well as their experiences in their first semester at ODU, reasons for being on academic probation after their first semester, strategies they used to get off academic probation, and different pathways after their second semester.

Again, considering the English level of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester, the interview protocol was written in Chinese and then translated into English. One staff and one graduate student whose native language is Mandarin helped on checking the translation. The interview protocol in Chinese is listed in Appendix E, and the interview protocol that is translated to English are listed in Appendix F.

Based on the survey results, I conducted a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions in Fall 2018. Survey respondents who agreed to participate in the interview filled out the survey. It was important to investigate through conducting the individual interviews in Fall 2018, the interview questions were partly based on the survey results, the strategies participants

used to get off probation and what worked and what did not work, as well as their different pathways and their academic status after their second semester. Therefore, I needed to wait until students knew their academic status after their second semester.

Interview language. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) suggested that the interview should be conducted at an appropriate level in the participants' own language in order to have effective communication. Considering the English skills of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation at the end of their first semester, all the interviews were conducted in Mandarin so that participants can completely understand the questions and answer the questions without language barriers.

Interview Pilot. In summer 2018, I piloted the interview questions with two Chinese international students who were on academic probation in their first-year after their first semester at ODU in the cohorts previous to Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017. They understood the questions very well.

The validity of qualitative data. All interviews were recorded. I took notes during interviews and wrote memos right after interviewing each participant.

Incentives. For each interview, a participant received \$20.

Interview data collection. One important function of the survey is to recruit interview participants. Among the 46 survey respondents, 16 students answered yes to the question to participate in the interview when they completed the survey during Spring 2017 to Summer 2018. In Fall 2018, I sent emails and WeChat messages to the contact information left by the 16 students, and 11 of them participated interview and five of them did not reply to emails and messages. In order to recruit more interview participants, I contacted survey respondents who said no to participate in interviews when they completed the survey via the contact information

they left for receiving survey incentives, and nine of them agreed to participate in interviews. Thus, 20 students were interviewed in total. All interviews were one-on-one, face-to-face and were conducted on campus at ODU, except for one interviewee who was in China at the time of interview. For that interviewee, the interview was conducted via a WeChat voice call. Each interview normally ran for about one and a half to two hours, and the longest interview was about three hours. The data collection period was from late September to late November in 2018.

Qualitative data analysis. Merriam (1998) discussed that all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that are analyzed. This study utilized the content analysis as the strategy to analyze qualitative data, which is to use implicitly in any inductive analysis of qualitative data (Merriam, 1998). This study used Creswell's (2009) procedure to analyze qualitative data. The qualitative data in this research included interviews and note taking during and after interviews. I transcribed all interviews in Chinese and typed up interview notes in order to organize and prepare the data for analysis. Then I read through all the data and clustered the topics into academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement, which are addressed in the conceptual framework. Then abbreviations of the topics as the code were used, as well as line-by-line coding to categorize data. I did not translate all transcriptions in Chinese to English but translated the interview data that were presented in the data analysis section to English.

Content analysis has categories and variables initially guiding the study; however, others are allowed and expected to emerge throughout the study (Altheide, 1987). Similarly, Creswell (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers code topics that readers expect to find based on the literature and common sense; topics that are surprising and were not anticipated at the beginning of the study, unusual topics, and topics that address a larger theoretical perspective in the

research. Thus, I coded data under the guidance of a conceptual framework as well as gave attention to the unexpected topics. Then I used the coding process to generate a description of the themes in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement for interpreting data.

Researcher's Role and Positionality

I am an international student from China and I went through K-12 education, college, and graduate school, earning a first master's degree, in China; thus, I am an insider of Chinese culture and the educational system in China. I also communicated to high school students in China from public and non-public high schools and study abroad agencies when I came back to China in summer break, in order to learn the teaching and curriculum in high schools in China, the study abroad preparations of high school students in China, and the services the agencies provided to their clients who aim to study abroad for college. This background provided me a better and deeper understanding of Chinese international students' experiences and the challenges they face when studying abroad.

When working at the Student Success Team at ODU since Spring 2014, I conduct research and assessment projects related to student success, for example, academic probation intervention and recovery, academic advising survey, and student success coach, etc. My official title is Cultural Assistant, and one of my daily works is to assist the transition and adaptation of Chinese international students at ODU, especially first-year Chinese international students who are in academic jeopardy. I have been working for more than five years directly with more than 500 first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester. In my daily work, I guide Chinese international students who are in academic jeopardy, especially who are on academic probation and are recessed, to figure out the process and

strategies to get off academic probation, apply for reinstatement or readmission, and/or transfer to another college, and refer campus services and resources to them to help them with socio-emotional engagement needs and emergencies to enhance their knowledge and skills in adapting to college.

I communicate and interact with those students in workshops, face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and text messages, even after regular business hours and weekends. I promptly response students' emails and messages, and the average communication time between a student and I is about one to three hours per time, which is much longer than the regular 30-min long academic advising session provided by ODU. Chinese international students who are in academic jeopardy not only seek help from me on their academic learning, but also come to me when they are struggling in daily life, romantic relationship, and family issues. When students' Chinese friends have similar problems, such as being on academic probation and/or recessed, they refer their friends to contact me. I also meet with students' parents and teach them how to support their children's academic learning and social transition during study abroad.

Therefore, those first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester at ODU I worked with developed strong trust and rapport with me. My work experience of assisting them helped me a lot with recruiting survey respondents and interview participants. Many survey respondents and interview participants have received help from me to deal with being on academic probation since one or two years ago, so I have built rapport with them for a long time, and some students helped recruit their Chinese friends who were on academic probation to take the survey. I also answered their questions about studying and living in the U.S. before and after the interviews. Therefore, participants were very open to me during the interviews.

In addition, I earned my bachelor and master degrees in history in China. My history learning background guides me think and view problems and phenomenon in a historical lens, which means viewing how the problems and phenomenon developed in history, and how other policies, events, and factors in the world impacted the development of those problems and phenomenon, in order to find the root reasons for those problems and phenomenon and provide recommendations to fundamentally solve the problems. With the six-year-long professional training on history research, I studied the first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester with the lens of market economy and society development of China as well as the evolution of related educational policies in China, and analyzed the development of non-pubic educational system and study abroad market driven by the policies and capital, and the characteristics of Chinese students in current generations, rather than merely discussing it in the view of language barrier and transition to a different cultural and educational system.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Overview of the Data

Overview of Educational Record Data

From Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017, there were 1,130 first-year Chinese international students on academic probation ($GPA < 2.0$) after their first semester. The numbers and percentages of first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation grew in the same way when compared to the first-year Chinese international student enrollment. Compared to domestic students and international students from other countries, first-year Chinese international students had the lowest rates on academic probation after their first semester in Fall 2007 to Fall 2011. However, this trend changed in two years and they became the student population had the highest rate on academic probation after their first semester since Fall 2013. First-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester had significantly lower rates in persistence and 4,5,6- year graduations than their Chinese peers who were in good standing after their first semester. Only about 40% of first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester returned to good standing after their second semester, and the numbers of first-year Chinese international students who earned a 0.0 GPA and who were recessed after their first semester increased a lot.

Almost half of those academic probationary students were from the College of Business and about 20% of them from the College of Engineering, the two colleges that enrolled the most Chinese international students. The ratio of male to female students who were on academic probation after their first semester is 2:1, and female students also have a slightly higher average GPA than male students. However, the correlation between students' gender and GPA is very

small. After Cohort Fall 2008, the rate of students who earned a GPA higher than 1.4999 decreased 20%, which is a change from 60% to about 40%, and the number of students who earned a 0.0 GPA at the end of their first semester increased, which composed 9.7% of the 1,130 students. Thus, the data demonstrates that in general, during the 12 years in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017, not only the did the numbers and percentages of Chinese first international students on academic probation after their first semester increased sharply but also students' academic performance (GPAs) decreased, and the differences in their GPAs are greater. The international division in public and private high schools and international high schools in China had much more academic probationary students than public high schools in China.

Considering the non-linear relationships and very low correlation shown in Scatter Plots and Person Correlations respectively, shown in students' TOEFL scores and first semesters' GPAs, SAT scores and first semesters' GPAs, and ACT scores and first semesters' GPAs, the regression analysis was unable to be done in this study. I categorized students' GPAs in five groups: GPA=0, GPA=0.001-0.4999, GPA=0.5-0.999, GPA=1-1.4999, and GPA=1.5-1.999, and selected the One-Way ANOVA Analysis in SPSS to explore the correlations between students' TOEFL scores and first semesters' GPAs, SAT scores and first semesters' GPAs, and ACT scores and first semesters' GPAs. The results show that students' TOEFL listening scores and ACT reading scores have significance with their first semester GPAs.

Looking at the Means Plots generated by the One-way ANOVA Analysis in SPSS, students' first semesters' GPAs had the negative relationship with the means of students' total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT; namely, students who earned a higher GPA had the lower mean scores in their TOEFL, SAT, and ACT total scores. Students who earned the lowest GPA (GPA=0) in their first semester had the highest mean of total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT;

while students who earned the highest GPA (GPA=1.5-1.999) in their first semester had the lowest means of total scores in TOEFL and ACT scores and the second lowest mean of SAT total score. When breaking down the data into each section in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT tests, students who earned a 0.0 GPA had the highest means of TOEFL total, reading, and listening scores, SAT verbal and math scores, and ACT reading, science, math, and composite scores; and students who earned a 1.5-1.9999 first semester GPA had the lowest means of TOEFL reading and listening scores, SAT verbal scores, ACT English, reading, and composite scores, and the second lowest mean score of ACT science. However, students who earned a higher GPA, specifically a GPA between 1-1.999, usually had higher mean scores in the writing sections of TOEFL, SAT, and ACT tests.

The negative relationships between students' TOEFL scores and first semesters' GPAs, SAT scores and first semesters' GPAs, and ACT scores and first semesters' GPAs are very different from the expectation that international students with a higher TOEFL, SAT, or ACT scores will have higher academic performance in college. This finding demonstrated that for Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU,

- English proficiency tests such as TOEFL may not be able to demonstrate their real English language skills
- SAT and ACT results may not be able to show their real pre-college academic performance
- Some students may not take the TOEFL, SAT, or ACT tests by themselves
- Other non-cognitive factors not related to their English proficiency and pre-college test scores contribute more to their academic performance in college

Overview of Survey Data

Demographic information. There were 46 first-year Chinese international students on academic probation after their first semester in Cohort Fall 2016 and Cohort Fall 2017, who completed the survey. This represents a response rate of about 16% of the total of two cohorts. Out of the 46 survey respondents, 27 were male and 19 were female, and the gender ratio of male to female is about 3:2.

In their first semester, 16 students were in the College of Business; eight students were in the College of Natural Science; seven students were in the College of Engineering; three students were in the College of Social Science; two students were in the College of Arts and Letters; one student was in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources; and eight students did not have a major preference. In their second semester, 13 students changed their major, and six of those 13 students changed their major in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences. One student also expressed his desire to transfer to the College of Communication Arts and Sciences.

Reasons for being on academic probation. The survey results show the participants have different pre-college educational backgrounds. Their pre-college academic achievement and preparedness were not good enough to be competent to the academic requirements at ODU. The reasons for being on academic probation are complicated, yet English skills are not identified as one of the top reasons by students, which is different from the conclusion in the existing literature.

The survey listed 23 possible reasons that cause students to end up on academic probation after their first semester in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement. Each reason has five scales: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree; and each scale weighs 1 point, 2 points, 3 points, 4 points, 5 points, respectively.

Figure 2

Possible Reasons for Being on Academic Probation Ranked by Rates of Agreeing and Strongly Agreeing

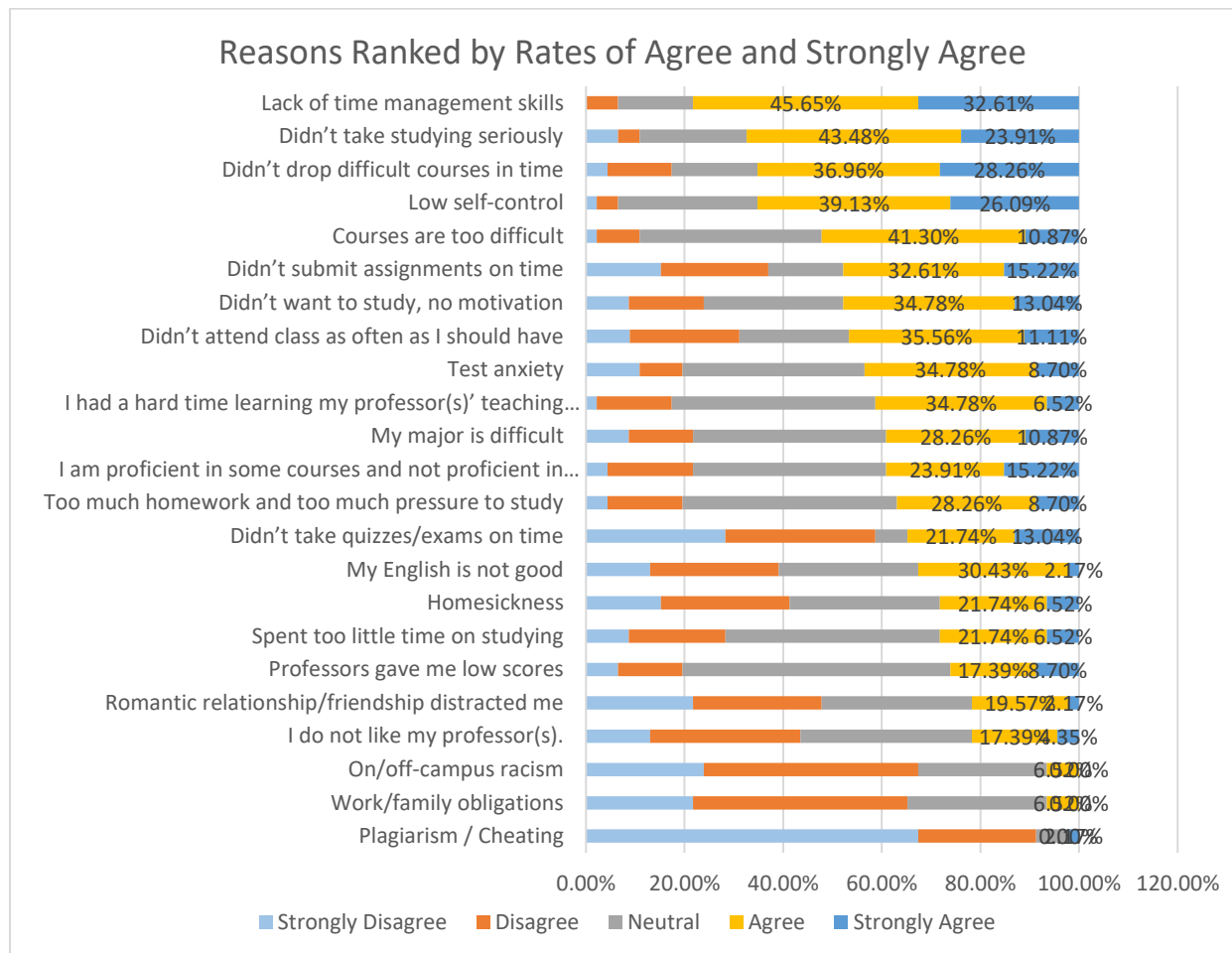
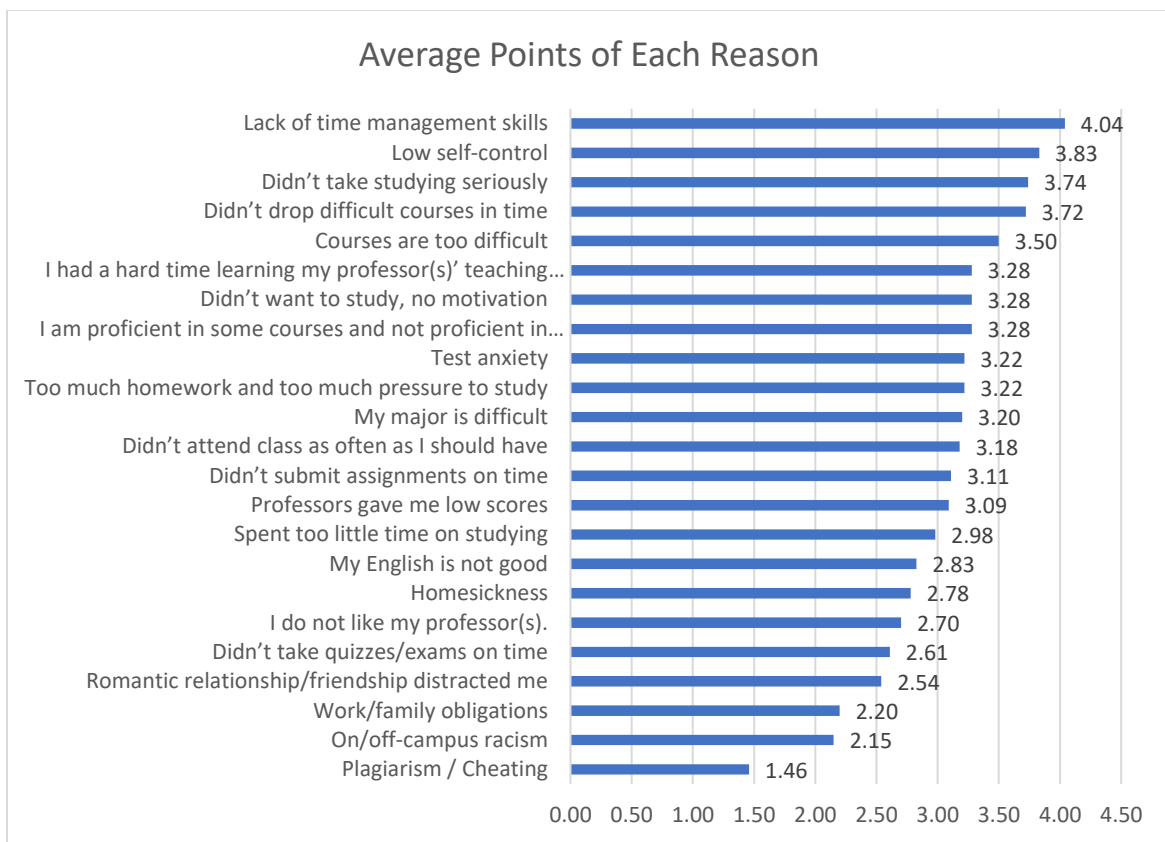


Figure 2 shows the top 10 reasons for being on academic probation, ranked by with the highest rates of agreeing and strongly agreeing, which are lacking time management skills, not taking study seriously, did not drop difficult courses in time, low self-control, courses are too difficult, did not submit assignments on time, did not want to study/no motivation, did not attend class as often as I should have, test anxiety, and I had a hard time learning my professor(s)' teaching style(s).

Figure 3

Mean Point of Each Possible Reason for Being on Academic Probation



As shown in Figure 3, when looking at the mean point of each possible reason, the 13 reasons with the first 10 highest points are lacking time management skills, low self-control, did not take study seriously, did not drop difficult courses in time, courses are too difficult, I had a hard time learning my professor(s)' teaching style(s), did not want to study and no motivation (tied for 6th), I am proficient in some course and not proficient in other courses (tied for 6th), test anxiety, too much homework and too much pressure on study (tied for 7th), my major is difficult, did not attend class as often as I should have, and did not submit assignments on time.

Although the ranking of the top reasons that students gave for on academic probation are slightly different when looking at the rates of agreeing and strongly agreeing and the mean point of each reason, as shown in Figures 2 and 3, the results are very similar. Time management

skills, learning attitude, self-control, motivation of study, test anxiety, attendance, course assignment submission, adaptation of new teaching styles, adaptation of study load and pressure, low proficiency in some certain courses, and not dropping courses on time are all in the top reasons, and most reasons are in the categories of institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement. Unexpectedly, English language skills, the number one reason that scholars and researches pointed out as international students' difficulty during study abroad, is not ranked as a top reason for being on academic probation by survey respondents. English language skills have a relatively low rate of agreeing and strongly agreeing in Figure 2, and a low mean point in Figure 3.

In addition, seven survey respondents selected other reasons for being on academic probation, and three of them identified the reasons: sometimes instructors refused to answer my questions, psychological problems (depression, anxiety disorder, insomnia), and issues with roommates. These three reasons are also non-cognitive reasons in institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement.

In the open-ended question of the main reason that caused students to be on academic probation, 44 survey respondents answered it and identified various reasons. For reasons in academic proficiency, survey respondents answered stress in studying a single subject and the subject's difficulty, earning a 0.0 for ISB course, seriously not proficient in some courses, courses were too difficult, not doing well on tests, poor test results in courses where tests weighed heavily in the grading structure, and tests were too difficult and poor test preparation. For reasons in institutional navigation, survey respondents identified the unfamiliarity with the U.S. higher education system due to the differences between educational systems in China and the U.S., not knowing many policies in the first semester, having no idea on grading policies, the

scores professors gave me were too low, and not wisely selecting courses. For reasons in socio-emotional engagement, survey respondents listed not liking the university they currently enroll in and having no motivation to study, being too lazy to study and not studying seriously, not fully focusing on studies and having huge problems with study attitude, having too many absences in class, lacking good rest, not adapting to college life, and not adapting to the environment in the US. Poor time management skills, such as not arranging time well, is also identified as one main reason by survey participants. Only one student wrote English was not very good as one of the reasons for being on academic probation.

Awareness of related policies. Many students are not (fully) aware and do not understand academic status policies and related immigration policies, and their 1st choice to learn academic policies is from their Chinese friends. About 80% of survey respondents met with academic advisors in their first semester, but they mainly met with academic advisors for course selection, not for help on study strategies, learning skills, and problems they had in their studies. Survey respondents utilized the on-campus resources that will benefit their success at a very low level, especially on tutoring services in academic courses and writing, counseling services, and intercultural activities.

Other things related to being on academic probation students shared. Being on academic probation is not only a warning on students' academic performance but also an opportunity for students to reflect on the behaviors during their first semester and the lessons they learned from those experiences. In the open-ended questions of other things you would like to share of being on academic probation, 12 students left their thoughts. Some students shared tips to improve academic performance such as checking emails regularly, having self-caring, and arranging their time on study reasonably. Many students expressed their deep regret of poor

GPA and non-serious study attitude in their first semester as well as the determination of studying hard. Some survey respondents provided very deep reflections. One student wrote:

1. Being on academic probation, the problems must be on myself. 2. The school wants to help you actively, hopes everyone can finish their study, so you need to take advantage of the resources provided by the school to learn the things in school, don't easily believe your Chinese friends or senior students' words. 3. Communicating at the first time when having any problems, don't wait for the advisor to reach to you.

One student shared his/her very strong determination to devote to studying and wrote it down in English: “ Always get 2.0 at least even when you think you could die for studying too hard”.

Some students shared his/her action after being on academic probation: “I am very regretful that I did not take study seriously in my first semester, but I have worked so hard in my second semester and have already caught up”; “In one word, I had the most tragic time in my first year, and I will work harder in future”.

The above students' comments demonstrate that the students realized their own problems caused them to end up on academic probation after their first semester; they learned the importance of taking advantage of on-campus resources and obtaining the related information from the official channels and being active to communicate with academic advisors in order to seek help; and their strong determination to study hard to improve academic performance.

Overview of Interview Data

In total, 20 students participated in the one-on-one, face-to-face interview, as shown in Table 1, including 13 male students and seven female students. 11 students are from Cohort Fall 2016, and nine students are from Cohort Fall 2017 (Neo was provisionally admitted in Fall 2016 and he started his academic program as a freshman in Fall 2017.). Seven students were business majors in their first semester, and four students had undecided majors in their first semester. One

student was born in the U.S. but was raised in mainland China until going to college at ODU, and one student was from Taiwan but lived in Shanghai since he/she was three or four years old. Five students' hometowns were in Northern China and 15 students' hometowns were in Southern China.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Interview Participants

| No. | Pseudonym | Gender | Cohort | 1st Semester Major | Current Major |
|-----|------------|--------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Taidixiong | M | FS16 | Business | Pre-law |
| 2 | Sirius | M | FS16 | Math | Math |
| 3 | Jenifer | F | FS16 | Business | Media & Information |
| 4 | Bojack | M | FS16 | Business | Business |
| 5 | Oscar | M | FS16 | Undecided | Undecided |
| 6 | Angela | F | FS16 | Business | N/A |
| 7 | Jimmy | M | FS17 | Theatre | Theatre |
| 8 | Gabriel | M | FS16 | Business | Business |
| 9 | Vincent | M | FS16 | Mechanical Engineering | Communication |
| 10 | Anna | F | FS16 | Journalism | Journalism |
| 11 | Neo | M | FS17 | Human Biology | Human Biology |
| 12 | Vivian | F | FS17 | Business | Media & Information |
| | | | | Computer Science & | Geographic Information |
| 13 | Varina | F | FS16 | Engineering | Science |
| 14 | Elda | F | FS17 | Undecided | Business |
| 15 | Kelvin | M | FS17 | Business | Business |
| 16 | Colin | M | FS16 | Undecided | Children Development |
| 17 | Billy | M | FS17 | Applied Science | Math |
| 18 | George | M | FS17 | Undecided | Business |
| 19 | Maria | F | FS17 | Media & Information | Media & Information |
| 20 | Andy | M | FS17 | Economics | Undecided |

Family and education background. The interview data show interviewees' experiences before and after being on academic probation were intricate. Most interviewees have at least one parent who received a degree in higher education, and no matter how high the degree interviewees' parents hold, helicoptering was the main parenting way used by their parents. The helicoptering parenting style is usually accompanied by high expectations on interviewees'

academic performance, and not meeting those high expectations often caused the bad relationships between interviewees and their parents.

In the educational background, most interviewees were not high academic achievers in their K-12 education; and quite a number of them frankly said their academic performance before college was very low and they never liked study. Most interviewees had poor academic proficiency in STEM courses. More than half of the interviewees went to a non-traditional public high school in China, including international division in public high schools, international division in private high schools, private high schools, and international high schools. Interviewees reported those high schools offered different curricula compared to each other and the traditional public high schools, and those high schools had lower the admission bars, much lighter study load, much poorer teaching quality, and much looser daily school management compared to the traditional public high schools. The problems in those high school also contributed to interviewees' low academic performance.

Reasons and preparation of study abroad. The main reason for the total of 20 interviewees to study abroad is their academic performance before college was too low to get admission to a prestigious university in China. Many parents actually planned to send interviewees to study abroad when they were in middle school. All interviewees commented that they were unprepared or prepared poorly for their study in U.S. college. They only prepared the study abroad tests such as TOEFL/IELTS, SAT, and ACT; no one prepared for self-management abilities, learning strategies and study skills, and study habits that are essential for their success in U.S. colleges. Eighteen interviewees used different kinds of agencies or agents in China to apply for U.S. colleges; and they either only wrote the draft of personal statement or did nothing during the application process.

College and/or major ranking was the primary or only concern of interviewees and their parents during applying to U.S. colleges, and their aim was to be admitted by the university with the highest ranking among the universities interviewees' test scores reached the admission bar. What colleges they applied was decided by the agencies and agents. Thus, before coming to ODU, interviewees and their parents had very limited or no information about ODU except for its ranking; and none of them viewed the ODU official website to learn about the school.

Seventeen interviewees escaped the regular learning in their high school for preparing those study abroad tests, except for one interviewee who went to American high school after spending one year in high school in China and two interviewees who took the *Gaokao* in China. They usually have nine to fifteen months free time before coming to ODU and they used the time on non-academic activities. All interviewees reported misunderstandings about U.S. colleges; and they seriously underestimated the study load, course difficulty level, and the requirement of commitment on their study in U.S. colleges. No interviewees understood or fully understood the academic policies and immigration policies that related to their academic performance, and most interviewees even were not aware of the existence of those important policies before studying abroad in the U.S.

Reasons for being on academic probation. Most interviewees described their first semester at ODU as bad and/or puzzled. The top two reasons of being on academic probation that interviewees reported are poor study attitude and low commitment on study because is no parents and/or teachers helicopter them anymore in college and in the U.S. The most important reasons they identified are:

Academic proficiency: poor academic preparation in high school.

Institutional navigation: not knowing grading policy, wrong study strategies, unsuitable

course selection, and not utilizing on-campus resources and services because of unawareness.

Socio-emotional engagement: not taking study seriously, not studying, not studying hard, breaking up with girlfriend, peer influence, laziness, spending too much time on playing and non-academic activities, lack of self-management and self-discipline, lacking of initiative to solve own problems, lacking of initiative, execution, and willingness on study, spent too few time on study, not realizing the importance of grades, high expectations and pressures from family, not realizing the importance and goal of going to school and study.

Actions were taken after being on academic probation. Interviewees had different feelings and actions after learning they were on academic probation. Generally, interviewees who had higher academic performance in high school were more likely to realize the seriousness of being on academic performance and therefore took actions as required by ODU than interviewees who had low academic performance in high school. Many interviewees did not (fully) understand the content in the academic probation email notification, and asking other Chinese international students was the first choice for many of them to understand their situations and next steps.

Most interviewees reported filling in the Satisfaction of Academic Progress (SAP) form and having Probation Conference with an academic advisor were unhelpful or of limited help. Interviewees had difficulties in filling the SAP form and they needed step-by-step guidance to complete the form, which was not included in the email notification. None of them prepared for the Probation Conference, because they did not know what they needed to prepare and how to prepare.

Academic status in each semester by Summer 2018. The academic status of each interviewee in each semester by the time of being interviewed demonstrated the different

pathways of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester. In total, among the 20 interviewees, after their second semester, only six (30%) of them returned to good standing, nine (45%) of them were on final probation, and five (25%) of them were recessed.

For interviewees who returned to good standing after their second semester, the majority of them still had challenges in their following semesters. Among the four interviewees in Cohort Fall 2016 who returned to good standing (cumulative GPA ≥ 2.0) after their second semester, two maintain the good standing in each following semester; however, one of them had a semester GPA was below 2.0 in the fourth semester, and the other one had a semester GPA was below 2.0 in the fourth and fifth semesters. Another two interviewees who returned to good standing after their second semester were on academic probation again in their third semester. Vincent was on academic probation and good standing alternately and was on final probation after his sixth semester. Anna was recessed after her fourth semester and then was reinstated before her fifth semester so she was placed on final probation. So far, Elda and Kelvin from Cohort Fall 2017 are the only two students maintain their good standing in all following semesters without having any a semester GPA was below 2.0.

Among the three interviewees in Cohort Fall 2016 who were on final probation after their second semester, one returned to good standing after his third semester at ODU, one was on extended final probation after his third semester and returned to good standing after his fourth semester at ODU, and one was recessed after his third semester in summer. Among the six interviewees in Cohort Fall 2017, the one interviewee who took classes in summer and she returned to good standing after the Summer 2018, her third semester.

Strategies for improving GPA. For the thirteen interviewees whose original academic

status was good standing and final probation by the end of their second semester, the most common strategies they mentioned are taking the study seriously, studying hard, and devoting more time on their study in and after class.

Another strategy to improve GPA interviewees mentioned is course selection strategies. Seven interviewees selected less challenging courses in the second semester, compared to their first semester, and their course selection strategies are not all the same. Those strategies include selecting courses with different difficulty levels, selecting less challenging selective courses, selecting relatively easy courses in summer, and retaking failed courses. Some interviewees mentioned they selected *shuike* (meaning “water courses” in English), the courses have few assignments, loose class management, and can easily get high grades with low commitment. For example, Maria asked her Chinese friends and enrolled in the *shuike* they recommended.

Utilizing on-campus resources and services is the third strategies interviewees used a lot. Interviewees reported they used the Math Learning Center, Help Rooms, Writing Center, and instructors’ office hours.

There are other strategies a couple of interviewees used, which include Chinese international students who enrolled in the same courses with them, knowing how to use D2L, proper learning strategies, and helping from their boyfriends. One interviewee who returned to good standing in a unique way, compared to others. The reason he returned to good standing is stopping inhaling laughing gas. In his first semester, his girlfriend at that time (now ex-girlfriend) took him to inhale laughing gas together every day. When he stopped inhaling laughing gas and recovered, he was able to study as a normal student and his academic performance improved.

Pathways of the recessed students. Ten interviewees have the experiences of being

recessed, and one of them was recessed for a non-academic reason. Seven of the ten recessed students applied for reinstatement right after being recessed but not everyone passed it.

Interviewees who did not apply or failed the reinstatement transferred to other colleges in order to continue to study and maintain their Form I-20 and F-1 full-time student status. One interviewee transferred out for a non-academic reason.

According to ODU's policy, the recessed students can be readmitted after one calendar year. However, the way of interviewees to transfer back to ODU is very complicated. One interviewee was readmitted by ODU after studying in another college for one year; one interviewee transferred to another college but was recessed by that college and had returned to China; one interviewee transferred to two colleges before being readmitted, and one interviewee transferred to four colleges. They also had non-academic issues when studying at other colleges that distracted their academic learning.

Other related issues. Interviewees also reported other issues I did not expect. One issue interviewees reported the most was about Willie's (an international student advisor at the ODU's International Students Office) practice of transferring recessed Chinese international students to other colleges he recommended. Another issue interviewees reported a lot is the negative feedback about an academic advisor who is also a Chinese in the Student Success Team. Interviewees reported that academic advisor had stereotypes on Chinese international students and treated Chinese international students differently based on their academic performance and dressing way. Moreover, many interviewees were scared and nervous after being on academic probation and/or recessed. They felt pressure and depressed for their low academic probation, and four interviewees reported suicidal tendencies.

Suggestions from interviewees. Interviewees provided many practical suggestions about

how ODU could better help them to deal with academic probation and recess. The most frequently mentioned suggestions include teaching and explaining the related academic and immigration policies in Mandarin to Chinese international students at the International Student Orientation, using the experiences of academic probationary and recessed Chinese international students as examples to educate new Chinese international students, sending the academic probation and recess email notification in Chinese with detailed step-by-step guidance of filling the forms and preparing of Reinstatement Conference, and promoting the on-campus resources and services more effectively.

Interviewees also shared other suggestions, feedback, and experiences. Some interviewees gave suggestions to future Chinese international students on adapting to U.S. colleges and provided suggestions to academic probationary and recessed Chinese international students. Some interviewees also had suggestions to ODU in admitting and supporting Chinese international students.

Gaps Demonstrated in the Data

The educational record data, survey data, and interview data strongly demonstrated that there are gaps in first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester, ODU, and parents of those Chinese international students. All of these following gaps contributed to participants' low academic performance.

Gaps in Students' Preparation for Study Abroad

The central finding in this study is in participants' understanding, preparation for study abroad equals to preparation for study abroad tests (TOEFL, SAT/ACT, etc.) and doing some academic and/or non-academic activities in shallow level that can help them to be accepted to a college in the U.S. Participants' goal was to obtain an admission letter from one U.S. university

before study abroad, and they believed that an admission letter equals to graduation and diploma. Thus, no participant thought about what they need to do during study abroad in order to successfully graduate from a U.S. university. When I probed the questions about the other preparation they did for study abroad except for those tests preparation, 15 interviewees answered nothing. For the five students mentioned more information, they mainly did some activities for admission purpose in shallow level such as being a volunteer for a short time organized by the agencies. One interviewee also said she packed her luggage.

Twelve interviewees reported that they did not prepare their study abroad well before studying abroad. The reasons included that they knew nothing about the higher education system in the U.S. and related academic policies at ODU, they were pushed to study abroad by their parents, they were rushed to prepare for the study abroad tests, and study abroad was out of their own expectation. Oscar commented that he was prepared to play abroad, not study abroad. The reasons Vivian felt she was not prepared well for her study abroad were her was rushed to take TOEFL and her score was not very high, and she did not learn the knowledge of U.S. higher education system as students who were in the international divisions and international schools. However, all the interviewees who went to international divisions and international schools reported they did not obtain the knowledge of U.S. higher educational system in their high schools, either.

Four interviewees felt they prepared well for study abroad because their tests scores were high enough before coming to ODU, however, when they arrived at ODU, they felt they were not prepared at that time. Four interviewees did not really consider their study abroad preparation. They just had a relaxing feeling about study abroad and they did not think that much about study abroad preparation. Therefore, the data strongly show the following gaps of participants.

Gap 1: Preparation for study abroad in academic proficiency.

Not prepared for the academic proficiency level to enter ODU. Participant's actual pre-college academic proficiency level is lower than the level that is essential to be survival and successful at ODU, although students TOEFL and/or SAT/ACT reached the admission bar at ODU. As shown in the educational record data, students' total score of TOEFL, SAT, and/or ACT inversely correlated to their GPA in their first semester. For example, students who earned the lowest GPA (GPA=0) in their first semester had the highest mean of total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT; while students who earned the highest GPA (GPA=1.5-1.999) in their first semester had the lowest means of total scores in TOEFL and ACT scores and the second lowest mean of SAT total score. These findings demonstrated that for Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU, English proficiency tests such as TOEFL may not be able to demonstrate their real English language skills; SAT and ACT results may not be able to show their real pre-college academic performance; some students may not take the TOEFL, SAT, or ACT tests by themselves; other non-cognitive factors not related to their English proficiency and pre-college test scores contribute more to their academic performance in college.

Interview data confirmed that TOEFL, SAT, and ACT scores are not a reliable indicator to demonstrate the real academic proficiency level of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester at ODU. As interviewees reported, they took one year or longer time off their regular academic study in middle or high school to learn the strategies of gaming the tests to earn a high score in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT.

For students in China, the tier and ranking of the college and university students can be admitted demonstrated students' academic proficiency in their high school. According to the

World University Ranking in 2018 by the Times Higher Education, the top three universities in China are Peking University, Tsinghua University, and Fudan University, which are ranked 27th, 30th, and 116th. The world ranking of ODU is 50 to 100, which means it is better than Fudan University that ranked three in China. However, none of the total of 46 survey respondents could be admitted by Fudan University according to the survey results, 34.78% of survey respondents could be admitted to a university ranked from 113th to 300th in China; 45.65% of survey respondents could be admitted to a university ranked from 301st to 760th in China; 10.87% of survey respondents could be admitted to a university ranked 761st to 862nd in China; and 4.35% of survey respondents could be admitted to an associate degree granted institution in China that is equal to a community college in the U.S.

The interview results confirmed the survey result. Of the total 20 interviewees, most of them admitted that they were low academic achievers in K-12 education in China. About 37% of survey respondents selected the reason for them to study abroad is not adapt to the educational system in China. For the two interviewees who took the *Gaokao* in China, their scores only reached the admission bar of Tier Two bachelor's degree-granting university in China, and their failure of not reaching the admission bar of Tier One bachelor's degree-granting university in China made their parents decided to send them to study abroad in a U.S. college.

Not prepared in academic proficiency as well as students in top universities in China.

Participant's actual pre-college academic proficiency level is lower than their Chinese peers who can be admitted by a top university in China, such a 211/985 project university that ranked 1st to 112th in China, as shown in above.

Not prepared as well as high school graduates from the Gaokao division in China.

Participant's actual pre-college academic proficiency level is lower than their Chinese peers who

went to the *Gaokao* division in the traditional public high school system in China. As reported by many interviewees, one main reason that their parents sent them to the non-traditional public high schools in China to prepare for study abroad is their academic performance in China were not good enough for them to be admitted by a public high school, especially an elite high school. Except for the participants who took the *Gaokao*, all other participants escaped at least one year of the regular education in their high school in order to prepare the TOEFL, SAT, and ACT.

After finishing their last study abroad tests, interviewees had eight months to 15 months free time before coming to ODU or American high school; and Chinese students who attend a college in China only have less than three months of free time before going to college. During that free time, 17 interviewees did not take any academic courses as the requirement in high school in China. Students who went to the *Gaokao* division in public and private high school did not go back to school and restore their regular academic study because they would not take the *Gaokao*; thus, studying was meaningless to them. Andy was very frank to say that his last year transcript provided by his high school was fake because he did not attend high school for the last year. For the same reason, Billy refused to disclose the name of his high school since his last two-year transcript provided by his high school was fake. Sirius and Jimmy signed the *Agreement of Abandon Taking Gaokao* as required by their high schools, due to their high schools think students who plan to study abroad will occupy the educational resources and have negative impact on the students who take *Gaokao*, and their low academic performance will earn low *Gaokao* grades and therefore decrease the university admission rates in their high schools if they take the *Gaokao*. Some international divisions and international high schools still opened to interviewees after they finished the study abroad tests, however, teachers did not teach in class and just played movies to them or asked them to learn by themselves, and they were also not

required to come to class. Maria's head teacher in the international division even did not come to class anymore after students finished those tests.

Interviewees mainly used the long free time to do non-academic activities such as going travel, hanging out and/or drinking with friends, relaxing at home, and playing mahjong. Three interviewees did part-time jobs or internships either father's company, small loan company or a bar owned by a family friend's friend, respectively. The Tsinghua University's study abroad program that Kelvin was in was a one-year long program and lasted until the summer break. Therefore, Kelvin is the only student who continued his study after finishing those test. His first semester GPA was 1.9666, which is the highest among all participants.

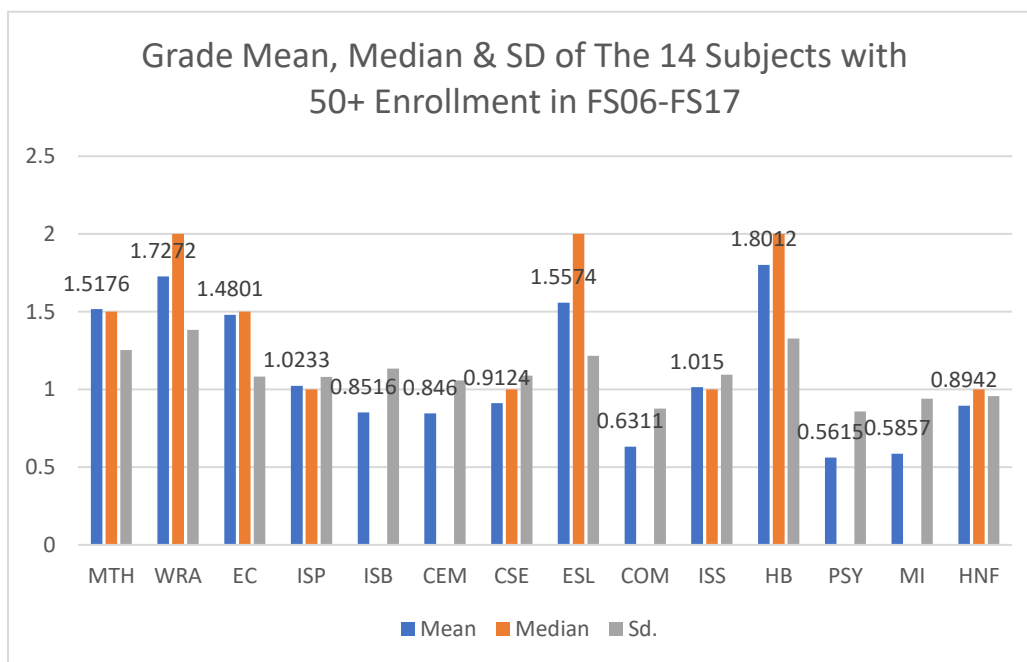
Compared to their peers in the *Gaokao* division, participants not only spent much less time on regular high school learning but also not studied all the subjects which are required in high schools in China. It is very common for interviewees who went to a non-traditional public high school, especially for who went to the international division in a private or public high school and international high school, reported that their high curricula skipped many subjects that were taught in the *Gaokao* division, and teachers had low academic requirement to them on those non-skipped subjects, such as Chinese literature. The study load, teaching quality and daily management quality in those non-traditional public high schools are also much lower than the *Gaokao* division in the traditional high school system. Some non-traditional public high schools even did not require their students to take the *Huikao*, the high school graduation exam. Therefore, those interviewees technically did not graduate from high school and did not have a high school diploma. In addition, interviewees who went to average public high schools and non-traditional public high schools reported their classmates often did not take the study seriously, not study hard, and drifted along aimless, those peer influences also negatively impact their

academic proficiency.

Not prepared well in STEM subjects, especially math. Participants usually reported low academic proficiency in some certain subjects, such as STEM subjects, especially math, which is against the stereotype that Chinese international students are good at math. The grades they earned in the courses they enrolled in their first semester in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017 provided evidence for their unbalances in academic proficiencies in STEM subjects.

Figure 4

The Grade Mean, Median, and Standard Deviation of the 14 Subjects with 50+ Enrollment in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017



As shown in Figure 4, these seven subjects students did worse were ISB, CEM, CSE, COM, PSY, MI, and HNF and at least five of these are in STEM fields. Within these seven subjects, five of them, ISB, CEM, COM, PSY, and MI, had a median of 0. The two subjects that first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017 did the worst in were PSY and MI.

Figure 5

The Pass and Fail Rates of the 15 Subjects with 50+ Enrollment in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

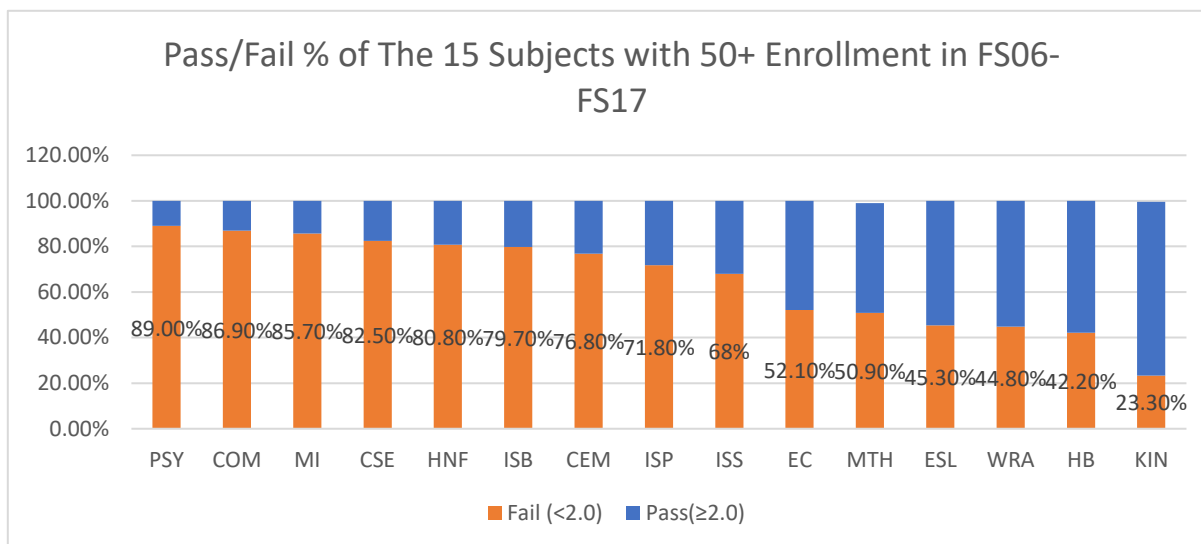


Figure 5 shows the percentage of students who earned a grade below 2.0 (not-passing) in the 15 subjects with more than 50 enrolled in their first semester in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017. Only four subjects in these 15 subjects had a fail rate less than 50%, and one of them is KIN, which is not an academic course (Kinesiology). There are five subjects that had a fail rate over 80%, and these are PSY, COM, MI, CSE, and HNF. PSY had the highest fail rate of these 15 courses at nearly 90%. This figure demonstrated again that the first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester had much lower academic proficiency in subjects in two categories, one related to STEM fields, such as psychology, computer science, nutrition, chemistry, and physics, and the other is courses that demand students put lot energy and high commitment because grading policy included attendance, homework, quizzes, and papers, such as COM and MI.

ODU's curricula are general education, and students are required to take a certain level of math in order to full fill the graduation requirements. For participants who were in STEM

majors, the requirement of math is higher. As shown in the interview data, the low academic proficiency in STEM subjects not only make students failed in their first semester but also have long negative impacts in their study in their following semester. For example, Vincent returned to good standing when enrolling more courses in literature and arts, and he was repeatedly on academic again after his first semester when enrolling in courses in STEM fields.

Not prepared well in literacy skills, especially reading and writing. Participants were not prepared well enough in literacy skills before coming to ODU, especially reading and writings. Many interviewees reported the courses that have high requirements on academic writing were very challenging to them. They did not (fully) understand the academic probation and the recess email notification because of their low reading skills. For example, one interviewee reported having difficulties in reading and understanding information written in long paragraphs.

It is worth noting that participants' low reading and writing skills in English may actually be caused by their low reading and writing skills in Chinese. As mentioned earlier, a vast majority of interviewees skipped at least one year from their regular high school education that offers Chinese literature class. Some interviewees reported low literature skills in Chinese, for instance, one interview never passed the Chinese literature exams in his high school. Interviewees who went to an international division and international schools usually reported they did not go to Chinese literature class and not listen to teacher's lecturing and study in Chinese literature class, because Chinese literature is not one subject included in the study abroad tests. Many interviewees did not like studying and not taking studying seriously in K-12 education, which also contributed to their low literacy skills in Chinese.

The study abroad test preparation strategy is another reason caused participants did not have high enough reading and writing skills in English. The study abroad test training programs

provided in China aim to make students get an as high as possible score in as short as possible preparation time. Interviewees acknowledged they earned a high enough score to be accepted by U.S. colleges through learning gaming the tests. For example, they memorized the writing templates and sample essays of the most frequent appeared topic in the writing test in TOEFL.

Not prepared for different teaching styles. As shown in survey data, having a hard time learning professor's teaching style is identified by survey respondents as one of the top 10 reasons for being on academic probation after their first semester. Interviewees adapted to the teaching style that is similar to common teaching style in China, which is focusing on textbooks, organizing well, explaining in detailed, having key points written on the blackboard, providing standard answers, and having abundant practice questions led and explained by teachers. However, interviewees reported that their instructors at ODU did not give detailed instructions to all the content in textbooks and lead them to do the practice questions of all type of questions; and exams also included the content did not teach in class and/or not listed on the course syllabi.

The experiences of four interviewees who took courses at River Community College (RCC) advocated this point, they reported that they felt the professors at RCC taught better than professors at ODU. For example, Ann said she understood teaching in English well, but her professors and TAs in math courses at ODU did not teach clearly and she was unable to fully understand all of the concepts because of their teaching methods. When taking the equivalent math course at RCC, she earned a very good grade. She described that instructors at RCC taught and explained the concepts to students at first, then led students to do the example questions together, and found plenty of questions for them to practice. Her math instructors at RCC not only explained step by step while leading the students to understand those questions but also checked with students if they understood each step. Professors at both ODU and RCC teach in

English, but she was able to understand the math courses at RCC because of the teaching styles and methods.

Not prepared for learning strategies. As shown in the interview data, interviewees were not prepared for learning strategies that work in U.S. colleges before and after coming to ODU. As mentioned in the teaching styles part above, teachers in China give very detailed instructions to students and lead students to do all types of questions. In this way, students in China mainly need to fully follow their teachers' instruction to earn good scores; it is not necessary for students to take their own responsibilities to learn and/or develop learning strategies. Thus, parents and students value the contribution of study time and effort more than learning strategies.

In contrast, U.S. colleges expect students to take own responsibilities on their study, and it is important for students to explore and master knowledge and information by themselves after class. Learning strategies play important roles in students' academic performance in this situation, but no interviewees realized it. They still believed that their grades would be improved merely through devoting more time and more effort to study, but this strategy did not work. For example, many interviewees described that they made an effort for a while to improve academic performance, but they found no matter how hard they studied, their grades did not improve. They were very frustrated about this result and had the sense of powerlessness to return to good standing, and therefore they gave up making effort on their academic study shortly. Learning and developing learning strategies for different subjects actually are more difficult than extending study time, it may also lead participants were reluctant to learn and develop learning strategies based on their individual situations that could effectively improve their academic performance.

Not prepared for early knowledge and/or use of academic resources. Participants were not aware that U.S. colleges provided on-campus resources and services to support their

academic success and overall well-being. Colleges in China rarely provide resources and services related to student academic success, such as tutoring, and they do not have academic advisors. As shown in the survey and interview data, ODU provides free of charge academic advising, tutoring in different subjects, Writing Center, Math Learning Center, group exercises class located in residence halls, libraries, and colleges, but participants did not (fully) take advantage of these services. They reported in interviews that they did not know those resources and services exist, not know the business hours and locations of those resources and services, and did not understand how those resources and services can support them, which led to they lack motivation and willingness to utilize those resources and services.

Gap 2: Preparation for study abroad in institutional navigation. It is understandable that Chinese international students come from a very different educational system from the U.S. and thus they have challenges in adapting to the educational system in the U.S. However, the interview data demonstrated that Chinese international students and their parents even did not think about there are differences in educational systems between China and the U.S. No interviewee and/or their parents actively looked for ways to learn the policies and norms in the educational system in the U.S, and Chinese study abroad agencies they used to apply for U.S. colleges and their international division/high school teachers did not inform them those differences, either. One interviewee's parent graduated from a graduate school in the U.S., two interviewees went to an international division that owned and operated by American Chinese, and one interviewee went to a branch school of an American High School, but they all did not learn any information about the higher education system in the U.S.

Not prepared for related academic and immigration policies. The survey results show about two-thirds of survey respondents were not aware and did not understand the vital related

academic and immigration policies as well as the serious consequences of violating those policies, before and after coming to ODU. The vast majority of interviewees never heard of academic status policies until they were on academic probation. Some of them did not know the word “probation” when reading in on the email notification, some of them even did not think U.S. colleges have requirements on students’ GPA. Enrolling as a full-time student and have a at least 2.0 are two essential requirements that international students must fulfill in order to maintain their legal F-1 full-time student status in the U.S., but one-third of survey respondents do not know their GPAs will have an impact on their Form I-20 and F-1 visa, and none of the interviewees were aware or informed about this information before coming to ODU.

Not prepared for non-academic policies. Participants were not aware of non-academic school policies and regulations, and violation of those will have direct or indirect serious consequences to their F-1 full-time student status before and after arriving at ODU. It is not uncommon that academic probationary Chinese international students also violated other non-academic policies and regulations at ODU. As reported by the interviewees, the most common non-academic policies and regulations they violated include smoking and/or inhaling laughing gas and/or marihuana in dorms, drinking under 21 in dorms, friends’ houses, and karaoke bars, and having prohibited items in dorms. One interviewee was recessed because of being accused of smoking in his/her dorm, and the other interviewee had to transfer out with good standing for not dealing with the consequences of violating those policies.

Not prepared for classroom management. In China, teachers make announcements in class about teaching content and assignments. In K-12 education, each class section also has a class leader and a course representative for each subject to write down the assignment on the blackboard and collect finished assignments from students in every morning and bring to

teachers in each subject. In the contrast, in U.S. colleges, all the important course information are in course syllabi that are sent to students at beginning of each semester, including textbooks, course content, class scheduled, assignment deadlines and requirements, attendance policy, and grading policies, etc. Students need to read and understand the course syllabi and remember the date to submit assignments by themselves. Participants did not know course syllabi and their importance before coming to ODU, and this caused problems in their study. For example, textbooks fee are included in students' tuition fee in China and schools give students textbooks, but in the U.S., college students need to buy textbooks by themselves. One interviewee did not realize that he needed to buy the workbook for EC201 until he retook the course in the second semester, he also reflected that no wonder he failed that course in the first semester.

Not prepared for Learning Management Systems (LMS). Participants were not aware of LMS before coming to ODU. In China, teaching and learning activities are managed face-to-face by teachers; and the e-learning and online courses in China are not as popular as in the U.S. Therefore, colleges in China do not use LMS, such as D2L, Canvas, and Blackboard, and Chinese students are not familiar with the functions of LMS. For example, some interviewees reported they did not know the assignment requirements were posted on D2L and/or they did not know they needed to submit their assignments on D2L in their first semester.

Not prepared for communication ways. Participants were not aware that email and the college's official website are the main communication way in U.S. colleges. In China, email is not used to communicate with students and their parents in K-12 and higher education; and announcements are made in class by teachers. Accompany with the fast development of internet and smartphones, teachers in China now also send notifications to parents and students on online communication applications, such as WeChat and QQ. Thus, participants reported that they did

not know ODU posts important information on its official website, and their instructors and advisors email and send the information to them via D2L and student information system. It is very common that many interviewees do not know they can email professors to ask questions, not know how to find professors' emails, and not how to write emails to communicate with professors and academic advisors in both Chinese and English.

Not prepared for making appointments. Making an appointment is very common in the U.S. However, China does not have the culture of making appointments, and planning ahead is not the habit of the vast majority of Chinese people. In China, K-12 teachers stay in their offices when they do not teach in class, and students can go directly to the teachers' offices to ask questions. In contrast, in U.S. colleges, students need to make an appointment to meet with professors outside of office hours and they can make an appointment online with academic advisors and international advisors. The interview data shows that interviewees were not aware of making an appointment to meet faculty and staff and how to make appointments in their first semester. None of the interviewees viewed the ODU official website before coming to ODU, so it is not surprising they did not know how to make an appointment with academic advisors in the online advising system.

The process of making an appointment is another issue to interviewees that led them were reluctant to make an appointment. As one interviewee reported, the online process that making an appointment with an academic advisor was complicated, and there was often no available advising slot opened for him to solve his problems in time. When I told interviewees they could make appointments with academic advisors by phone call, they also expressed that they did not know what and/or how to say over the phone. I probed the question if they knew what and/how to say in Chinese in the same situation, they said no.

Gap 3: Preparation for study abroad in socio-emotional engagement. Studying abroad experience not only includes academic learning but also means managing life and dealing with personal issues, and this impact students' academic performance. Learning and living in a brand new environment that is very different from China is very challenging to Chinese international students, and they need to be psychologically prepared in order to deal with the issues emerge during studying abroad. It is unrealistic to expect a teenager suddenly turns to a mature adult after his/her 18 years old birthday. As shown in the survey and interview data, participants lack the following abilities and skills in their socio-emotional engagement.

Not prepared for time management skills. As shown in the survey result, the top 1 reason of being on academic probation identified by survey respondents is lack of time management skills. When recalling their educational experiences in K-12 education in China, interviewees reported that students' time was arranged by their teachers and parents. Their schedules were fixed by the school, and they (especially for students attended the public schools) spent at least eight hours per day in school to study under teachers' supervision. As reported by interviewees, when they came home after school, their parents arranged their study time and sat next to them to watch them do homework. In this situation, the majority of students' time was occupied by studying and related academic activities arranged by their teachers and parents. Thus, it is not necessary for Chinese students to learn time management skills in K-12 education because they actually seldom have personal time for them to manage.

It is understandable that students come from such helicoptering family and school environment are eager for the free time that they can spend on activities they are interested in. The interview data advocates that freedom is one main expectation identified by interviewees about their the college life in the U.S. Actually, college life in the U.S. does provide much

freedom to Chinese international students, compared to their K-12 education experiences in China. However, the interview data shows when facing the very free environment, participants usually were at a loss for what to do, especially in their first semester. Therefore, the vast majority of participants did not devote enough time on academic learning and they spent a huge amount of their free time on non-academic activities in their first semester, which negatively impacted their first-semester study habit and academic performance.

Not prepared for motivation and goals to study abroad. In the multiple response questions of reasons to study abroad in the survey, 28 respondents (60.87%) selected the education in the U.S. is better; 17 respondents (36.96%) chose they did not adapt to the educational system in China; eight respondents (17.39%) answered they did not want to take the *Gaokao*, the very competitive national college entrance exam in China; six respondents (13.04%) selected being admitted in a U.S. college is easier compared to taking the *Gaokao* in China; five (10.87%) students answered going to college in China is boring; and three respondents (6.52%) chose learning in a U.S. college is easier compared to learning in a college in China. As a result, participants were motivated to study abroad because studying abroad is a shortcut for them to receive a better education, avoid taking the *Gaokao* and the educational system they did not adapt to, and being admitted easier in college. Their motivation for study abroad is actually focused more on “abroad”, not “study”. As one interviewee Oscar said, he was prepared to hang out and have fun abroad before coming to ODU, not study abroad.

Interviewees reported getting the admission letter from a good U.S. college was their goal during their preparation of study abroad. When receiving the admission letter, it means participants had already fulfilled their all motivations of study abroad: they successfully avoided the *Gaokao* and were admitted by a U.S. college, they would receive a better education in an

educational system that is different from the Chinese educational system they did not adapt to. Thus, it is not surprising that participants lost their motivation to study when their motivation to study abroad was fulfilled. For example, many interviewees described that they did not have goals in academic learning and they lived in a “muddle along without any aim” in their first semester.

It is worth noting that no motivation and goals are not only created by study abroad. First, in China, the main goal, even the ultimate goal, for K-12 students is to be admitted by a prestigious university. As interviewees reported, except for attaining a good job, schools, teachers, and parents seldom talk about the goals during and after attending college. Attaining a good job is actually a very broad and vague goal, and it is rarely for Chinese people to discuss how to achieve this broad goal. For example, interviewees’ parents commonly expected them graduate from ODU and then find a good job, but no one told students how to graduate and find a good job by setting particular goals to make the gradual process towards the goal.

Second, no motivation and goals in academic study is a long term problem for many participants since elementary or middle school. As reported by interviewees, drifting alone aimless was the theme in their middle and/or high school, and quite a number of participants never had motivation on academic learning since they were in elementary school. For instance, Jimmy reported that he was very confused and struggling in his middle school about why all his classmates took their study seriously, and thus he developed serious psychological problems.

Third, sometimes there is a mismatch between parents’ goal and students’ goal, especially in their career goal, negatively impact participants’ motivation for their study. It mainly represented by the conflicts of major selections revealed in the interviews. Parents’ who have their own business usually expect their children to be the successor. Therefore, they selected

business major or major in the field of their business, but interviewees often had their own choice on major due to their own interests and/or academic proficiency. For example, Vincent's father runs a business in mechanical engineering and his father selected the mechanical engineering for him, but Vincent is passionate on design and his academic proficiency in STEM subjects was not strong enough for mechanical engineering. As a result, he had very low motivation to study mechanical engineering and STEM courses.

Fourth, the unrealistic goals and expectations set by parents also have a negative influence on participants' motivation in their study. The interview data demonstrate that it is very difficult for some Chinese parents to set suitable goals for their children to achieve, and parents often underestimate or overestimate children's abilities and set goals that are too low or too high to children. For example, Jimmy's parents never have any expectation on his academic performance, so he did not have a goal to achieve and did not understand the meaning of learning. In contrast, Varina's parents expected her to be a successful person like Bill Gates. However, this goal is far beyond the abilities that Varina could reach. She was depressed because no matter how hard she studies, she will never satisfy her parents. As a result, she gradually lost her motivation in academic learning.

Not prepared for stress management. Studying abroad in the U.S. colleges are challenging for international students, and interviewees reported issues in social, psychological, and academic they had. However, interviewees were not prepared for having those stresses and how to deal with those stresses during studying abroad, especially for mental health issues.

Compared to Chinese international students with good standing, the survey and interview data show that participants had higher rates of suffering stress and mental health issues. The low academic performance brought huge pressure on all participants, and some of them had test

anxiety. They were scared and nervous during the period of being on academic probation and/or recessed, and the serious consequence they worried the most was losing their legal F-1 student status and being repatriated to China. It is common that interviewees felt it was the end of their study, even their lives when learning they were on academic probation and/or recessed. The stress of improving academic performance and returning to good standing also causes interviewees to have mental health issues or exacerbate the mental health problems they developed in China, such as depression and suicidal tendency.

Another resource of stresses many interviewees reported is their parents. Participants' parents usually have high expectations for them, including graduating within four or fewer years with good academic achievements. A couple of interviewees also reported non-academic stresses from their parents. For example, one interviewee's parents do not have good relations of each other, and they vent dissatisfaction of their marriage to that interviewee. Thus, that interviewee took the role of parents' marriage fixer by becoming a good academic achiever since he was young. Some interviewees' parents expected interviewees to realize their dreams and goals in a career that they were unable to make, regardless of interviewees' abilities and personal interests. The third resource of stresses interviewees identified is their personal life, such as problems in a romantic relationship, friendship, and daily life.

Although all interviewees reported suffering stresses and/or mental health issue after being on academic probation, only one interviewee went to the counseling center at ODU and utilized the My SSP online counseling service that recommended by ODU's International Student Office, but the interviewee reported those services did not help her effectively. The two main reasons for not using on-campus counseling services identified by interviewees are no Mandarin speaking counselor and they thought only people who have mental illnesses used

professional counseling services. They usually did not open themselves to others to talk about those issues or turned to their Chinese friends for help. For some interviewees' parents, it is very difficult for them to understand mental health issues are issues and believe their children have mental health issues.

Not prepared for being an independent problem solver. Studying abroad is the first time for Chinese international students to really live independently in their life. In their K-12 education in China, they have teachers take dominant roles in their academic learning and their parents and/or grandparents take responsibilities as their caregivers and helicopter their study, which is not conducive for students to become independent problem solvers. For example, Vivian's parents rent an apartment that was closer to her high school and her mother lived with her in that apartment during her entire high school to take care of her as a *peidu*, which means parents move to a place that is closer to children's schools and accompany their children study.

First, participants were not prepared as an independent problem solver in their academic learning, as shown in the interview data. When having problems in academic learning, interviewees did not know how to solve it and not take actions to solve the problems. They usually did not know what to do after learning they were on academic probation and/or recessed, and they still needed to ask other Chinese international students to help them deal with it. Quite a number of interviewees reported they had problems in group projects, communicating with professors and staffs, and applying to the College of Business, but they lacked the abilities to solve the problems independently and effectively. They either did not know those problems could be solved via discussions or negotiations, or expected problems would be automatically solved and/or disappeared by ignoring the problems.

Second, participants were not prepared as an independent problem solver in their daily

life because of the lack of self-care abilities and living skills. It is common that Chinese parents view attending a residential school as a symbol of living independently. However, interviewees reported that they had “life teachers” in their residential high schools to take care of their daily life, for instance, managed their time of going to bed and getting up. In this situation, students lived away from their parents, but not lived independently. Chinese parents usually interpret self-care abilities and living skills as children can cook and know to wear more or fewer clothes according to the weather, but Chinese international students have more challenging situations in their daily life than problems in this shallow level. Interviewees reported that the first semester usually had more issues in their daily life, they needed to open a bank account to have a debit or credit card, have a sim card for their cell phone, purchase articles for daily use, and learn how to use laundry machine, etc.; and those small things distracted them from academic study. It is not uncommon that participants had bigger issues happened in their daily life in their first semester. Those issues they reported include but not limited to, romantic relationships, friendships, relationship with parents, and conflicts with roommates. All of these contribute to their poor academic performance.

It is worth noting that in China, people often have stereotypes on high academic achievers and describe them as “high scores, low abilities”, and therefore suppose low academic achievers have high abilities. However, the interview data shows that for participants, they are more like low scores low abilities. For example, one interviewee asked me to reschedule the interview two days earlier because the interviewee needed me to call an airline customer service for the issues of the flight tickets her boyfriend booked for her. Some interviewees mentioned they sought help from me for booking flight tickets and hotels online, learning how to write checks, paying tuition, using an ATM, and looking for apartments, which could be solved by

searching on Google. All the examples demonstrate participants are not able to solve problems independently.

Not prepared to build a support system. Building a support system that can assist students' academic learning and adaptation to the environment in colleges is a vital skill for international students to achieve academic success in the U.S. Chinese international students from an educational system that teachers supervise students' learning process and actively provide support to students when teachers observe students have difficulties in learning, and students can seek help from teachers who teach their class section. However, U.S. colleges expect students to be independent learners, and students need to take the initiative to seek help for academic and other issues. There is no one like the head teacher in each class section in China that students can seek help for all kinds of problems when studying abroad. Thus, many participants did not build a system that can professionally and effectively support their academic learning in their first semester or first year.

However, it does not mean Chinese international students with low academic performance did not seek help, as shown in the survey and interview data. Participants just did not seek help from official resources, and faculty and staff from ODU (at the first time). Their Chinese friends were their first resource of seeking help, although the help they received from their Chinese friends were not always correct. Survey respondents and interviewees identified their Chinese friends as the first and preferable resource for seeking help. They also sought help from online Chinese community like WeChat groups and WeChat public accounts as well as Zhihu (a Chinese website that is similar to the Wiki how). The official resource including faculty, academic advisors, and other on-campus resources and services are the last choice for them to seek help, although in many cases the official resources are the only way can solve their

problems, such as lifting the hold in their student accounts. The reasons they identified included it was difficult to get immediate help from faculty and advisors, and sometimes the guidance they received from faculty and advisors were unclear and difficult to understand.

It is worth noting that participants usually finally seek help from official resources in an indirect way. For example, the academic probation and recess notification sent to participants included the contact information of official resources, but most participants asked their Chinese friends first, then their Chinese friends sent them the contact information of me, I communicated with students on Wechat and/or face-to-face, and then I connected students with academic advisors. This demonstrates that participants prefer to connect with and seek help from official resources from someone they know and/or trust, rather than directly seek help from official resources that they do not have a personal connection with.

Gaps in ODU's Understanding and Knowledge

Gap 1. Understanding and knowledge about the non-traditional public high school system in China. The educational record data, survey data, and interview data demonstrate that participants have very different educational backgrounds in China, especially in their high schools. However, ODU lacked the understanding and knowledge about the non-traditional public high school system (including private high school system and international high school system) in China and its impacts on students' academic performance and learning abilities.

According to the high school names that provided by the Office of the Registrar at ODU, the number of valid high schools is 664 with the students' number is 914 (some students went to more than one high school). Thus, the average number of academic probationary first-year Chinese international students in each school is 1.38.

Table 2

Top Five High Schools That Had the Most 1st-year Chinese International Students on Academic Probation after Their First Semester

| Name | No. of Students | School Type |
|--|-----------------|--|
| Beijing Huijia Private School | 22 | Private international school |
| Beijing Royal School | 21 | Private international school |
| Beijing New Oriental Foreign Language School | 16 | Private international school |
| Zhengzhou Middle School | 13 | International division in public high school |
| Chengdu Shude High School | 9 | Private international high school |

As shown in Table 2, the top five high schools that had the most first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester are all international high school and international division. These five high schools are 0.75% of the all 664 valid high schools, but their graduates composed 9.08% of the 914 first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester. The top two schools are Beijing Huijia Private School and Beijing Royal School, had 22 and 21 students on academic probation, respectively, which is significantly higher than the average number of academic probationary first-year Chinese international students in each school. These two schools also have bad reputations in China for students' low academic performance and disordered school management. As one interviewee who graduated from Beijing Huijia Private High school said: "I went to a very famous high school in China, but it is famous for its really bad reputation."

Among the 40 survey respondents identified the types of high school they went to, 22 students attended the non-traditional high schools in the Chinese educational system: nine students went to the international sections within elite public high schools; two students went to the international sections within average public high schools; three students went to the average sections within private high schools; three students went to the international sections within

private high schools, and four students went to international high schools. The different high schools have different curricula, study load, and daily management, which contribute to students' pre-college academic knowledge, learning habits, and study skills. It is common for people to think that international students who went to American high schools have a higher level of English and better understanding of the U.S. classroom culture so that they will adapt the U.S. higher education system better and have higher academic achievements compared to international students who went to high schools in their home countries. However, in the survey, eight students (17.39%) went to U.S. high schools but were on academic probation after their first semester.

Among the 20 interviewees, 10 of them went to the high schools that are in the international high school system in China. Two students went to the *Gaokao* division in public high school, but their high schools have international divisions. The private high school the one interviewee went to also has an international division. Based on interviewees' reports, in China, international high school system usually has three types schools, including international high schools only open to foreign students and non-mainland Chinese students, international division in public high schools and private high schools, and private international high schools.

Interviewees reported that international division in different high schools was operated by different parties, including foreign language and study abroad tests training companies, such as New Oriental Education and Technology Group (New Oriental), a branch school of American high school called Saint Mary's, and study abroad agency or agents in China. The interview data also shows that the international high school system in China has much lower admission bars than traditional public high schools in China. For example, many interviewees reported that their parents sent them to international high schools because they did poor in *Zhongkao*, the entrance

exam to high school, and/or their academic proficiency was too low to be admitted in a (good) public high school.

Based on the experiences and observations from interviewees, in China, the curricula, teaching style, textbooks, daily management in the private high school system and international high school system are very different from the public high school system as well as in different international divisions and international high schools. Not as same as the *Gaokao* division in public and private high schools that have the same curricula formulated by the government, the curricula in the international high school system are very different. As demonstrated in the interview data, those curricula usually combine Chinese curricula and international curricula. Only a few interviewees said their international high school offered Advanced Placement courses, most of the nine interviewees who went to international high schools were unable to identify which kind of curricula offered in their high schools. The curricula of the international division usually skipped many subjects that were offered in the *Gaokao* division, such as physics, chemistry, history, and politics, which has a negative impact on interviewees' academic performance in college. For example, Oscar had very low academic proficient in math because his international high school did not offer the typical math courses in public high schools in China, so he did not learn algebra in high school.

The quality of teachers directly impacts teaching and administration quality in schools. Interviewees described that their foreign teachers usually teach international curricula with western teaching methods, and Chinese teachers teach Chinese curricula with the traditional Chinese teaching method. However, all interviewees who went to international high school system in China reported both their Chinese teachers and foreign teachers taught badly. Their foreign teachers had higher mobility than Chinese teachers, but those foreign teachers taught

worse than Chinese teachers.

Based on the descriptions from interviewees, the study load of the international high school system in China is much lighter than the typical *Gaokao* division that students will take the *Gaokao*, which caused them unable to afford the academic study load that required at ODU. Elda described that the study load in the international division she went was less than 10% of the study load at ODU during her first semester, and she was unable to handle with it.

The daily management of teaching and students in the international high school system is also much looser than the *Gaokao* division. Although interviewees reported both their teachers from China and foreign countries in the international high school system taught very bad, their school did not have any intervention on improving teaching quality. Gabriel and Oscar reported that their classmates in the international high school system often escaped classes and slept at their dorms during class time, but no teacher asked them to go to class when they did this. Compared to the nine interviewees who went to international high schools and international divisions, two interviewees who took the *Gaokao* were very thankful for tenacity and solid knowledge they learned in high school. As Vincent said, if he went to the international division, he would not have the good foundation on the knowledge he gained in the *Gaokao* division.

Gap 2. Understanding and knowledge about study abroad industry for Chinese international students. The study abroad services for Chinese international students have already become an industry both in China and overseas. The agencies/agents in China and overseas, study tours in the U.S. such as summer and winter camps, the tutoring services target Chinese international students at ODU, and assignment writing and class taking services offered by Chinese shown in the interview data are just part of the study abroad industry. As shown in the interview data, the study abroad industry in China and overseas provides different services to

Chinese international students due to the different purposes.

No understanding and knowledge about the study abroad industry for Chinese international students in China. The study abroad industry in China is a huge market. As shown in the interview data, study abroad industry in China not only includes the international high school system mentioned above but also includes the study abroad test preparation training schools and agencies that applying foreign colleges and universities for students, which play paramount roles in interviewees' preparation for study abroad and school application.

Study abroad tests preparation training in China. The study abroad tests preparation training has different providers in China, but all of them are for-profit, as interviewees reported. Some students received the study abroad tests preparation training provided by the international division they attended in high school, and during the tests preparation training, many other subjects and regular courses were skipped. For students who went to the high schools did not provide study abroad training, they took off their regular high school study and went to training courses provided by the private English tests training providers. Most students took training from New Oriental, other providers identified by students are Qide, Wobang, and Woodpecker. Kelvin is the only student who participated in a one-year long study abroad training program offered by Tsinghua University which aims to provide the training for Tsinghua University's students who participate in their official study abroad exchanging program. Thus, he also participated in activities and events held by student organizations at Tsinghua University.

Interviewees who prepared the study abroad tests during high school usually skipped or took off their regular high study and fully focused on study abroad tests preparation from six months to two years, and the two interviewees who took the *Gaokao* used one year on tests preparation after *Gaokao*. The most frequent test preparation strategy all interviewees mentioned

is called *Shuati*, which means repeatedly doing numerous questions that appeared in the past tests that recalled by people who took the tests before, and memorized the answers and the templates for writing and speaking tests. All interviewees reported that the test preparation training schools they went taught them how to *Shuati*, and they took one same study abroad test three to six times in order to get a high enough score to reach the admission bar of U.S. colleges.

Using agencies/agents to apply to U.S. colleges. The interview data shows that 90% of interviewees applied for U.S. college via agencies, which advocates that most Chinese international students use agencies to apply for colleges overseas. 18 interviewees used agents in China to apply to U.S. colleges. George used an agent to apply American high schools, and this agent contacted him later for applying colleges for him but he refused. He thought he had advisors in his American high school to help him apply for colleges, and he could do the application without that agent. Tsinghua University's study abroad training program that Kelvin attended also had an advisor to guide and teach them how to do the application by themselves.

The agents that the 18 interviewees used included Vision Overseas in New Oriental, Henuo (the owner worked at Vision Overseas in New Oriental in the past), Century Bridge, Jiaxin (assigned by the international division in the private high school interviewee attended), Woodpecker, U.S.-Sino International, Qide, teachers from the international division the interviewee attended, the agent who owns and operates the international division that interviewees attended, and husband of interviewee's head teacher in the international division the interviewee attended. The international high school, namely the branch school of American high school Oscar went had advisors to help them on the application, but Oscar commented they were not professional and did not care about his application, so he hired another agent to do his application. Elda also said the agent that runs the international division she attended was not

reliable on helping her application, her agent did not help her that much on revising personal statement since her agent needed to use another agent in California to revise personal statements.

According to interviewees' descriptions, the agents covered 50% to 100% of the application procedures and paperwork for them. Interviewees who did the most work in the application process was writing a personal statement and the agent revised their personal statement. Jimmy totally knew nothing about his U.S. college application process because his agent did all for him. When I asked him if he wrote his personal statement by himself, he asked me: "what is a personal statement?"

When selecting which colleges to apply, interviewees and their parents primary considered the college and/or major rankings and the admission bar their tests scores achieved. Namely, they were looking for the highest ranking college among the colleges that their test scores reached the admission bar. Other factors they considered include environment, location, safety, and personal reasons such as having friends come together or not. Some interviewees considered nothing when applying since their agents made the decision for them. The main reason that interviewees selected to come to ODU with similar reasons as they applied for U.S. colleges, ODU is the university with the highest ranking among the colleges they reached the admission bar.

Using agencies/agents to apply U.S. colleges also has a direct impact on some interviewees' first-semester major selection. Six interviewees' major in their application was decided by their agents. As Taidixiong recalled, he did not know his major until he read his admission letter, because his agent selected the major for him during application.

It is worth noting that although the study abroad industry in China provides different types of services to Chinese international students through study abroad preparation to post study

aboard, but there is no service to prepare students with knowledge, abilities, and skills to survive and thrive in their academic learning as well as supporting students in academic jeopardy during studying abroad. This huge blank in study abroad industry actually is one real and deep reason that causes first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation are not prepared in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement, as discussed earlier.

No understanding and knowledge about the study abroad industry for Chinese international students in the U.S. Different from the study abroad industry in China that targets Chinese international students plan to study abroad, the study abroad industry for Chinese international students in the U.S. targets Chinese international students who have already studied abroad in the U.S. These services reported in the interview data include academic emergency services, services that target Chinese international students at ODU, assignment writing and course taking services, and international summer schools in China.

Academic emergency services. The academic emergency services are the services mentioned most by interviewees. Three interviewees reported they used or contact agents to active their Form I-20 or transfer to another college, and they were connected with those agents by their Chinese friends who know or also used the services provided by those agents. This demonstrates that using agencies/agents for the academic emergency is not uncommon among Chinese international students.

Generally, the academic emergency services including dealing with academic probation, appealing for plagiarism, appealing for recess, activating Form I-20, and transferring to another college after being recessed. As interviewees reported, the transferring after being recessed services usually charged \$7,000 to \$8,000. Three interviewees used or contacted those agents.

Those agents are Chinese in the U.S., around ODU or in other states, and they promote their services and look for customs on WeChat. It is difficult to know if they registered their business in the U.S. or just doing it online, and the quality of their services are low. According to interview data, those agents usually transfer recessed Chinese international students to a diploma mill and it causes problems for students' future transferring to a community college and/or their reinstatement at ODU.

One interviewee used the agent to activate his Form I-20. Neo dropped one course in his first semester and then failed to meet the enrollment requirement to be a full-time international student. He did not know that he needed to apply for Reduced Course Load to maintain his full-time student status in this situation, so his Form I-20 was terminated by ODU's international student office. When he consulted to ODU's International Student Office, one international student advisor at the office told him that he needed to activate his Form I-20, for doing this, he needed to have a record of exit and entry U.S. Neo's Chinese friend referred a Chinese agent located in Tucson, Arizona who does this business of taking Chinese international student to cross the U.S. and Mexico border and then reenter in order to have that exit and entry record.

The agent promised that there would be no problem and they have already taken many Chinese international students who were in the same situation from local universities did the exit and entry process, and Neo paid the agent \$1,500 and flew to Tucson. Under the agent's guidance, Neo passed the Customs and reentered Customs soon, and this raised the attention of the Customs officers. Finally, the Customs officers caught Neo and the agent, and they were in handcuffs and were interrogated by the Customs officers from morning to afternoon. Neo said the Form I-20 termination experience had a huge impact on his GPAs, "I was unable to attend class due to without a valid Form I-20, and it became the last straw that breaks the camel's back

on my grades.”

Services target Chinese international students in a specific college. One interviewee, Maria, misunderstood that the on-campus resources and services as the resources and services were located in buildings on-campus. She mentioned that she used a CSE tutoring class operated by A+ Education, a tutoring and academic advising company owned by ODU’s Chinese international students and alumni that targets Chinese international students at ODU, and this tutoring class was located in a computer lab in one teaching building at ODU. Marina paid \$800 for a one-semester long tutoring class which met once a week, and she said lots of Chinese international students went to this tutoring class and there were many sections in a different time. However, the tutoring class was not as effective as the A+ Education claimed. They advertised many of their students earned 4.0 in CSE 101, but Maria still earned a 0.0 in CSE 101.

Kelvin reported Lax, another service provider that is similar to A+ Education, also provides service of writing a profile for applying College of Business at ODU and they charge \$4,000 for writing a profile. This reveals a unique type of services for Chinese international students in the U.S. This type of services targets Chinese international students in a specific college that usually has a large number of enrollment of Chinese undergraduate students. As shown in interview data, their services include tutoring for the subjects that many Chinese international students take and/or many Chinese international students fail, such as the five core courses that are required to apply College of Business at ODU, application to College of Business at ODU, academic advising, and course selection, etc. The interviewees reported that those services were owned by Chinese international students and alumni of College of Business at ODU, and their tutors were also Chinese international students at ODU, as shown in their WeChat promotion posts. Maria recalled that the tutor of CSE 101 at A+ Education was a

Chinese international student at ODU who earned a good score in CES 101. The main promotion channel of these businesses is WeChat, interviewees mentioned that they saw A+ Education and Lax post their advertisements on WeChat and many Chinese international students circulated those advertisements were circulated on their WeChat moment for getting discount.

Daixie (assignment writing), Daishang (course taking), and Daikao (exam taking) services. One interviewee reported that many Chinese international students who were on academic probation he knew earned high grades by using *Daixie, Daishang, and Daikao* to write assignments and papers, go to class, and take exams for them, to return to good standing. He said many Chinese international students used *daikao* to take exams for their ISS210 course because the exams in ISS210 were all online so the instructor was unable to know when students used the *Daikao* to take the exams for them. He also reported that his Chinese girlfriend, a Chinese international student at ODU, was a ghostwriter for math courses in order to make money.

International summer schools in China. One interviewee who attended the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) International Summer School in China reported the low teaching quality and loose management in that summer school, which reveals the problems in international summer schools in China.

After being recessed in May 2018, Billy went back to China and attended the UIBE summer school in summer 2018. This type of International Summer Schools in China offers American college-level courses that they claim are able to transfer to the U.S. colleges Chinese international students enrolled in, but the tuition fee is much cheaper than U.S. colleges. However, according to Billy's experience at UIBE International Summer School, the teaching quality in those summer schools are questionable.

Billy reported the teaching quality and daily management UIBE International Summer School were very low. Students received the exam papers before taking exams from teaching assistants who were Chinese. The instructors were all from American institutions, but quite a number of them are Chinese. Their teaching just went perfunctory. He reported Chinese instructors taught the worst and most careless because they knew most Chinese international students came to those International Summer Schools for earning credits in a faster, easier, and cheaper way, not for learning knowledge. Compared to the Chinese instructors, American instructors tested Chinese international students' bottom line of teaching quality at the beginning in order to make their teaching quality as low as possible but not touch students' bottom line. He observed that at more than 80% of Chinese international students enrolled in UIBE International Summer School did not take their study seriously or study hard. Thus, he suggested ODU have exams before transferring the credits Chinese international students earned from those International Summer Schools in China.

Gap 3: Understanding of Chinese International students of the current generation.

Chinese international undergraduate students in the U.S. are from a new generation compared to Chinese international students studied abroad in the U.S. before 2000. The current Chinese international undergraduate students were mainly born after 1995, in China, they are called as *95hou* (born after 1995 to 2000), which is similar to Generation Z. The *95hou* Chinese international students are different from Chinese international students from older generations, as a new generation, they have some characteristics in general. It is import for U.S. colleges to understand the characteristics of *95hou* so that to provide supports fit their needs.

Different and diverse values than older generations. As shown in interview data, interviewees have multiple values and different definitions of success compared to Chinese

international students from older generations. Participants believed academic achievement is not the only way for them to measure and/or approve their success, and academic learning is not their only and main goal of study abroad. For example, Jennifer, studying abroad was one part of the plan for her whole family to immigrate to North America, which was decided by her parents. She never fully committed to study since her K-12 education to college, because she never thought the academic performance was the way to show her success. Instead of academic achievement, she used participating in non-academic activities to approve her success in school.

The interview data also demonstrates that compared to Chinese students who are *80hou* (born after 1980 to 1990), *95hou* Chinese students spend less time on academic learning but more time on entertainment. 16 interviewees did not spend enough time per week on their study in their first semester. The range of their weekly study time in their first semester ranged from very few to no more than 15 hours. When I asked Sirius how many hours he studied per week in this first semester, he said “you should ask me how many hours I spent on my study in my entire first semester. Less than 24 hours except for doing homework.” Elda spent about at least 15 hours per week on her study in her first semester, and she reflected that amount of time was far not enough to meet the requirement of study load during the interview. Most of those 16 interviewees only spent time on study for homework or before exams, and they did not have the habit to preview and prepare before the class and review after class on a regular base.

In contrast to a few study hours, 18 interviewees had much free time per week in their first semester. The most common activities they did in free time include sleeping in dorms, playing online video games with other Chinese international students and/or Chinese friends in China, hanging out with friends, playing, drinking in KTVs and other senior Chinese students’ apartments (invited by senior Chinese international students), weekend trips to Chicago,

watching concerts in Detroit, shopping, and having romantic relationship. Some interviewees also reported working out, and using marijuana and/or inhaling laughing gas as their free time activities.

However, such plenty of non-academic activities did not bring good experiences to some interviewees. Bojack spent a huge amount of time with his Chinese friends and actually he did not want to see some of them, but he was afraid that other people thought he was social withdraw. He commented, “I drank with Chinese international students and hung out with them, but those did not make me happy.”

Believe and learn from peers and online resources, not authorities. Chinese international students from the current generation have multiple resources to learn knowledge, not limited to learn from teachers in class. Their peers and non-official online resources are the main resources for them to learn related academic policies and immigration policies, and official resources usually became their last choice, according to the survey data and interview data. When asking survey respondents the resources they obtain from academic policy knowledge in the multiple response questions, it is not surprising that their top resource is other Chinese international students they know, which indicated by about one-third survey respondents. The official website, where colleges and universities actually post the detailed academic policies, is only 19.63% of responses.

Interviewees described that when they have questions in academic learning and/or related policies, they asked their Chinese friends at first. If their Chinese friends did not know an answer, they posted their questions on WeChat moments and/or search online resources in Chinese. Even after ODU sent students the official guidance or resources, interviewees still first sought help from their peers and online resource in Chinese. For example, when Neo was

recessed, he searched online in Chinese about the petition and found all available online information in Chinese, such as Zhihu (similar to the Wiki How).

Trust the authorities after the authorities really helped them. Although official resources and authorities were the last choices for interviewees to contact, it does not mean Chinese international students from the current generation do not believe authorities forever. In fact, when they found the authorities and/or official resources responded them promptly, gave them detailed answers and guidance, and really helped them to solve the problem, they built the trust with the official resources and authorities. Then the official resources and authorities become the first choice to contact when they had questions and problems.

Many interviewees reported they always contacted me, the Cultural Assistant in the Student Success Team when they had questions and problems. Six interviewees identified me as the person who helped them the most to understand the related policies, the procedures, and the paperwork, their options according to their individual situation, and provide continued support during and after their transferring. For example, Angela reported the Cultural Assistant always helped her when she asked for help:

The Cultural Assistant speaks Mandarin and she is super nice and patient. She is the person who understood me the most. She always guided me step by step, not just giving me the links or referring me to other offices when my questions beyond her responsibilities.

Billy described that the Cultural Assistant gave him very detailed help, not only told him to transfer to another school but also sat down with him together to show him how to apply and transfer to RCC with very detailed guidance and explanations. No matter what kind of questions Billy asked the Cultural Assistant on WeChat, she always replied promptly.

Sirius also commented:

The Cultural Assistant really helped me, not just referring me to other offices or people and never checking with me anymore. I feel regardless of what kind of

problems and issues I have when I contacted the Cultural Assistant, she helped me to resolve everything.

Three interviewees identified me and the Advising Director who speaks Chinese in the Student Success Team as the staff who helped them the most. Vivian described me and Advisor Director were very nice and ardent, which made her feel they were very reliable:

It is very often that I waited half an hour in line to see an academic advisor, but when I met with them, they usually became impatient with my questions quickly. They explained a lot but not clearly. So I feel that talking to the Cultural Assistant and the Advising Director in 10 minutes are much more helpful than having a 30 minute-long meeting with an academic advisor.

Oscar reported the Cultural Assistant and the Advising Director were the people who helped him to be successfully readmitted by ODU after three tries, and they guided him step-by-step how to accomplish it after he was recessed. Andy was very grateful that the Cultural Assistant and the Advising Director not only helped him to win the opportunity to continue his study at ODU but also listened to him talk about his pressures caused by academic learning and personal life, which were not understood by his parents. During the interviewee, Andy recalled that I exchanged WeChat text messages with him to comfort and encourage him until 4:00 am:

Everything in the world in my eyes turned to grey since the moment that I knew I was recessed. When I heard the Cultural Assistant said she would like endeavor to help me on getting an extra opportunity to have the Reinstatement Conference, I saw a piece of color in the world.

Psychological development issues. The *95hou* Chinese college students have slower and less mature psychological development and less resiliency compared to their peers in older generations. As shown in the interview data, interviewees usually felt frustrated and powerless when facing challenges and difficulties in their academic learning and daily life. Many interviewees reported they studied hard at the beginning, but they lacked strong determination and tenacity. Therefore, when they had difficulties in improving their GPAs, they gave up soon.

Compared to interviewees who went to the traditional public high school system in

China, interviewees who went to the non-traditional public high school system in China were less tenacious to face challenges, and often small failures can hit them down and even go astray. Similarly, interviewees who had lower academic performance in K-12 education were easier to give up soon when encountering challenges in academic learning than interviewees who were higher academic achievers in K-12 education. Comments from interviewees who were middle to high and high academic achievers in elite public high schools explained the reasons. Although the intensive study in high school brought them pressure, they were thankful for the arduous school life that provided their solid academic foundation, shaped their tenacious personality, and cultivated their confidence to overcome difficulties, especially for the interviewees who took the *Gaokao*.

Cognitive competence development issues. As shown in the interview data, interviewees often lacked the ability to distinguish the information they learned and have difficulties in decision making and taking actions. One interview learned that earning a 0.0 would be fine in the first year from other senior Chinese international students, but did not have the ability to distinguish that this information is wrong. Many interviewees had a much longer time to fully realize the serious consequences of being on academic probation and/or recessed, and many of them were reluctant to take actions to deal with their problems. They rarely independently solved the problems before study abroad, and when they had to understand, analyze, and solve the problems by themselves, it is easy to transform into negative aspects and attitudes. As shown in the interview data, many interviewees felt it was the last day in their life when learning they were on academic probation and/or recessed. Maria felt “It is the end of my life! The world is falling down, and I have to go back to China!” When knowing he was recessed, Andy felt “I am dying. If my parents knew it, they would scold me to death and they will give me up.” Vincent felt huge

pressure of being on academic probation, and he thought about suicide several times.

The sang culture. The word *sang* appeared quite a number of times during interviews. One interviewee described she was very “*sang*” during studying abroad in U.S. colleges, which demonstrated her frustration and pessimism. The word “*sang*” means the one subcultural called *sang* culture that is popular among urban, middle-class Chinese youth who were born in the 1990s.

According to the interview data, the *sang* culture takes the form of no goals in study and life, lack of motivation to study, poor study attitude, low or no expectation on academic learning and/or personal life, and feeling powerless to overcome difficulties in academic learning and daily life during studying abroad. During studying abroad, the pressure caused by the high cost of surviving in U.S. colleges, such as maintaining good standing, keeping valid F-1 student status, devoting long-term effort to academic learning, and solving problems in academic learning and daily life, accelerates the development and spread of feeling of *sang* culture among interviewees. The *sang* culture negatively impacted the academic learning and psychological development of interviewees and made them have more depression, less motivation in academic learning and daily life, and more possibility to escape when having challenges. Thus, educators and counselors need to pay more attention to the negative impact of the *sang* culture.

The conditional good academic achievers. Some interviewees were good academic achievers in K-12 education in China, however, they were also on academic probation after their first semester at ODU. Based on the interview data, those interviewees are conditional good academic achievers, which means they can only have good academic performance when meeting these conditions: helicoptering from parents, strict management and supervision from teachers, detailed instruction and plenty of practices given and led by teachers, and positive peer influence.

With these conditions, even interviewees did not have a very clear goal and enough self-motivation, they still had good academic performance when followed the guidance from teachers. When coming to ODU, all those conditions disappeared; and lack any one of those conditions led to interviewees' low academic performance. In this situation, students' self-motivation and self-control play key roles in their academic learning. Therefore, students need to become an independent thinker, independent learner, and independent problem solver, in order to become an unconditional good academic achiever to be successful in colleges.

Gaps in Faculty and Staff at ODU

Students are not the only part that in academic learning, the buy-ins from faculty and staff also play key roles in their success. As shown in survey and interview data, faculty and staff at ODU have gaps in teaching and supporting participants.

Gap 1. Lack of understanding and knowledge to teach Chinese international students. The survey and interview data and the discussion in earlier section demonstrate that Chinese international students come from an educational system that has different concepts of teaching and different teaching styles, and therefore they have different expectations on instructors in the U.S. colleges. Interviewees reported they had difficulties in adapting to their instructors teaching style and teaching method at ODU. The main problems in adapting to ODU's teaching students identified are not teaching all content listed on syllabi in class, not teaching all concepts, not explaining in details, and not leading and guiding students to do practice questions. For interviewees who took courses at other colleges, they reported they felt the teaching at RCC is better than ODU because RCC taught all content on syllabi in class, taught all concepts, explained in details, and led and guided students to do practice questions. The teaching styles at ODU also indicate that instructors and TAs lack knowledge about students'

previous teaching and learning context. Thus, instructors and TAs need to understand that Chinese international students, especially first-year Chinese international students in academic jeopardy, expect teachers take more leading and guiding role when teaching Chinese international students rather than asking students to find the solution by themselves with limited lecture and guidance. It is better for instructors to provide Chinese international students an instruction about the teaching style will be used and clearly explain expectations on students before the semester starts so that students can be prepared for it.

Gap 2. Lack of understanding and knowledge to support Chinese international students in academic learning. Interviewees reported discrimination from professors and TAs. which shows some faculty at ODU lack understanding and knowledge to effectively support the academic learning of Chinese international students. For example, one interviewee expected a detailed and clear explanation of the grade he/she earned for a writing assignment and how to improve his writing, but the professor only replied him to read rubrics. Billy and Anna reported discriminations from their TAs and/or professors, which including not answering questions from Chinese international students, unfair grading practice, and not respecting students.

Interviewees also reported discrimination for not answering their questions after class and not communicating with them first before blaming them in front of all class. This demonstrates that some faculty members at ODU do not understand the communication way between teachers and students in China. In China, students seldom ask teachers questions in class, and this behavior could be viewed as a challenge to teachers' authority. However, it does not mean Chinese international students never ask questions. Instead of asking questions in class, most Chinese international students prefer to ask questions after class and have one-on-one communications with their teachers.

It is worth noting that interviewees reported discriminations from faculty and TAs who are Chinese and Asian from other countries. Based on her own and her friends' experiences of meeting an academic advisor who is Chinese, Jennifer commented:

That Chinese academic advisor treats Chinese international students differently, he treats Chinese international students with high grades well and he discriminates on the Chinese international students with poor grades. He is reluctant to help Chinese international students and he moans and groans when meeting with Chinese international students. He said my Chinese friends' grades were too low to be admitted to the College of Business. He criticized my Chinese friends because they wore make-up, and he stated to one of my Chinese friends that her skirt was too short. He said wearing make-up and short skirt did not make them look like students. He despises Chinese international students and he voiced his hatred of the rich. He believes he got the position of academic advisor because of his own efforts, but that we come to the U.S. just because of the fortune our families has, so he thinks we are totally ignorant.

This case reminds us that U.S. colleges need to pay attention to the discrimination among people from the same country and/or continent, and not merely focus on discrimination on international students from domestic people. Again, it shows that not everyone who speaks Mandarin knows how to support Chinese international students. Compared to discriminations on international students from domestic people, the discriminations on international students from people come from their home country and similar culture are more covert, and this kind of discriminations also negatively impact international students' academic learning and transition.

Gap 3. Lack of understanding and knowledge of why international students have low academic performance. As discussed earlier, the reasons for being on academic probation are very complicated, and academic proficiency is one reason, not all reasons. As shown in survey and interview data, the language barrier is not in the top reasons identified by participants that caused their poor academic performance. However, some faculty and staff at ODU still believe low English level is the only reason that contributes to participants' low academic performance, and Willie's practices that interviewees reported strongly demonstrates the shallow

understanding towards to this issue some ODU faculty and staff have.

Among the 20 interviewees, four interviewees reported their experience of Willie's practice of transferring students out from ODU. As an international student advisor at ODU, Willie takes charge of transferring the recessed international students to other schools. Willie built connections with two schools, Creek Community College (CCC) and the English language program at Steam State University (SSU), to take those recessed international students so that they can keep their Form I-20 and F-1 student status valid. Three of the four interviewees reported that Willie only said they could study in CCC or SSU and then transfer back to ODU, did not tell them how to transfer back and connect them with the academic advisors can help them on reinstatement and readmission. When they studied at CCC or SSU, Willie also did not follow up with them about their study, the problems they have, and their future plans. Two of the four interviewees reported that Willie actually advised them and their Chinese friends to transfer out from ODU to the English language program at SSU when they were still on academic probation. Although one interviewee submitted the academic progress report to Willie to show the possibility to return to good standing soon, Willie still insisted that the interviewee needed to transfer to the English language program at SSU to improve English. This interviewee earned a 4.0 semester GPA at the end of his/her second semester and successfully returned to good standing, which strongly approves that Willies' practice of advising Chinese international students who are on academic probation to transfer out from ODU to the English language program at SSU is unnecessary and unhelpful.

Willie's practices demonstrate that at ODU, some faculty and staff have a shallow understanding of reasons caused Chinese international students on academic probation, and they believe that English is the elixir to solve this issue. This actually hides the real and deep reasons

that caused Chinese international students to have low academic performance and led to ODU provides interventions also on the surface level, which really needs to raise attention from ODU. It also shows that ODU needs to carefully evaluate their current services related to academic probationary and recessed Chinese international students.

Gap 4. Lack of understanding and knowledge of what kind of support participants need. ODU has multiple practices to support students who are on academic probation, such as filling the SAP form and meeting with academic advisors for Probation Conferences. However, the interview data show that those practices are not very helpful for students to realize their problems and improve their academic performance. For example, some interviewees still did not realize the possible serious consequences of being on academic probation and/or recessed.

The SAP form aims to let students identify the reasons of being on academic probation and the strategies they plan to use in the second semester to improve GPA. However, participants reported having difficulties and problems to fill this form. If students were able to identify the reasons of being on academic probation and the strategies to return to good standing, they probably would not be on academic probation after their first semester. For interviewees who identified some reasons, as they reported, there were inconsistent between their understandings and academic advisors' understandings. For some interviewees, they needed academic advisors listened to them and provided detailed guidance to improve GPAs during the Probation Conferences, rather than just went through the content of SAP form. Therefore, some staff at ODU do not understand that before having the Probation Conference, participants need a pre-conference to give them step-by-step guidance on filling the SAP form, understanding the possible serious consequences of being on academic probation, and identifying the reasons of being on academic probation and strategies of returning to good standing.

The interview data also show interviewees who were recessed needed support on filling the petition form, preparing the Reinstatement Conference, transferring to another college, transiting and adapting to another college, and applying for reinstatement and/or readmission. This is why the agencies and agents that have services of dealing with recess and transferring to another college exist, but the staff at ODU do not understand those needs. When students are recessed, technically they are not students at ODU. However, as educators, ODU's staff still need to take the responsibilities to support those students. If students are recessed by ODU, it is unrealistic to expect they will be successful in another school without any support. If students fail to build a support system and have a smooth transition at ODU, it is unrealistic to expect they can successfully build a support system and have a smooth transition at another college. However, there are no official services provided by ODU to meet those needs of recessed international students except for Willie's practice of transferring them to another school. As discussed in the earlier section, Willie's practice has a lot of issues and it is as same as the practice of agencies and agents. Although according to interviewees' report, I, the Cultural Assistant in the Student Success Team, provide full service to support all their needs after being recessed, this is still not official service because this is not listed on the job description of the Cultural Assistant. When I leave the position, the services I provide will be no longer available to students.

Gaps in Support From Chinese Parents

As shown in survey and interview data, Chinese parents play dominant roles in making the decision of sending participants to study abroad, and they are the people who pay the tuition and other costs for students. Thus, support from Chinese parents also has an influence on participants' academic learning, as shown in the interview data. Related research on supports

from Chinese parents is very rare, but the survey and interview still show the gaps that Chinese parents have in support their children.

Gap 1. The parenting style during K-12 education. The interview data show that the most popular parenting style among interviewees' parents is helicoptering. Instead of cultivating participants' good study habits through parents' behaviors, parents helicoptered interviewees too much, no matter how high the degree interviewees' parents hold, as reported by 16 interviewees. The most common helicoptering example is those parents' sat next to them to watch them writing homework when they were in elementary school, and also in middle school for some interviewees.

The helicoptering parenting style is usually accompanied by high expectations on interviewees' academic performance, and not meeting those high expectations often caused the bad relationships between interviewees and their parents. Many students struggled with parents' extremely high expectations and earning parents' recognition, this caused they had test anxiety and other learning issues. For example, comparing to mastering the knowledge, Andy cares more about earning a high score because of the pressure of getting high scores from his parents. "Even I earned a good score but then I died, my parents would feel I died in peace and my death is totally worth," Andy commented. All of the 16 interviewees did not like such helicoptering. However, many students said they did not like to study and did not self-motivated on the study, if parents did not helicopter them, they would not study.

Two students' parents almost did not parent them in their study. Although both of Jimmy's parents hold a master degree, they do not have any expectation on his academic learning. Therefore, Jimmy does not care about his study very much all the time. For example, he even did not know what his first semester GPA was and only knew he was on academic

probation in his second semester. Maria's parents divorced when she was a little girl. Her mother is busy doing business and earning money, and she actually grew up with her mother's parents. Her grandparents took care of her living, not really parent her on her study, and she never likes to study, either.

The most common education method parents used are criticizing and blaming, and physical punishment. Most interviewees reported that their parents are very adept at depreciating children's value and undermining children's confidence. In some cases, interviewees became the scapegoat of parents' unhappy marriage and/or the dream achiever of parents' expectations. Therefore, many Chinese parents educate children by blaming their faults, but they do not teach children the correct way and show them how to do correctly. Many parents were very miserly on giving encouragements and praises to interviewees, which made interviewees had a very low sense of acceptance and recognition. Most interviewees reported their parents focused on their academic achievement and ignored their overall well-being in psychological development, mental health issues, and independence development, which negatively impacted participants' academic performance.

Gap 2. Support during studying abroad. As shown in the interview data, most Chinese parents not only failed to parent them correctly in their K-12 education but also failed to support them correctly during their study abroad. According to interviewees' reports, their parents can be categorized into two types: supporters and pressure creators. The characteristics of parents who are supporters are listening to students, showing understanding to students, not blaming students, providing constructive suggestions on problem-solving, and trusting students. Interviewees are more willing to share their problems and struggles with parents who are supporters and listened to parents' suggestions. For example, some interviewees were recessed by ODU and they told

their parents about it, their parents expressed they would like to support interviewees whatever they need, which made interviewees release pressure and focus on how to effectively solve the problem. In contrast, most interviewees have parents who are pressure creators. Those parents either failed to provide constructive suggestions to support students or just said they did not know what to do. They often have very high and unrealistic expectation on students, such as pushing students to learn certain majors and graduating in four or less than four years. They claimed their pushing was good for students, but it created more pressure and anxiety, even caused suicide tendency to students. Interviewees are reluctant to communicate with those parents, but they have to keep the communication with parents because parents pay for them. Therefore, educators need to think about to educate parents on how to correctly support children during study abroad.

Summary

According to the data analysis of students' educational records, survey data, and interview data, here are the summary of the answers of the four research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the trends in first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester?

Students' educational records, survey data, and interview data show the general trends are the academic performance of first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester from Fall 2006 to Fall 2017 at ODU was worse by year. More students had difficulties to leave academic probation in one semester, and first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester at ODU were more likely graduated from non-public high school system in China, especially the international high school system in China.

Research Question 2: Are there correlations between their academic performance and their English proficiency (TOEFL scores) and pre-college knowledge (SAT/ACT scores)?

The statistic results demonstrate that for first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester from Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017, their mean of total TOEFL scores, total SAT scores, and total ACT scores, are inversely correlated with their first semester GPAs. Students who earned the lowest semester GPA (GPA=0.0) had the highest mean of total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT. When looking at the score in each subject of TOEFL, SAT, and ACT tests, students' TOEFL listening scores and ACT reading scores have significance with their first semester GPAs.

Research Question 3: How were their academic performances in the courses (their grades in each course) they enrolled in for their first semester?

Students' educational records demonstrate that first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester from Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017 had poor GPAs in two categories of courses: one is courses in STEM fields, such as psychology, computer science, nutrition, chemistry, and physics; and the other is courses that need high commitment and devotion to course load that includes attendance, homework, quizzes, papers. When looking at specific courses, ISB202, CSE101, COM100, CEM141, and ISP205 are the top 5 challenging courses for first-year academic probationary Chinese international students in their first semester because of the highest fail rates (GPA<2.0), and first-year Chinese international students who enrolled in one or more of these courses may have a higher possibility of being on academic probation.

One reason that these first-year Chinese international students were on academic probation in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort 2017 is the very high percentage of students who earned

a 0.0 in at least one course. Out of the total 1,130 students, 1,103 (88.76%) of them earned a 0.0 in at least one course, and 110 students (9.7%) earned a 0.0 grade in all courses they enrolled in for their first semester. This implies that earn a 0.0 grade in fewer courses or no course is important to decrease the academic probation rates of first-year Chinese international students.

Research Question 4: How do first-year Chinese international undergraduate students perceive and make sense of being on academic probation after their first semester at ODU?

The survey results strongly demonstrate that being on academic probation is a problem in students' academic learning on the surface, but problems in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement contribute to being on academic probation together in the deep layer. Actually, problems in institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement actually play much more important roles in their academic performance than academic proficiency. The interview data furtherly show that the main reasons for being on academic probation fall the most in socio-emotional engagement, less in institutional navigation, and least in academic proficiency. The Top 2 reasons for being on academic probation are not studying (hard) and having the poor learning attitude, both are in socio-emotional engagement. English skills were not identified as one top reason of being on academic probation in both survey data and interview data. The main reason for being on academic probation in academic proficiency is poor academic preparation in K-12 education, not English skills. Both survey data and interview data demonstrate participants lacked the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful in their college learning.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discussed the limitations in literature and reflection in the conceptual framework, then provided recommendations of practices and future research, and discussed the limitation and generalization of this study.

Discussions

Limitations in Literature

Limitation in reasons of being on academic probation. Ward, Jacobs, and Thompson (2016) argued that international student success may be related to characteristics such as motivation, familiarity with U.S. culture and teaching styles, family values in support of educational acquisition, English comprehension beyond that measured by the TOEFL, and individual goals, for which no quantitative institutional data exist. In the last chapter, students' educational records, survey data, and interview data demonstrate that the experiences of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester are very complicated and often twist with issues in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagements.

Students who have weak academic skills, challenging personal circumstances, and difficulties in adapting to the college environment are at risk for failure (Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2007). Yan and Berliner (2009) also found the two major concerns that contributed to the academic stress of Chinese international students were inadequate educational preparation and unfamiliarity with American classroom formalities. As discussed in Chapter 4, data in students' educational records, survey, and interviews show there are multiple gaps in

participants' preparation for study abroad in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement; gaps in ODU's knowledge and understanding about educational system in China, Chinese international students of current generation, and the study abroad industry that targeted Chinese international students; gaps in faculty and staff at ODU's knowledge and understanding to teach and support Chinese international students, and their perception of why Chinese international students are on academic probation; and gaps in Chinese parents' parenting style in students' K-12 education and how to support students during study abroad. However, these deep reasons of being on academic probation for Chinese international students demonstrated by those gaps that far beyond English skills, academic issues, and social interactions were rarely aware by researchers and studied in the existed literature.

Few studies on Chinese international undergraduate students. Although the number of Chinese international undergraduate students is much higher than Chinese international graduate students in U.S. higher education institutions, the research about Chinese undergraduate students is much less than Chinese graduate students. Currently, the research about Chinese international students focuses more on their English skills learning and social interaction and transition. The academic performance and student success of Chinese international students are rarely discussed, and Chinese international undergraduate students in academic jeopardy are not fully aware and researched in academia. The potential reason is lacking researchers who have deep understanding in educational systems in China and U.S., work directly with Chinese international undergraduate students in academic jeopardy, and have the abilities and skills to connect and have deep communication with those students based on their characteristics.

Neglect of research done in China. Comparing the findings in this study and related research in China and in the U.S. and other western countries, it is surprising that findings in this

study are different from the most western literature in English, but are highly consistent with the findings in the literature in Chinese. For example, Chen (2016) summarized that Chinese college students failed courses because of reasons in five types of factors: First, personal factors mainly included students' poor learning attitude, poor self-control, lack learning goals, lack learning strategies and skills, attribution bias (attributing to other people), psychological distress, etc.; second, faculty factors mainly included teaching quality, teaching methods, and some faculty did not put teaching as their priority; third, schools factors mainly included administration system of teaching and testing, and curriculum; fourth, family factors mainly included families' economic situation, parental education, etc.; fifth, social factors, mainly included unhealthy social ethos, students focus on getting skill certificates, not on academic learning. Thus, this study and studies about college students' course failing in China both found no clear study goal, no motivation, poor attitude, poor self-control, not spending enough time on study and academic activities, not adapting to new environment in college (no matter in China or in the U.S.), pre-college academic proficiency, and social and/or peer influence are main reasons caused Chinese college students failed in China and in the U.S. Most of these main reasons are in socio-emotional engagement, the second most reasons are in institutional navigation, and least reasons are in academic proficiency.

Overly addressed on “international”. The comparison of studies of Chinese college students who failed in academic learning in the U.S. and in China demonstrates the gaps of the related studies done by scholars in the U.S. and other countries. Those studies focused a lot on “international students” when studying Chinese international students and ignored Chinese international students are “students” that share many general characteristics as Chinese college students in China. As a result, scholars discussed a lot about the how learning with a second

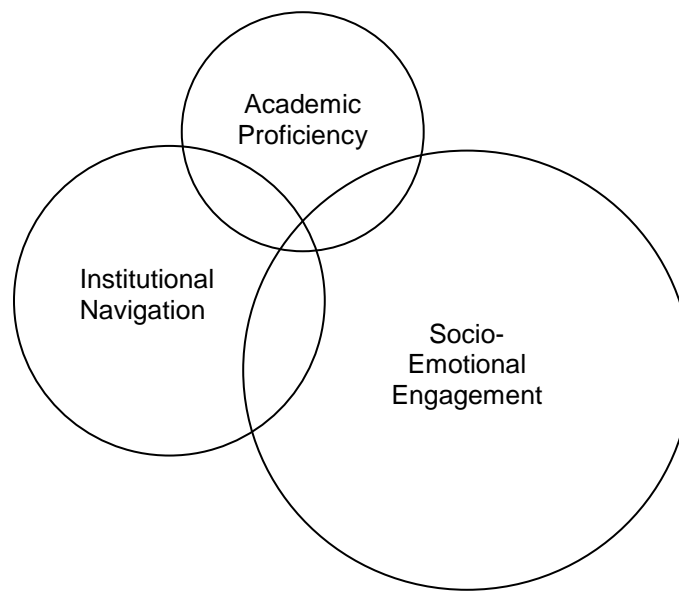
language and a different educational system in a foreign country impact their academic performance and attributed their low academic performance to the language barrier and transition problems caused by study abroad. Those studies did not address or correlate the fact that as students, many Chinese college students also have low academic performance when learning in their native language and in their home country. As shown in the data in this study and findings in literature in Chinese, if a student has low academic proficiency in K-12 education, no motivation and study goal in K-12 education and/or college, and poor self-control, he/she will have low academic performance in college, no matter the college located in which country and what language he/she is learning with. Overly focusing on the “international” identity of Chinese international students and ignoring their main identity as “students” narrow the insight of studies conducted out of China. Doing so narrows, the recommendations fall into improving students’ English skills and cultural adaption to a new country.

Reflection on Conceptual Framework

In the NSSC Student Success Model, the three independent variables (academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement) contribute equally to student success. In this study, the reasons for being on academic probation fell most in socio-emotional engagement, less in institutional navigation, and least in academic proficiency. Thus, the conceptual framework of this study is the NSSC Student Success Model 2.0, which with the three independent variables contribute differently to student success, as shown in Figure 6. The NSSC Student Success Model 2.0 addresses that socio-emotional engagement plays the most important role in student success. Thus, educators need to pay more attention to students’ development in socio-emotional engagement and institutional navigation, rather than only focusing on improving students’ academic proficiency.

Figure 6

The NSSC Student Success Model 2.0



Recommendations

Recommendations in Practices

As discussed above, the reasons first-year Chinese international students are on academic probation after their first semester are very complicated, and students are not the only part contributing to their low academic performance. This is an extraordinarily complicated issue, intertwining the problems in policies, economy development, and educational system in China, the growing role of social capital in education in China, the study abroad industry that targets Chinese international students, parenting and supporting from Chinese parents, policy and practices in U.S. higher education, and preparation and understanding of faculty and staff in U.S. higher education. Thus, this section provided recommendations on how to support Chinese international students on academic probation at an individual level, an intervention level, as well as at a policy level to ODU and other U.S. higher education institutions that face the same

challenges.

Individual level: recommendations to faculty, staff, and administrators. Teaching and serving a large number of international students from one country is challenging to faculty, staff and administrators in U.S. higher education, especially when the academic probation rate of this student population is high. Chinese international students come from a country that has a different culture, and current Chinese international students are different from their peers from older generations. In order to effectively understand, communicate and support first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation and recessed, individuals in U.S. higher education who teach and serve Chinese international students, including faculty, staff, and administrators, need to understand the following three patterns that apply to all Chinese international students.

Communication pattern. As discussed earlier, the *95hou* Chinese college students do not believe authorities and faculty and staff are their last choice to communicate with and seek help. As shown in interview data, very few interviewees contacted academic advisors as written in the email notification, and most of them asked their peers and/or the Cultural Assistant in the Student Success Team at first. For the communication way, interviewees' prefer WeChat, not traditional face-to-face meeting. When the face-to-face meetings are needed, the initiative of meetings still happens on WeChat. The text messages are used the most on WeChat, but when they believe their situations are urgent, they also made WeChat calls. However, ODU does not provide any official support and communication on WeChat.

For the communication timing, interviewees needed the instant response when they have questions, no matter what time it is. For example, the Chinese agencies, agent, and tutoring services companies in the study abroad industry all provide 24 hours by seven days available

communication on their website and WeChat. As shown in the interview data, very few interviewees contacted the Cultural Assistant contact during the regular business hours. Their active time on WeChat to contact the Cultural Assistant was 8:00 pm to 4:00 am, and the peak time was 10:00 pm to 2:00 am. If they did not get the response in five minutes, they usually gave up the communications and probably did not trust the person they were communicating with. If communicators are not available to provide instant responses, they need to explain to students and let students know that they will reply to students at a specific time.

For the communication language, it should be the language students can understand. It is worth noting that the language does not mean Chinese, it means a language that conformity with students' culture and habits. First, the information should be delivered in a clear and short form. As shown in the interview data, interviewees had difficulties in reading and understanding long sentences and paragraphs, and they were used to write and receive short sentences. Thus, when communicating with students via WeChat text messages, do not send long sentences and paragraphs with a lot of information in one message. Split the long information into a couple of short sentences to students, and explain clearly with examples that students can understand. Second, use students' language in students' culture. The *95hou* Chinese college students utilized the abundance of internet slangs in daily communication, if communicators do not understand and use those internet slangs, students will have a strong resistance to communicators (Chen, 2017). Therefore, communicators need to learn those internet slangs in order to decrease the resistance from students and build trust with students. Third, talking as a peer, not in the tone as an authority, and showing understanding and empathy during communications. As shown in the interviewee data, one negative comment that interviewees gave the Chinese academic advisor is arrogant and apathetic, voicing like an authority, and blaming students.

Help-seeking pattern. The official resources, including online resources, faculty, and staff, are usually the last choice for Chinese international students seeking help. They prefer to seek help from someone they already know or referred by someone they already know. The people and resources for interviewees help-seeking identified as their Chinese peers, WeChat, Chinese websites (e.g. Zhihu), agencies and/or agents in China and in the U.S., local church, etc. Thus, faculty and staff at ODU need to actively reach out to more Chinese international students on campus and local communities and let students know they can refer their friends to seek help from faculty and staff.

Chinese international students usually do not get used to seeking help from the English websites, so do not just send the webpages to students without explaining the purpose and content on the webpages. Chinese international students prefer to get all answers from one person and/or one office rather than running among different people and/or offices, and referring people to another person and/or office is viewed as a shirking one's responsibilities in Chinese culture. However, the different offices in the U.S. colleges have different responsibilities, and it is not uncommon that students need to go to multiple offices to fix one issue. In this situation, instead of merely verbally referring students to other people and/or offices, faculty and staff need to email the people and/or office and copy students in this email (or make a phone call in front of students) in order to make a connection for students. Then faculty and staff need to follow up with students via email or WeChat to see if they really go to meet the people and/or go to the office and if they have any other questions. In this way, students would feel they are cared for by the faculty and staff and therefore students are more motivated to connect with official resources.

Problem-solving pattern. The interview data demonstrates that students may require longer time with faculty and staff to become fully aware of their problems. One 30-minute

session meeting usually is unable to allow students to fully comprehend the actions they need to take that can help them to solve the problem. Having the reluctance to resolve problems is common among Chinese international students in academic jeopardy, many of them believe or expect that the problems will disappear automatically. Some students ask and expect others to solve the problems for them, and some students have the willingness to solve problems by themselves but lack the strategies and knowledge to do it. In this situation, faculty and staff need to help students to build problem-solving abilities and skills so that they can become independent problem solvers.

It is worth noting that helping students become independent problem solvers does not mean letting students solve the problems alone, especially at the beginning. For students who lack motivation and/or strategies and knowledge to solve problems, faculty and staff need to use the “hand-holding” strategy to support them. Problem-solving is a process to guide students to understand what the problems are, write down the steps to solve each problem, list the paperwork, people, and/or offices that students need to complete of each step, then set up a timeline for each step. At the beginning, faculty and staff can complete some steps with students together, for example, guiding students to fill forms and brainstorm ideas, and emailing related people and offices. Then gradually letting the students do more independently. Informing students that they can ask faculty and staff any questions in any steps, follow up with students, and give them prompt praise when they make progress. This would not only build students’ abilities of problem-solving but also build their confidence to independently solve problems as well as their trust with faculty and staff, which has a positive impact on their academic learning.

Intervention level: recommendations for ODU. The first-year Chinese international students have the highest rate on academic probation after their first semester in recent years at

ODU, this is a challenge that ODU is facing, but this is also an opportunity for ODU to build a model to support this special student population and become a leader in this field for other higher education institutions. Thus, based on interviewees' recommendations and the findings, ODU could provide the following intervention to prevent first-year Chinese international students from ending up their first semester on academic probation, and support Chinese international students who are on academic probation and/or recessed.

Academic information session in International Student Orientation. The most frequently mentioned recommendation from interviewees is to explain the related academic and immigration policies to new students in Mandarin at the International Student Orientation. Considering the International Student Orientation has international students from other countries, this academic information session could have two sections, one is offered in English and the other is offered in Mandarin, and students can select which section they would like to participate. This session includes the academic status policies and immigration policy, policies related to maintaining full time F-1 student status, serious consequences of being on academic probation and recessed as well as failing to maintain full time F-1 student status, goal settings, study hours needed per week for international students and time management skills, and on-campus services and resources. This session should invite Chinese international students who have experiences of being on academic probation and/or recessed to share their experiences to new students in order to help new international students realize this issue and learned the lessons from their peers.

Summer Bridge Program/First-year Seminar to teach essential knowledge, skills, and abilities. Considering the limited time and other activities at International Student Orientation, the Summer Bridge Program is an option because it can help incoming Chinese international students to effectively use their summer to prepare their study at ODU. This Summer Bridge

Program lasts three days to one week. One possible issue of the Summer Bridge Program is housing. ODU's residence halls are all closed during summer break, it needs collaboration with ODU's housing department to host this program. Thus, a semester-long First-year Seminar specifically designs for incoming Chinese international students is another option.

The Summer Bridge Program and First-year Seminar aim to improve Chinese undergraduate students' academic performance through their institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement at ODU. The main content of the Summer Bridge Program and First-year Seminar is teaching students essential knowledge, skills, and abilities that international students need to survive and thrive in their college. Based on students' educational records, survey data, and interview data, the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities include:

Academic proficiency: academic preparation in STEM subjects, especially math; literature skills, especially reading and writing; different teaching styles and learning strategies; and early knowledge and/or use of academic resources.

Institutional navigation: related academic and immigration policies; non-academic policies, e.g. misconduct behaviors; classroom management; how to use Learning Management System; communication ways, e.g. emails; and making appointments by email, EAB, phone.

Social-emotional engagement: time management skills, motivation, and goals to study abroad, stress management and mental health issues, being an independent problem solver, and building a support system.

After completion of the Bridge Program or First-year Seminar, participants will be able to: 1. identify important information through the MSU website; 2. locate on-campus resources and services that can help with their academic performance; 3. list faculty and staff from whom they can seek help when they need it; 4. understand the roles of academic advisors and the

importance of using academic advising; 5. know the academic integrity policy; 6. describe the different types of academic status, including good standing, academic probation, final probation, recess, and dismissal; 7. learn the knowledge about the potential consequences of academic probation, recess, and dismissal; 8. understand the international student policy related to how to maintain full-time F1 student status; 9. learn the classroom culture in the U.S. and using Learning Management System; 10. develop the skills of reading texts, analyzing and discussing them; 11. master basic time management skills; 12. set goals for their college life.

WeChat public account to promote student success for Chinese international students.

As the most popular social app among Chinese international students and their parents, WeChat is the most effective way to promote policies, resources and services, and events to Chinese international students. ODU's Admission Office and International Student Office have opened their official WeChat public accounts for recruitment and promotion events, but none of their WeChat public accounts covers the information about academic learning and student success. Thus, it is necessary for the academic unit at ODU, such as the Student Success Team, to open an official public account on WeChat to introduce related academic and immigration policies, university requirements, on-campus resources and services, learning strategies, and reminders of important days and notifications, in order to promote academic learning and student success to Chinese international students and their parents.

Another function of WeChat public account is students can send their questions on it at any time. Thus, the WeChat public account is also helpful on engaging Chinese international students and their parents to ODU, building a support system, and enhancing students' sense of belonging, which are vital to support the institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement of Chinese international students. Considering the working load of writing and

posting information on WeChat public account and the large number of Chinese international students at ODU, ODU needs to hire a full-time staff who native to mainland China to manage it.

Psychological development and mental health evaluation. The interview data and discussion about the characteristics of the *95hou* Chinese college students demonstrate that Chinese international students in the current generation are more likely to have slower psychological development and more mental health issues compared to their peers in older generations. Many Chinese international students actually developed mental health issues before studying abroad, and the pressures created by academic learning and daily life during studying abroad usually accelerate their mental health issues, even cause suicide tendency. Thus, understanding Chinese international students' psychological development level and mental health issues before they start their study in the U.S. and provide preventions are important. ODU can add a survey of psychological development and mental health to the ODU's Preview for incoming international students, and the counseling services at ODU can provide workshops and post related articles on the Student Success Team's WeChat public account based to address the issues found in the survey, and provide appropriate interventions that tail to students' needs.

Rewrite the academic probation and recess notifications. The interviewees' reports show after reading the email notification of academic probation and recess that sent by the Student Success Team at ODU, most interviewees still did not understand the seriousness of being on academic probation and/or recessed and the following actions they need to take. Therefore, ODU needs to rewrite the academic probation and recess notifications to Chinese international students. These notifications should be sent in Chinese so that Chinese international students fully understand the content. Instead of merely notifying students they are on academic probation/recessed and having the link of forms and petition, the notifications need to describe

the serious consequences of being on academic probation and recessed, the international student academic status map (please see Appendix H), importance of filling the SAP form and having Probation Conference, the step-by-step guidance of filling the forms and scheduling meetings with academic advisors, and include the contact information of specific academic advisor(s), not the contact information of an office, that students can seek help. For the notification of recess, it also needs to include the step-by-step guidance of transferring to another college, the contact information of an ODU staff can support students' transferring out, and reminders of meeting academic advisors at ODU after transferring to another college for their future reinstatement and/or readmission. Considering some interviewees did not check their ODU emails, the Student Success Team WeChat public account can also post reminders and related procedures and guidance to deal with academic probation and recess.

Academic Resilience Program for all Chinese international students who are on academic probation. Academic probation intervention programs tend to fall into one of two categories, classroom-or workshop-based interventions and working individually with an academic advisor or counselor (Kamphoff et al., 2007). As shown in the interview data, two interviewees who participated in the Academic Resilience Program held by the Student Success Team that had regular meetings with the same Advising Director highly praised this program and those meetings, and they developed more trust and engagement with academic advisors and ODU, which is very helpful for them to improve their GPAs. Similarly, the interviewee who did not participate that Academic Resilience Program but met with the Advising Director on a regular base and the interviewee who transferred to RCC regularly met with his Academic Success Coach at RCC also had the same positive feedback about their regular meetings. Thus, meeting with an academic advisor that understand Chinese international students who are on

academic probation and really care about their success positively impacts their academic performance.

However, such Academic Resilience Programs at ODU only open to students who are on academic probation in certain majors and colleges. For all academic probationary students, the only required meeting for them is a 30-minute long Academic Probation Conference with an academic advisor, which is not that effective and helpful, according to interviewees' report. Thus, ODU needs to have Academic Resilience Program for all Chinese international students who are on academic probation, regardless of their majors and colleges, to help them set goals in colleges, have the active learning attitude, and building confidence in academic learning. Considering interviewees also had negative feedback and feeling when meeting some academic advisors for their Probation Conference, training about how to support Chinese international students who are on academic probation to academic advisors is necessary, and this training should be provided by the Advising Director that received the positive feedback from interviewees.

Tracking system for Chinese international students who are on academic probation, recessed, and dismissed. As shown in the data analysis section, not every Chinese international student who is on academic probation after their first semester can return to good standing in one semester. After their second semester, some of them are on final probation and some of them are recessed. The interview data also reveal that the academic performances of some interviewees are not stable, they were on academic probation again or recessed after returning to good standing. A tracking system for Chinese international students who are on academic probation, recessed, and dismissed will help ODU to understand the pathway of those students and provide extra support that meets their needs, in order to increase the retention and graduation rates at

ODU.

For the recessed and dismissed Chinese international students, they still need support before, during, and after transferring to another college. The interview data shows that it is common for those students had low academic performance and/or been recessed again in their new college. Therefore, the tracking system can collect the information on which colleges those students transfer to (or go back to China) and their future plan for reinstatement and/or readmission. With this system, academic advisors can actively reach out to students to learn their academic learning, transition, and adaptation in the new college, and provide support to students when they are in the new colleges. In this way, students can keep connection and engagement with ODU even they are out of ODU, which is helpful for them to return to ODU in the future.

For the recessed Chinese international students transferred to another college by Willie in the International Student Office at ODU, as shown in interview data, Willie does not inform academic advisors in the Student Success Teams and Colleges who transferred out and where they transferred, and did not connect those students with academic advisors, which caused huge problems for students for their future reinstatement and/or readmission. Therefore, the International Student Office needs to inform the academic advisors who transfer to which college by the Office so that academic advisors can track and support those students.

Scholarship to Chinese international students who make significant progress in academic learning. Returning to good standing and being reinstatement or readmitted by ODU after transferring to other colleges is a tortuous experience. As shown in the interview data, many interviewees become more mature after this experience. ODU can consider offering a scholarship to academic probationary Chinese international students who make significant progress in academic learning, such as earning a high semester GPA or improving semester GPA most, and

to recessed Chinese international students who make significant academic progress after being reinstated and readmitted. Their progress and tenacity deserve applause and recognition from ODU, and this can also motivate and encourage other Chinese international students in the same situations to improve their academic performance.

Compare students' first semester GPAs with TOEFL, SAT, and/or ACT scores. As shown in the data analysis, students who earned a higher GPA had the lower mean scores in their TOEFL, SAT, and ACT total scores, and students who earned the lowest GPA (GPA=0) in their first semester had the highest mean of total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT. Considering this unusual situation, it is necessary to compare students' first semester GPAs with their TOEFL, SAT, and/or ACT scores. If a student's first GPA is not consistent with the academic proficiency level showed in his/her TOEFL, SAT, and/or ACT, ODU needs to contact ETS to check if it involves plagiarism issues. For example, one student whose TOEFL total score was 116/120 but only earned a first GPA lower than 0.5, which is a mismatch. Another student earned a TOEFL score of 30/120 in total (2/30 in reading, 3/30 in listening, 12/30 in writing, and 13/30 in listening) but earned 18 in ACT English, but the student still was admitted with this obviously not consistent English proficiency shown in those two tests.

Reform the recruitment and admission practice. The interview data and discussion section show that the international divisions and international high schools interviewees went have low quality in teaching and management, which negatively impact interviewees' pre-college academic proficiency and academic performance in college. The two high schools that have the most first-year Chinese international students who were on academic probation after their first semester are all international high schools located in Beijing that have bad reputations in China. According to this fact, ODU's Admission Office should recruit more incoming Chinese

international students from public high schools and international divisions and international high schools have high teaching and management quality and good reputation. ODU's Beijing Office needs to take the responsibility to do a research of the quality of international high schools in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province where the most academic probationary Chinese international students' international high schools located.

Due to the high school types related to first-year Chinese international students' academic performance, ODU's Admission Office needs to collect information about Chinese international students' high school types and names in Chinese. In the high school names obtained from the Office of the Registrar at ODU, more than 100 records showed the high school name was their 9th-grade transcript and high school external exam, which are obviously not high school names. I contacted the Office of the Registrar at ODU for this question, but no one at the Office was able to answer it except for the high schools were retrieved from students' high school transcripts. There are also several incorrect spellings of students' high school names. For example, "attached" was spelled as "attache". If a high school had a wrongly spelled name on its official transcription, it is worth considering the management quality of the high school, the work ethic of their staff, and the authenticity of the transcript.

Long term: cultivating qualified candidates in China. The interviewee data shows that first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester are unprepared in academic proficiency and vital skills and abilities for their study in U.S. colleges because the educational system and study abroad industry in China only prepare students to be admitted by a college overseas. Preparing students to survive and thrive in a college overseas is a huge blank in the educational system and study abroad industry for Chinese international students, which provides a good opportunity for U.S. colleges to prepare the

qualified candidates in China for the pipeline. In the long term, ODU can have workshops in China to prepare middle school and high school students and educate their parents for students' future studying abroad and host summer and winter camp in the U.S. This practice will not only cultivate Chinese international students to be qualified candidate for their study in U.S. colleges and increase ODU's revenue, but also actively engage Chinese international students and their parents, which is good to promote ODU's brand and build its reputation in China.

Office or team that supports Chinese international students in academic jeopardy.

Being on academic probation and recess is a very complicated experience for Chinese international students, and they usually have unexpected and unimaginable challenges after being on academic probation and recessed. As shown in interview data, those challenges included, but are not limited to: (correctly) understanding the email notification and procedures, (correctly) understanding the related academic policies, fully awareness of serious consequences of being on academic probation and recessed, understanding the purpose of SAP form and Probation Conference or Petition Form and Reinstatement Conference, how to fill in the SAP and Petition forms and prepare Probation Conference or Reinstatement Conference, (correctly) understanding the conversation in Probation Conference or Reinstatement Conference, lacking strategies and knowledge to get off academic probation, mental health issues, involving in other student misconduct behaviors, and contact agencies/agents instead of official resources and services.

Currently, ODU has a China office, but the main mission of this office is building a partnership with universities in China and serving visiting scholars from China. Thus, it is necessary for ODU to establish an office or team to support Chinese international students, especially for Chinese international students in academic jeopardy. In order to improve their

academic performance and overall experience at ODU, this office needs to provide the services include: pre-and-post Probation Conference to prepare the conference and follow up with students, transferring to another college (guidance in filling application forms, transfer out form, and preparing materials such as transcripts and a bank statement), reinstatement and readmission preparation and application, housing, dealing with transition issues at another college after transferring, and assistance in F-1 visa application.

Professional development to faculty and staff. Having a large international student population from a country that has a very different culture and values from the U.S. is challenging to faculty and staff in U.S. colleges. As shown in interview data, faculty and staff at ODU are not well prepared to teach and serve Chinese international undergraduate students in their academic learning and transition in college, including faculty and staff who are from China. ODU needs to provide workshops to faculty and staff so that they can understand how to teach and serve the 95hou Chinese international students. Again, these workshops need to be taught by researchers and/or professionals who deeply understand the 95hou Chinese international students and have experiences of directly working and communicating with those students.

Education to Chinese parents. The inputs from parents of Chinese international students impact students' academic learning, psychological development, and mental health during studying abroad. According to the interview data, most Chinese parents did not parent students to be an independent learner, an independent thinker, and an independent problem solver; and most Chinese parents actually created pressures to students that had a negative influence in students' academic learning. The International Student Office at ODU hosted a parents' section during the International New Student Orientation, but it did not focus on supporting students. In order to educate Chinese parents to correctly parent and support their children during studying abroad,

ODU can have a workshop in Mandarin during the International New Student Orientation for Chinese parents, post related articles and guidance on the Student Success Team WeChat Public Account, and host trainings in China.

Policy level: recommendations for ODU. It is worth noting that the increase of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester at ODU, and the increase of Chinese college students in China who fail courses both happened since the policy of open access to more Chinese students to attend college in the U.S. and in China. This situation reminds the educational policymakers to consider carefully the possible issues before implementing enlarging enrollment of high education, and fully assess the outcomes of this policy and related current practices, in order to provide appropriate services and resources that meet students' needs to support them.

The rates of first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester started to increase sharply at ODU after 2010. However, there is no research about this phenomenon and this phenomenon did not raise ODU's attention from high-level administrators. Therefore, ODU needs to have a strong leadership to support Chinese international students in academic jeopardy, and have funding to support Chinese international students and related research.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the very first academic study focused on Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation in the U.S., the findings and discussions of these research have implications on the related research of student success and Chinese international students.

This topic is very new. So far, there is no national or international data available about Chinese international students who are on academic probation, recessed, and dismissed. I

contacted more than ten universities to ask for the general data and information about the academic probation rates of first-year Chinese international students, but I did not receive any reply from those universities. In order to further understand this student population and provide appropriate services to them, it is necessary to conduct multi-schools research about first-year Chinese international students on academic probation after their first semester.

Academic probation can happen at any time to students during their college life. The author observed that some first-year Chinese international students were in good standing after their first semester, but they were on academic probation or recessed after their second semester, or they were on academic probation in their second or third year. Thus, the future study needs to include Chinese international students who are on academic probation in any year during college.

This study focused on first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester, future comparative studies, such as first-year Chinese international students, international students from other countries, and domestic students who are on academic probation, and first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation and in good standing may have new findings about the problem of academic probation.

As shown in the interview data, some interviewees were on academic probation again or recessed after returning to good standing in the following years. Thus, it is necessary to conduct a longitude study on the pathway of first-year students who are academic probation after their first semester through their graduation.

This study did not include voices from faculty, staff, and administrators in U.S. colleges. A future study about how faculty, staff, and administrators perceive the problem of Chinese international students can provide insights from the U.S. colleges, and find out the gaps between Chinese students' perceptions and U.S. colleges perceptions.

The findings of this study demonstrated that the existed research about Chinese international students overly addressed the “international” characteristic of those students, and ignored their characteristics as students and Chinese that significantly impact their academic learning in U.S. colleges. Thus, future research and study about Chinese international students need to focus more on the characteristics of the *95hou* Chinese international students and their pre-college educational background and academic performance, rather than only addressing the language barrier and the transition issues in a different country. Also, researchers in the U.S. and other countries need to pay attention to research about Chinese college students conducted by scholars in China, in order to understand this student population.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. The first is that Chinese international students who are on academic probation are one of the student populations that are very difficult to reach and engage in research projects, so the survey response rate is about 16%. The survey results may not represent all first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester at ODU. Similarly, the experiences of the total of 20 interviewees may not adequately represent the experiences of the entire population. Second, this study used a survey and interviews to collect data related to participants’ educational background, first-semester experiences, and experiences of being on academic probation. All of these are self-reported data. The nature of self-reported data may raise concerns about the quality of the data. For example, participants may not be able to recall all details in their experiences and to describe their whole experiences due to the length of each interview.

Generalizability

This study focused on first-year Chinese international students who are on academic

probation after their first semester and was conducted at one research site, however, the research instruments can be applied to other student population and other higher education institutions in the U.S. and other countries. The survey and interview protocol can be applied to all Chinese international undergraduate students who are on academic probation, recessed, and dismissed at ODU. With some adjustments, the survey and interview protocol can be applied to other international students and domestic students who are on academic probation, recessed, and dismissed at ODU. The survey and interview protocol also can be applied to academic probationary, suspended, and dismissed students in other colleges worldwide with some changes. For example, the on-campus resources and services question can be changed with the answers of resources and services provided by another college.

Conclusion

In conclusion, first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester is a relatively new phenomenon that surfaced after the expanded enrollment of Chinese international undergraduate students in U.S. colleges. The findings in this study show this issue is far beyond the language barrier and transition problems in a foreign college that shown in the existed literature. At ODU, this issue exacerbated from Fall 2006 to Fall 2017, which is presented by the increasing rates of academic probation, the worse academic performance of students by year, and more students had difficulties to leave academic probation in one semester.

The findings in this study are very different from the findings in the most existed literature in English about Chinese international students. The analysis of students' educational records shows that students' first semesters' GPAs had the negative relationship with the means of students' total scores in TOEFL, SAT, and ACT, and only students' TOEFL listening scores

and ACT reading scores have significance with their first semester GPAs. It implies that U.S. colleges may consider using other criteria, such as the *Gaokao* score, when recruiting international undergraduate students from China. When looking at students' academic performance in each course they enrolled in their first semester, students had poor GPAs in two categories of courses: one is courses in STEM fields, and the other is courses that need high commitment and devotion to course load. Nearly 90% of students in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017 earned a 0.0 in at least one course in their first semester, which significantly contributed to being placed on academic probation after their first semester.

The survey results and interview data demonstrate participants have very different educational backgrounds. Many participants went to non-traditional public high schools in China, such as international divisions in public and private high schools and international high schools, which negatively impact their academic performance in high school and college. The vast majority of the main reasons for being on academic probation identified by survey respondents and interviewees are in the categories of institutional navigation and socio-emotional engagement. For example, the top main reasons include not studying (hard), poor learning attitude, no clear goals in college (and life), lack tenacity in long-term hard working, and lacking time management skills. The language barrier that addressed commonly in the existed literature was not identified as the main reason by participants.

The findings demonstrate that first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation were not prepared for the knowledge, abilities and skills, and maturity that are essential for them to survive in U.S. colleges. While the findings in this study are very different from most existed literature in English, they are highly consistent with the findings in literature in Chinese about Chinese college students in China who failed courses. This shows

when a Chinese student has low pre-college academic proficiency in pre-college, no clear goals in college, no motivation to study, low psychological development, and low self-control, no matter which country he/she is studying and which language he/she is studying in, it is very likely that this student will fail in his/her college study.

As shown in the findings, first-year Chinese international students who are on academic probation after their first semester were not prepared in academic proficiency, institutional navigation, and socio-emotional engagement. However, the root reasons that cause students' poor preparation are far more complicated than attributing all to students. The educational policies in China, the entering of social capital in education in China, the study abroad industry in China and overseas, and Chinese parents' parenting styles all contribute to students' poor preparation before studying abroad. U.S. colleges, faculty, staff, and administrators lack understanding in those contributors and the characteristics of the Chinese international students from the current generation, and they are not prepared for teaching and serving a large number of students from China, which caused U.S. college to fail to provide the services that fit those students' needs. The process of returning to good standing is tortuous, for some participants, their studying abroad experiences in the U.S. is trauma.

The issue of Chinese international students on academic probation is a "mess" that created by study abroad craze which is driven the capital, policy, and commercialization, and students become the victims who suffer the serious consequences. Thus, this issue cannot be resolved only relies on the inputs from students. Faculty, staff, and administrators in U.S. colleges need to take the responsibilities to support those students in the personal level, intervention level, and policy level, in order to prevent this problem, support students to return to good standing, and cultivate qualified candidates from China for the future pipeline.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Factors in Variables in the NSSC Student Success Model

| Variable | Factors |
|----------------------------|--|
| Academic proficiency | High school preparation Uneven abilities in English and academic learning |
| Institutional navigation | Academic policies Immigration policies related to academic performance Academic advising procedures Major mismatch Unsuitable course selection |
| Socio-emotional engagement | Transition issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Locus of control- Peer influence- Motivation- Self-authorship Family obligations/expectations Work obligations Stress management Racism |

APPENDIX B

Survey Items

| Academic Proficiency | |
|--|---|
| <u>Factors</u> | <u>Survey Items</u> |
| High school preparation | High school(s) type Years in high school Took <i>Gaokao</i> or (The college entrance exam in China) or not Type of universities/colleges could be admitted in China |
| Uneven abilities in English and academic learning | English skills Proficiency in different subjects Learning abilities in STEM courses |
| Institutional Navigation | |
| <u>Factors</u> | <u>Survey Items</u> |
| Academic policies | Academic status: academic probation, recess, and dismissal Course dropping |
| Immigration policies | The impact of academic performance on I-20 and F-1 visa |
| Using resources on campus | Academic advising Other academic support and resources |
| Unsuitable course selection | Enrolled in courses which do not match personal interest, the level of English skills and academic learning, and/or major requirements |
| Socio-emotional Engagement | |
| <u>Factors</u> | <u>Survey Items</u> |
| Transition issues - Locus of control - Peer influence - Resistance - Motivation - Self-authorship | Self-management level Class attendance Assignment submission Attending quizzes, exams Study hours Have roommates/friends/high school classmates on academic probation together Resistance to study/go to school Level of study motivation Time management |
| Personal issues | Relationship and/or friendship obligations Family and/or work obligations |
| Stress management | Study load Test anxiety |
| Racism | Racism on and/or off campus |

APPENDIX C

Survey Questions Written in Chinese

问卷问题

1. 学生证号
2. 性别
 - 男
 - 女
3. 第一个学期的专业
4. 现专业，如果与第一个学期专业不同
5. 为什么来美国留学？请选择所有适用选项
 - 不想参加高考
 - 不适应国内教育制度
 - 在国内上大学没意思
 - 美国教育更好
 - 考美国大学更容易
 - 美国大学学习更容易
 - 其他理由，请说明
6. 谁决定要出国留学？
 - 自己提出来，家长也愿意
 - 自己提出来，家长不愿意
 - 家长提出来，自己也愿意
 - 家长提出来，自己不愿意
7. 你一共上了几年高中？
 - 一年
 - 两年
 - 两年半
 - 三年
 - 其他，请注明
8. 高中校名及类型。请列出所有的学校名称及类型。
学校 1: 名称
类型: 重点高中重点班/实验班

- 重点高中普通班
- 重点高中国际部
- 普通高中重点班/实验班
- 普通高中普通班
- 普通高中国际部
- 私立高中
- 私立高中国际部
- 国际学校
- 美国高中
- 其他，请注明

学校 2：名称

类型： 重点高中重点班/实验班

- 重点高中普通班
- 重点高中国际部
- 普通高中重点班/实验班
- 普通高中普通班
- 普通高中国际部
- 私立高中
- 私立高中国际部
- 国际学校
- 美国高中
- 其他，请注明

学校 3：名称

类型： 重点高中重点班/实验班

- 重点高中普通班
- 重点高中国际部
- 普通高中重点班/实验班
- 普通高中普通班
- 普通高中国际部
- 私立高中
- 私立高中国际部
- 国际学校
- 美国高中
- 其他，请注明

学校 4：名称

类型： 重点高中重点班/实验班

- 重点高中普通班
- 重点高中国际部

- 普通高中重点班/实验班
- 普通高中普通班
- 普通高中国际部
- 私立高中
- 私立高中国际部
- 国际学校
- 美国高中
- 其他, 请注明

9. 在国内是否参加了高考?

- 是
- 否

10. 根据你从小学到高中的学习情况, 你认为自己能被国内哪类大学录取?

- 211, 985 高校
- 其它一本
- 二本
- 三本
- 大专

11. 在知道自己被学业查看以前, 你听说过任何关于学习状态的政策吗?

- 是
- 否

12. 在知道自己被学业查看以前, 你了解任何关于学习状态的政策吗?

- 是
- 否

13. 在你知道自己被学业查看以前, 你知道学习成绩会影响留学生的 I-20 和签证吗?

- 是
- 否

14. 第一个学期的 GPA

15. 你认为你被学业查看的原因是什么? (GPA<2.0)

| # | 原因 | 非常不同意 | 不同意 | 中立 | 同意 | 非常同意 |
|---|------|-------|-----|----|----|------|
| 1 | 英语不好 | | | | | |
| 2 | 课程太难 | | | | | |
| 3 | 专业太难 | | | | | |

-
- 4 出勤问题
 - 5 没按时交作业
 - 6 没按时参加考试
 - 7 缺乏时间管理技巧
 - 8 偏科
 - 9 抄袭/作弊
 - 10 没有及时退掉难的课
 - 11 不喜欢我的老师（们）
 - 12 老师给分太低
 - 13 没好好学习
 - 14 不想学习，没有动力
 - 15 很难适应老师的教学方法/风格
 - 16 学习时间太少
 - 17 自制力差
 - 18 作业太多，学习压力太大
 - 19 考试时太紧张
 - 20 想家
 - 21 恋爱/友谊分散了太多的时间和精力
 - 22 打工/家庭责任分散了太多时间和精力
 - 23 在校园内/外遇到歧视
 - 24 其他原因: 请注明
-

16. 你觉得造成自己第一个学期以后被学业查看的最重要的原因是什么？

17. 你有多少个中国同学朋友，比如室友，网友，高中同学，也被学业查看了？

- 0
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 15 个以上

18. 第一个学期你去见 academic advisor 了吗？

- 是。请写出是在哪个学院，哪个 residence hall，见了几次
- 否

19. 第一个学期通常你去找 academic advisor 的原因是什么？请选择所有适用选项。

- 选课

- 办理 under enrollment
- 转专业
- 讨论学习计划
- 讨论学习中遇到的问题
- 其他, 请注明

20. 第一个学期你是从哪里了解到与学习有关的信息的? 请选择所有适用选项

- ODU 官网
- 任课老师
- 学业顾问
- 其他我认识的中国学生, 比如朋友, 同学, 室友, 网友, RA, ICA, 等等
- 其他我认识的美国学生, 比如朋友, 同学, 室友, 网友, RA, ICA, 等等
- 其他国家的国际学生, 比如朋友, 同学, 室友, 网友, RA, ICA, 等等
- 其他, 请注明

21. 第一个学期你使用过下列校内资源吗? 请选择所有适用选项

- Academic Advisors, in the Colleges and/or in the XXX halls
- Inter-cultural Aids (ICAs)
- Residence Assistants (Ras)
- ODU Library and/or Peer Research Assistants in the Neighborhoods
- Writing Center in XXX Hall, Main Library, and/or XXX Centers
- English Learning Center Writing Lab
- Math Learning Center
- Learning Resources Center
- Chemistry help rooms
- Social Science help rooms
- Fitness classes
- XXX health clinics, center and/or in the XXX halls
- Counseling Center
- Social dialogue groups
- Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities
- International Students Office

22. 关于被学业查看的经历, 你还有哪些想要分享?

23. 你是否愿意参加关于学业查看和适应 ODU 大学生活的访谈? 访谈仅用于研究目的, 并且使用全中文进行。所有访谈内容将完全保密, 你的名字不会出现在最后的研究报告中。

- 是。请留下你的姓名和联系方式。姓名 邮箱 微信 电话
- 否。也请留下联系方式以便领取 5 美金奖励

APPENDIX D

Survey Questions Translated in English

1. Student ID No.
2. Sex
 - Male
 - Female
3. Major in the first semester
4. Current major, if different from the first semester
5. Why did you choose to study abroad in the U.S? Please check all apply.
 - Didn't want to take the *Gaokao*
 - Didn't adapt well to the educational system in China
 - It is boring to go to college in China
 - Education in the U.S. is better
 - Getting into American universities is easier
 - Studying in American universities is easier
 - Other, please specify
6. Who decided that you should study abroad?
 - I initiated the conversation, and my parents also wanted me to study abroad
 - I initiated the conversation, but my parents did not want me to study abroad
 - My parents initiated the conversation, and I also wanted to study abroad
 - My parents initiated the conversation, but I did not want to study abroad
7. How many years did you study in high school?
 - One year
 - Two years
 - Three Years
 - Other, please specify
8. Please list all of your high school names and types.

School 1: Name

Type: Please check

 - Public elite school elite/experimental division
 - Public elite school average division
 - Public elite school international division
 - Public non-elite school elite/experimental division
 - Public non-elite school average division
 - Public non-elite school international division
 - Private high school normal division

- Private high school international division
- International high school
- American high school
- Other, please specify

School 2: Name

Type: Please check

- Public elite school elite/experimental division
- Public elite school average division
- Public elite school international division
- Public non-elite school elite/experimental division
- Public non-elite school average division
- Public non-elite school international division
- Private high school normal division
- Private high school international division
- International high school
- American high school
- Other, please specify

School 3: Name

Type: Please check

- Public elite school elite/experimental division
- Public elite school average division
- Public elite school international division
- Public non-elite school elite/experimental division
- Public non-elite school average division
- Public non-elite school international division
- Private high school normal division
- Private high school international division
- International high school
- American high school
- Other, please specify

School 4: Name

Type: Please check

- Public elite school elite/experimental division
- Public elite school average division
- Public elite school international division
- Public non-elite school elite/experimental division
- Public non-elite school average division
- Public non-elite school international division
- Private high school normal division
- Private high school international division
- International high school
- American high school
- Other, please specify

9. Did you take the *Gaokao*?

- Yes
- No

10. Base on your K-12 academic performance, which tier of university do you think you are qualified to be admitted to in China?

- 211, 985 universities
- Other Tier One Universities
- Tier Two Universities
- Tier Three Universities
- Associate Degree Universities

11. Before you learned you were on academic probation, were you aware of ODU's policies on Academic Standing of Undergraduate Students? E.g., academic probation, recess, dismissal, etc.

- Yes
- No

12. Before you knew you were on academic probation, did you understand any of the academic status policy? E.g., academic probation, recess, dismissal, etc.

- Yes
- No

13. Before you learned you were on academic probation, were you aware that academic performance has an impact to international students' Form I-20 and F-1 visa?

- Yes
- No

14. First semester GPA

15. What are the reasons you think you are on academic probation (GPA<2.0)?

| # | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | My English is not good | | | | | |
| 2 | Courses are too difficult | | | | | |
| 3 | My major is difficult | | | | | |
| 4 | Didn't attend class as often as I should have | | | | | |
| 5 | Didn't submit assignments on time | | | | | |
| 6 | Didn't take quizzes/exams on time | | | | | |
| 7 | Lack of time management skills | | | | | |
| 8 | I am proficient in some courses and not proficient in other courses | | | | | |
| 9 | Plagiarism / Cheating | | | | | |
| 10 | Didn't drop difficult courses in time | | | | | |
| 11 | I do not like my professor(s). | | | | | |
| 12 | Professors gave me low scores | | | | | |

-
- | | |
|----|---|
| 13 | Didn't take studying seriously |
| 14 | Didn't want to study, no motivation |
| 15 | I had a hard time learning my professor(s)' teaching methods/styles |
| 16 | Spent too little time on studying |
| 17 | Low self-control |
| 18 | Too much homework and too much pressure to study |
| 19 | Text anxiety |
| 20 | Homesickness |
| 21 | Romantic relationship/friendship distracted me |
| 22 | Work/family obligations |
| 23 | On/off-campus racism |
| 24 | Others, please specify |
-

16. What is the most important reason do you think caused you are on academic probation?
17. How many Chinese classmates and friends do you have are also on academic probation? E.g. your roommates, suitemates, high school classmates, etc?
- 0
 - 1-5
 - 5-10
 - 10-15
 - More than 15
18. Did you meet with any academic advisors in your first semester?
- Yes, please specify in which colleges, in the Neighborhood Engagement Centers and how many times
 - No
19. If you have met with academic advisor(s) in your first semester, generally speaking, what were the reasons you went to see academic advisors last semester? Please check all that apply.
- Course selection
 - Under enrollment/sign Reduced Course Load form
 - Change major
 - Discuss academic plan
 - Discuss difficulties I had with studying
 - Others, please specify
20. Where did you learn the academic information in your first semester? Please check all apply.
- ODU official website
 - Instructors
 - Academic Advisors

- Other Chinese international students I know, e.g. friends, classmates, roommates, suitemates, residence assistants (RAs), inter-cultural aids (ICAs), etc.
- American students I know, e.g. friends, classmates, roommates, suitemates, RAs, ICAs, etc.
- International students from other countries, e.g., friends, classmates, roommates, suitemates, RAs, ICAs, etc.
- Others, please specify

21. Did you use any on-campus resources in your first semester? Please check all that apply.

- Academic Advisors, in the Colleges and/or in the XXX halls
- Inter-cultural Aids (ICAs)
- Residence Assistants (RAs)
- ODU Library and/or Peer Research Assistants in the Neighborhoods
- Writing Center in XXX Hall, Main Library, and/or XXX Centers
- English Learning Center Writing Lab
- Math Learning Center
- Learning Resources Center
- Chemistry Help Rooms
- Social Science Help Rooms
- Fitness classes
- XXX health clinics, center and/or in the XXX halls
- Counseling Center
- Social dialogue groups
- Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities
- International Students Office

22. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experience on academic probation?

23. Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview about academic probation and your experience(s) at ODU? This interview is for research purposes only, and it will be conducted solely in Mandarin. All information will be completely confidential. Your name will not be attached to any information in the final report.

- Yes, please leave your name and contact information. Email, WeChat, phone number
- No, please leave your contact information in order to receive \$5.00 survey incentive

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol Written in Chinese

采访大纲

你好！非常感谢你来和我聊聊你的经历。访谈的主要目的就是聊聊你第一个学期的学习和生活。我们今天聊的所有内容都会严格保密，学校名字和你的名字都不会出现在我的研究报告中。

1. 能先谈谈你自己的一些情况吗？

- 你现在大几了，专业，等等。
- 你的老家，长大的地方。
- 你的家庭，例如父母的教育水平和工作。
- 你和父母的关系怎么样？

2. 请谈谈你的教育背景。

- 你是在哪儿上的小学和中学？
- 你上的是什么样的学校？小学，初中，高中。
- 你在小学到高中都是个什么样的学生？
- 在上大学之前，你觉得你的学校生活都怎么样？
- 你从小到大，在你的教育上，父母都是如何帮助你的？

3. 请谈谈关于你出国留学的决定。

- 做这个决定的过程都有谁参与了？
- 你是什么时候决定，或者说，你是什么时候知道自己会出国留学的？
- 你是怎么准备出国留学的？
- 在你考完托福/雅思，SAT/ACT 之后，你还在上学，或者是上课（有可能是在一些培训班）吗？考完这些试以后你还做了些什么？
- 你觉得自己做好出国留学方面的准备了吗？（对你做的这些出国留学的准备，你觉得怎么样？）
- 谈谈你申请美国大学的过程。

扩展问题：

- 你是怎么申请美国大学的？
- 选择申请哪些美国大学时，你都考虑了哪些因素？
- 你是怎么决定来 ODU 的？做这个决定时还有哪些人参与了？

10. 请谈谈你是怎么选专业的？

- 你第一个学期的专业是什么？
- 做这个决定时还有哪些人参与了？
- 你现在的专业是什么？

- 如果学生转了专业，问谁做的决定。
- 如果学生没有转专业，问是否打算转专业。

10. 在你来 ODU 之前，你理解的美国生活是什么样的？对此你了解多少？

- 你对美国大学生生活有什么期待？（你觉得美国大学生生活是什么样的？）
- 你对美国大学的学习有什么期待？（你觉得美国大学的学习是什么样的？）
- 对你在美国大学的学习，你准备得怎么样？
- 你能定义这些本科生学业状态（Academic Standing of Undergraduate Students, ASUS）的术语吗？例如：状态良好，学业察看，勒令休学，开除，等等？
- 你对美国 I-20, F1 签证有关的移民方面的政策有什么了解？

6. 你第一个学期的经历怎么样？

- 你的学习情况怎么样？
- 说说你第一个学期的学习习惯。

扩展问题：

- 你每周花几个小时学习？
- 你有多少空闲时间？
- 空闲时间你都做些什么？例如：和朋友们一起玩儿吗？
- 你用过哪些和学习相关的资源和服务？

7. 我理解你第一个学期结束之后 academic probation。能说说你是怎么知道自己是 academic probation 的吗？

- 第一个学期以后，你是什么时候知道你是 academic probation 的？
- 你是怎么知道的？
- 通知你是 academic probation 的邮件上都说了什么？
- 从那封邮件上，你都明白/了解了什么？

8. 对你来说，你是 academic probation 意味着什么？

- 当你知道自己是 academic probation 时有什么样的感觉？
- 造成你一个学期结束以后就被 academic probatio 的原因是什么呢？最重要的原因是什么？
- 说说你的中国朋友/同学/室友。他们第一个学期都怎么样？他们中有人是 academic probation 吗？

9. 你知道自己第一个学期以后是 academic probation 之后，都采取了什么行动呢？

- 你有没有按照邮件通知的那样，填写 SAP 表格（Satisfaction of Academic Progress SAP form）并预约 academic advisor 开 Academic Probation Conference？如果有，你是什么时候填完 SAP 表格并去见 academic advisor 的？如果没有，能说说你为什么没有做这些吗？

- 回想一下填写 SAP 表格的过程。SAP 表格在哪些方面对你有帮助？SAP 表格对你多有大帮助？

10. 说说你和 academic advisor 开 Academic Probation Conference 的情况。这个过程是怎样的？

- 你是什么时候开的 Academic Probation Conference？
- 你是怎么准备这个面谈的？
- 你觉得这个面谈怎么样？
- 这个面谈有多大的帮助？

11. 谈谈你现在的 academic standing。(Good standing, final probation, extended final probation, or recess)

- 这是怎么发生的？你是怎么被 final probation/被勒令休学的？
- 对此有什么感觉？
- 当你知道自己是 final probation/被 recess 的时候，你采取了什么行动？
- 你未来的计划是什么？

12. ODU 怎么才能帮助你脱离 academic probation，处理被 recess，转到其它学校，申请 reinstatement 或者 readmission 重新回到 ODU,以及适应 ODU 的学习和生活？

扩展问题：

- 你觉得在自从你是 academic probation 以后，在这个问题上，谁/哪个资源或服务对你帮助最大？为什么？

13. 还有其它的建议，评论，经历，或者是任何事情你想要分享的吗？

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol Translated in English

1. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself?

- Your year in college and major, etc.
- Your hometown, the place you grew up.
- Your family, e.g. parents' education level and jobs.
- What was your relationship with your parents?

2. Tell me about your educational background.

- Where did you go to school?
- What schools did you go? Elementary school, middle school and high school.
- What were you like as a student?
- How did you feel about your school life before coming to college?
- How did your parents help you in your education?

3. Tell me the decision of your study abroad.

- Who involved in this decision-making process?
- When did you decide or know you would study abroad?
- How did you prepare for studying abroad?
- Did you continue go to school or take classes after taking TOEFL/IELTS, SAT/ACT? What else did you do after taking TOEFL/IELTS, SAT/ACT?
- How comfortable were you with your readiness with your study abroad?
- Tell me the process you used to apply U.S. universities.

Probe questions:

- How did you apply to U.S. universities?
- What did you consider when you selecting which universities to apply?
- How did you make the decision to come to ODU? Who else involved in the decision-making?

4. Tell me something about how you selected your major.

- What was your major in your first semester?
- Who else involved in this decision?
- What is your major now?
 - For students who changed their majors, ask them who made the decision.
 - For students who did not change their majors, ask them will they change their major.

5. What was your understanding of life in the U.S. before coming to ODU? What did you know about it?

- What were your expectations of life in U.S. higher education institutions?
- What were your expectations of study in U.S. higher education institutions?
- How prepared were you studying in the U.S.?

- Can you define these terms of Academic Standing of Undergraduate Students (ASUS) here? E.g., good standing, academic probation, recess, dismissal, etc?
 - What's your understanding of immigration policies here?
6. How was your experience during your first semester?
- How was your study going?
 - Describe your study habits in your first semester.
Probe questions:
 - How many hours did you spend on study after class every week?
 - How much free time did you have?
 - How did you use your free time?
 - What did you do in your free time? E.g. hanging out with friends?
 - What kind of resources and services related to your academic work did you use?
7. I understand you were on academic probation after your first semester. Can you tell me how you became aware of it?
- When did you know you are/were academic probation after your first semester?
 - How did you find it out?
 - What did the email that notified you were on academic probation say?
 - What did you understand from that email?
8. What was that like for you of being on academic probation?
- How did you feel when you knew you were on academic probation?
 - Could you tell me what were the reasons of you were placed on academic probation after first semester? What was the most important reason?
 - Tell me something about your Chinese friends/classmates/roommates. How were they doing at their first semester? Any of them were on academic probation?
9. What actions did you take when you knew you were on academic probation after the first semester?
- Did you fill in the Satisfaction of Academic Progress (SAP) form and schedule an Academic Probation Conference with an academic advisor as the email notification said? If so, when did you finish the SAP form and meet with an academic advisor? If not, can you tell me the reasons you not doing it?
 - Think about the process of filling in the SAP form. What ways did the SAP form help you? How helpful the SAP form was?
10. Describe the process of your Academic Probation Conference with your academic advisor. What was the process like?
- When did you do your Academic Probation Conference?
 - How did you prepare for it?
 - How do you feel about the meeting?
 - How helpful it was?
11. Tell me something about your current academic standing. (Good standing, final probation,

extended final probation, or recess)

- How did happen? How did you end up on final probation/being recessed?
- How did you feel about it?
- What actions did you take when you learned you are on final probation/recess?
- What is your plan for the future?

12. How can ODU help you to get off academic probation, deal with recess, transfer out and apply for reinstatement or readmission, and/or adapt to the learning and life at ODU?

13. Any other suggestions, comments, experiences, or anything you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX G

Tables and Figures

Figure 1

Number of 1st-year Chinese International Students' Enrollment by Semester, Who Were on Academic Probation after Their 1st-semester, and Academic Probation Rates at ODU from Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017

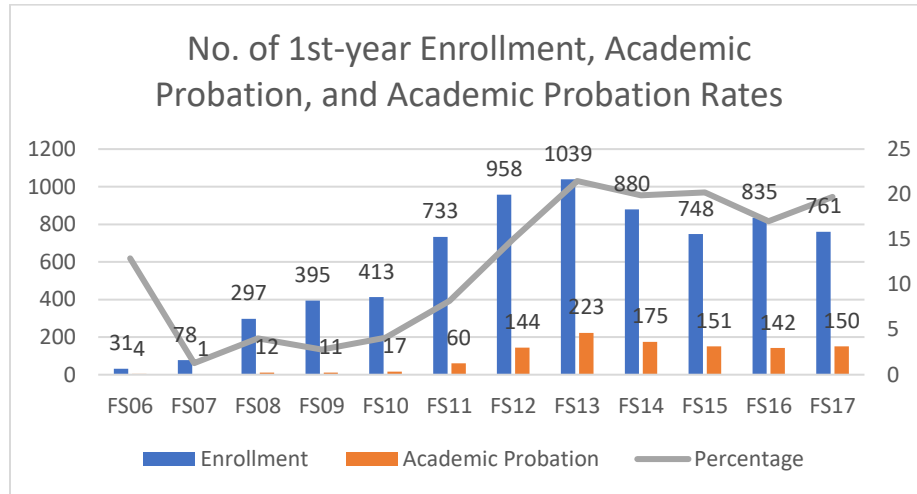


Figure 2

Percentage of 1st Time 1st Year Undergraduate Students on Academic probation after their First Semester at ODU

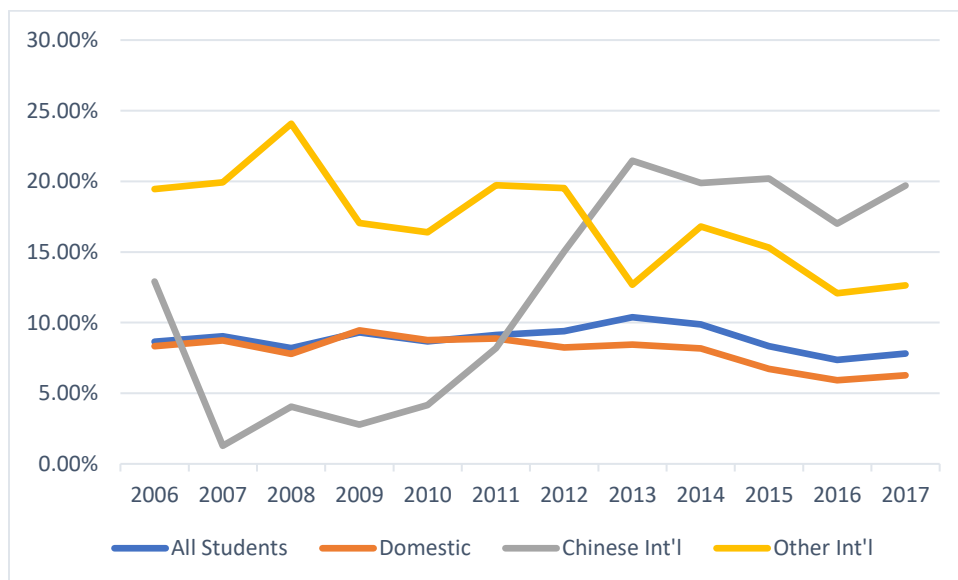


Figure 3

Persistence of First-Time First-Year Chinese Undergraduates by Their End of First Fall Academic Status at ODU

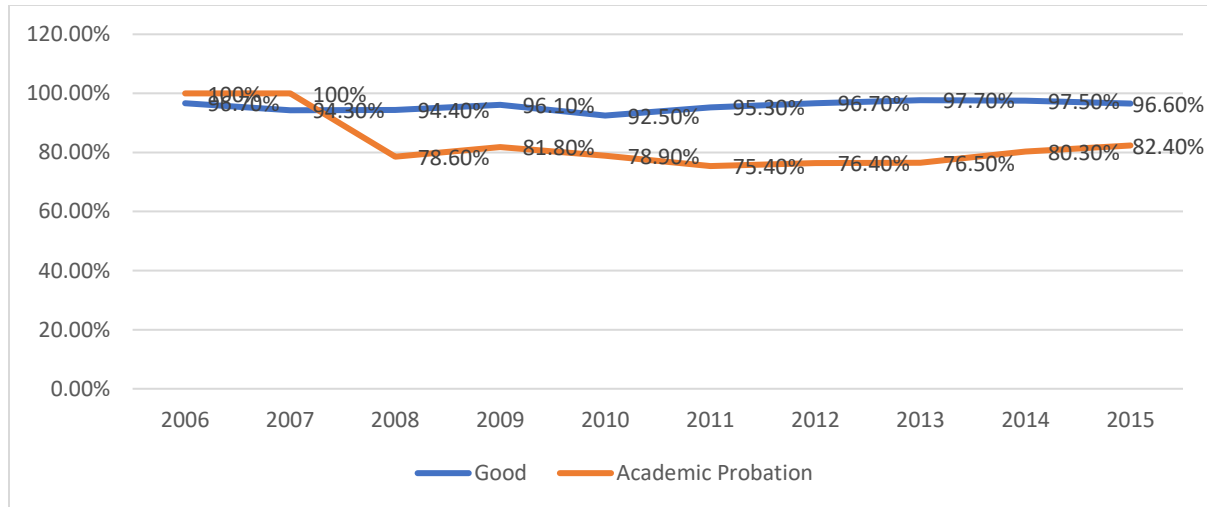


Figure 4

4-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time First-Year Chinese Undergraduates by Their End of First Fall Academic Status at ODU

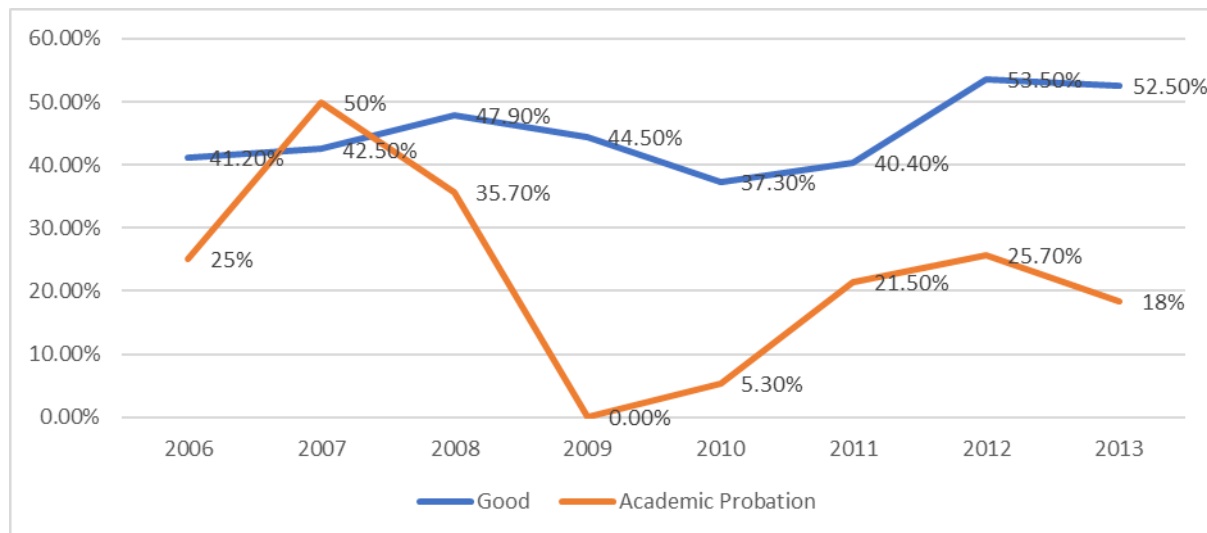


Figure 5

5-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time First-Year Chinese Undergraduates by Their End of First Fall Academic Status at ODU

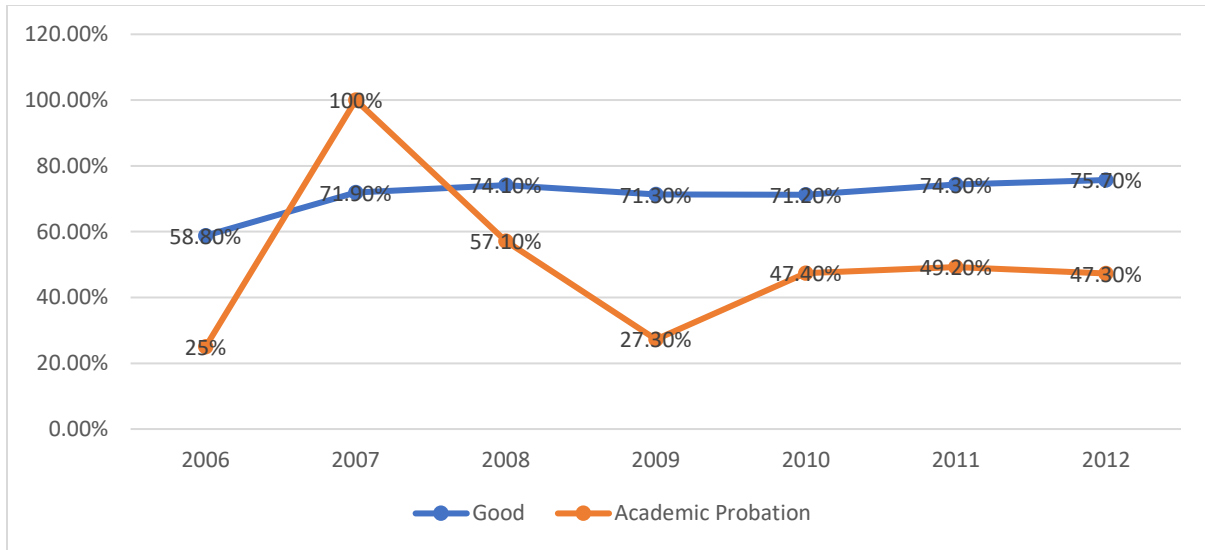


Figure 6

6-Year Graduation Rates of First-Time First-Year Chinese Undergraduates by Their End of First Fall Academic Status at ODU

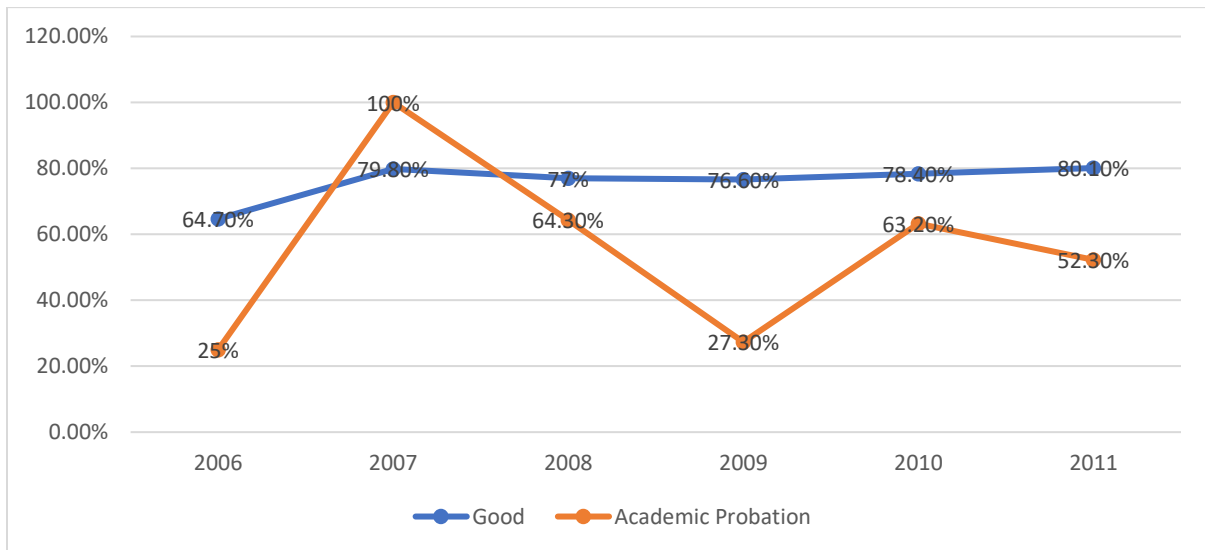


Figure 7

Distribution of 1st Spring Semester Academic Status of First-Time Chinese undergraduates Who are on Academic Probation by their End of First Fall

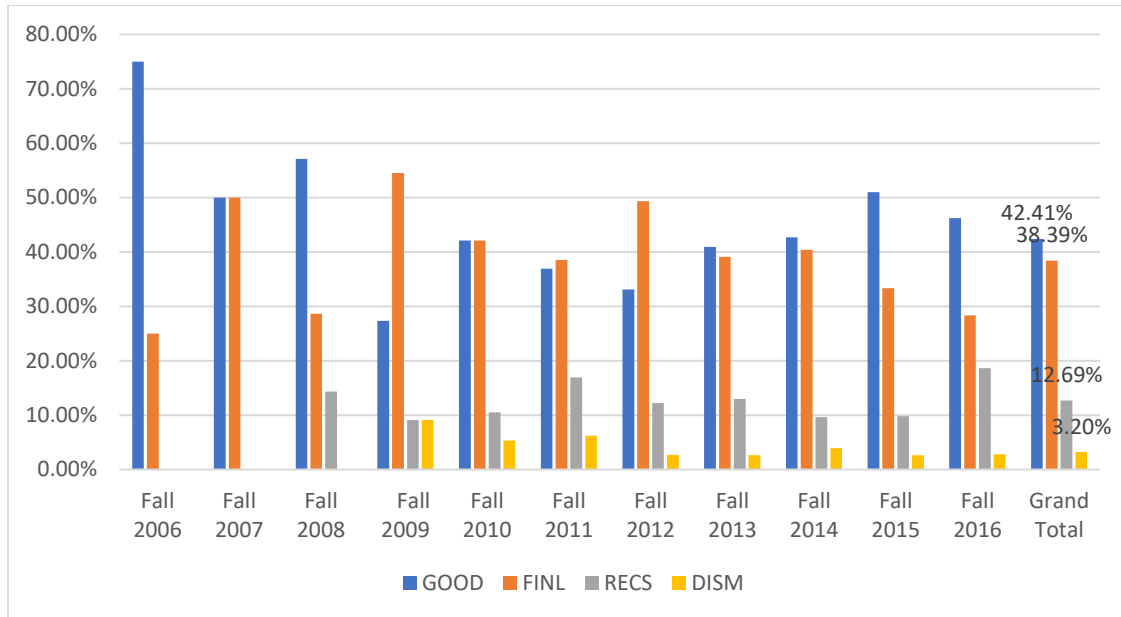


Table 1

Number of First Year Students Who Earned 0.0 GPA without Good Standing after Their First Semester

| Semester | All | Domestic | All Int'l | Chinese Int'l | Other Int'l |
|----------|-----|----------|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| FS06 | 41 | 37 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| FS07 | 31 | 24 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| FS08 | 36 | 30 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| FS09 | 40 | 34 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| FS10 | 33 | 28 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| FS11 | 40 | 27 | 13 | 8 | 5 |
| FS12 | 59 | 37 | 22 | 19 | 3 |
| FS13 | 69 | 49 | 20 | 18 | 2 |
| FS14 | 58 | 39 | 19 | 12 | 7 |
| FS15 | 55 | 33 | 22 | 16 | 6 |
| FS16 | 51 | 33 | 18 | 15 | 3 |
| FS17 | 49 | 29 | 20 | 18 | 2 |

Table 2

Number of First Year Students Who are Recessed after Their First Semester

| Semester | All | Domestic | All Int'l | Chinese Int'l | Other Int'l |
|----------|-----|----------|-----------|---------------|-------------|
| FS06 | 18 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| FS07 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| FS08 | 23 | 19 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| FS09 | 16 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| FS10 | 20 | 17 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| FS11 | 13 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| FS12 | 30 | 24 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| FS13 | 29 | 24 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| FS14 | 19 | 15 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| FS15 | 26 | 17 | 9 | 6 | 3 |
| FS16 | 37 | 27 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| FS17 | 34 | 20 | 14 | 12 | 2 |

Figure 8

First Semester Colleges of 1st- year Chinese International Students Who Were on Academic Probation after Their 1st semester at ODU from Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 20107

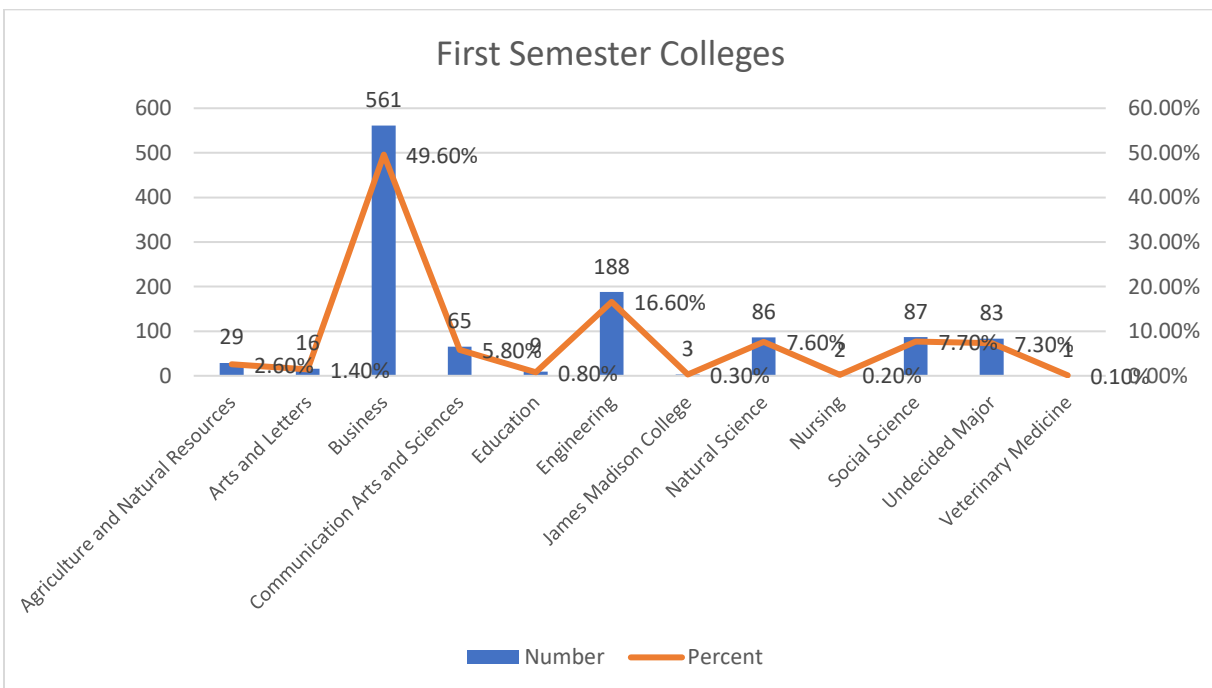


Figure 9

Changes in Mean, SD, Minimum, and Quartiles in GPA in Cohort Fall 2006 and Fall 2008 to Fall 2017

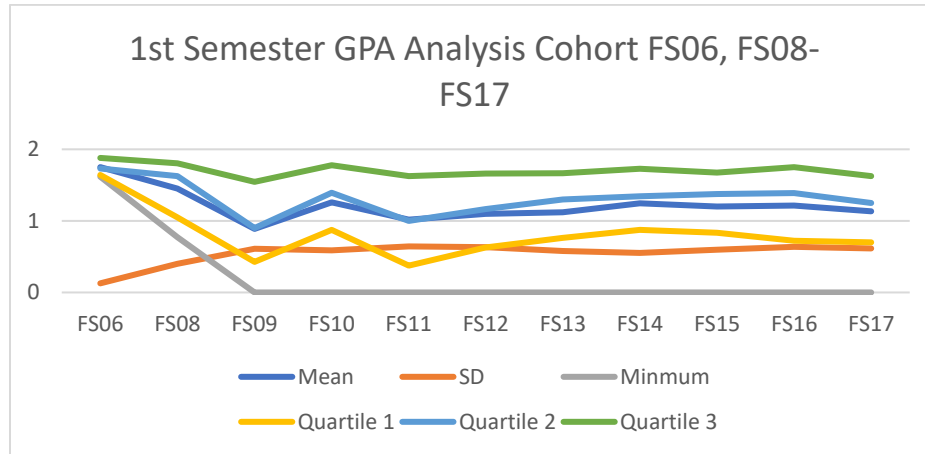


Figure 10

1st Semester GPA Distribution in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort 2017

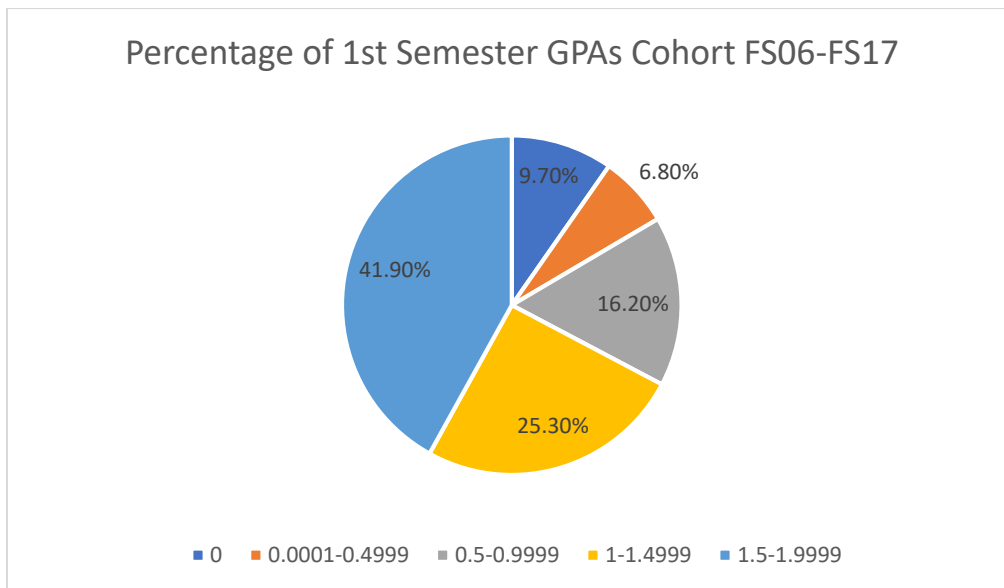


Figure 11

1st Semester GPA Distribution in Each Cohort in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort 2017

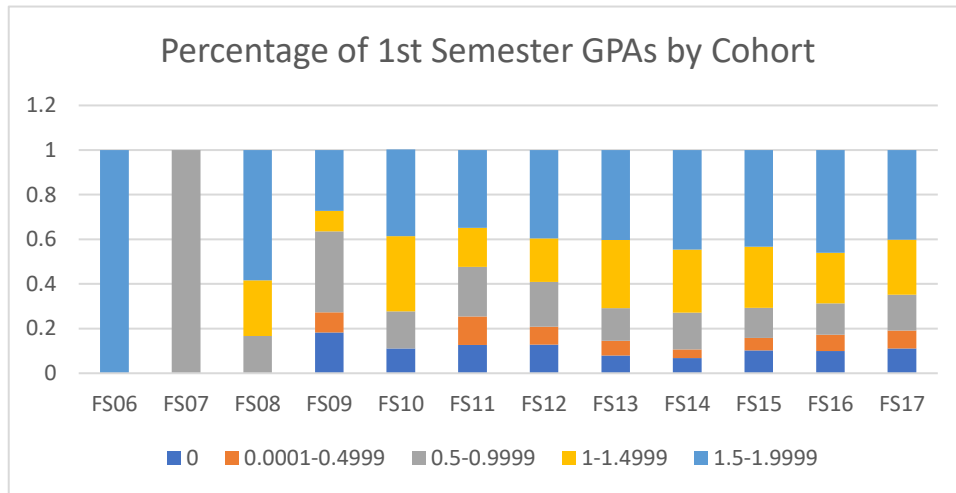


Table 3

Mean GPA by gender

| Gender | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
|--------|----------|------|----------------|
| F | 1.278888 | 364 | .5688067 |
| M | 1.129925 | 766 | .6126812 |
| Total | 1.177910 | 1130 | .6026845 |

Table 4

Correlations between First Semester GPA and Gender in Cohort Fall 2006 to Cohort Fall 2017

| | | Gender | GPA |
|--------|---------------------|---------|---------|
| Gender | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.116** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 1130 | 1130 |
| GPA | Pearson Correlation | -.116** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 1130 | 1130 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation of Students' iBT TOEFL Scores in Cohort Fall 2007 to Cohort Fall 2017

| | | TOEFL_TOTAL | TOEFL_READ | TOEFL_LISTEN | TOEFL_SPEAK | TOEFL_WRITE |
|----------------|-------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| N | Valid | 920 | 920 | 920 | 920 | 920 |
| Mean | | 83.00 | 22.20 | 21.50 | 19.51 | 20.22 |
| Std. Deviation | | 8.768 | 4.840 | 4.382 | 2.678 | 3.043 |
| Percentiles | 25 | 79.00 | 19.00 | 19.00 | 18.00 | 18.00 |
| | 50 | 83.00 | 22.00 | 21.00 | 19.00 | 20.00 |
| | 75 | 88.00 | 26.00 | 25.00 | 22.00 | 22.00 |

Figure12

Scatter Plots of Each Pair of Variables

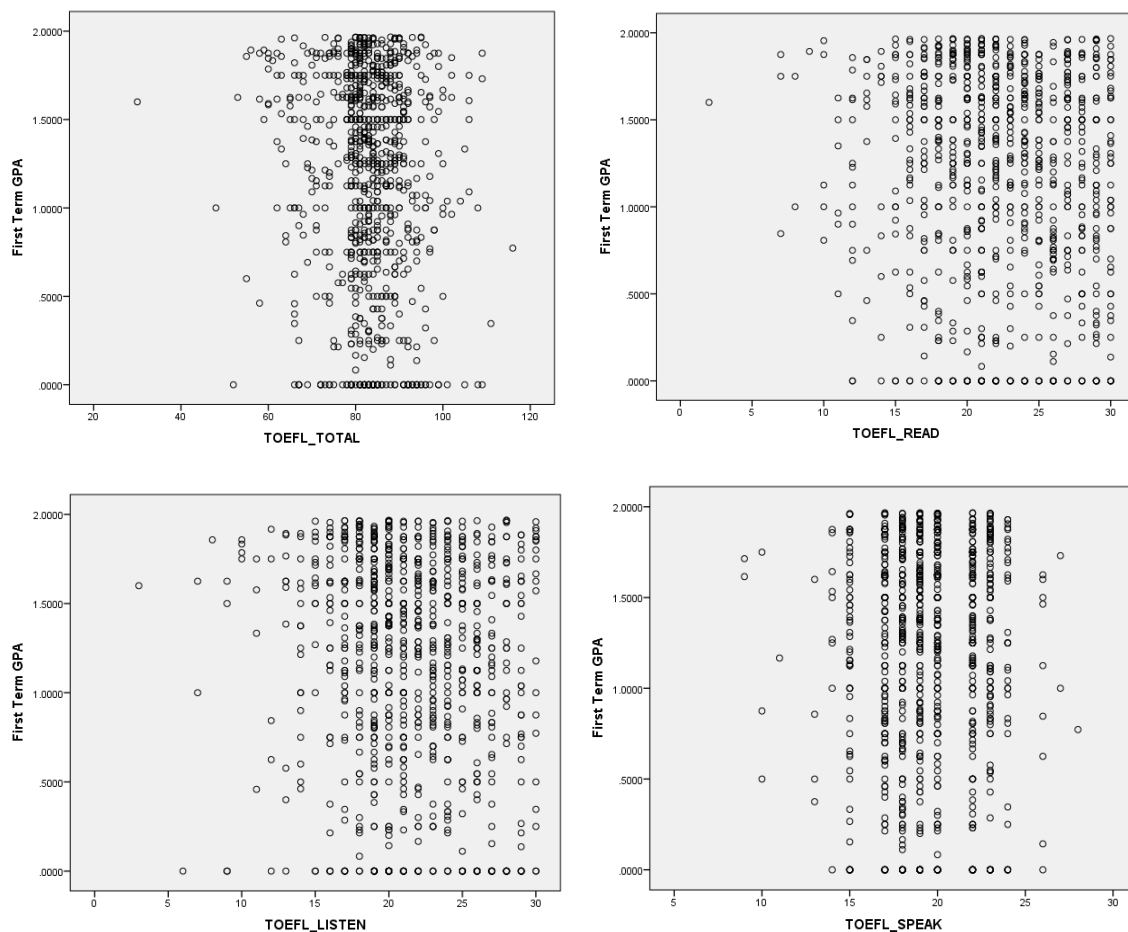


Figure 12 (cont'd)

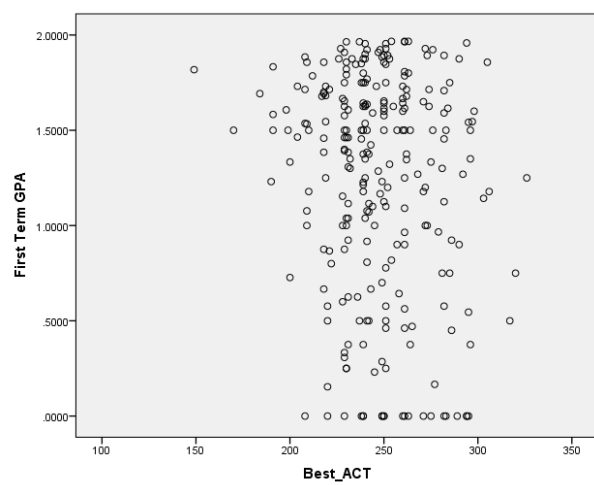
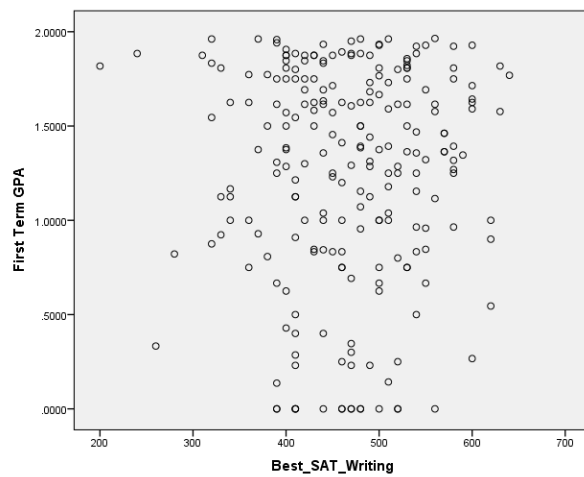
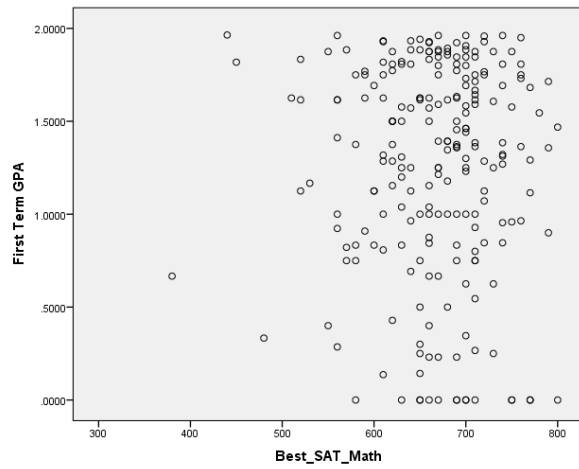
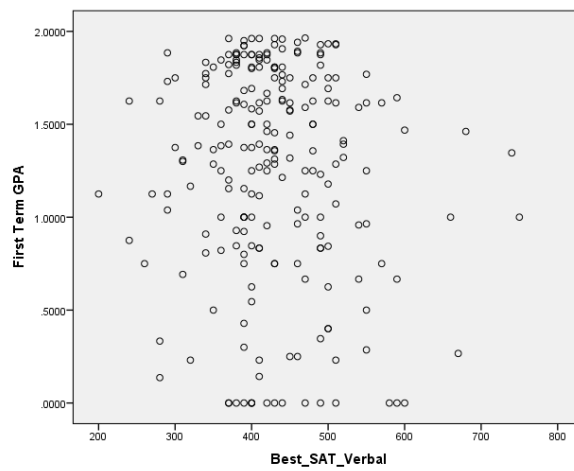
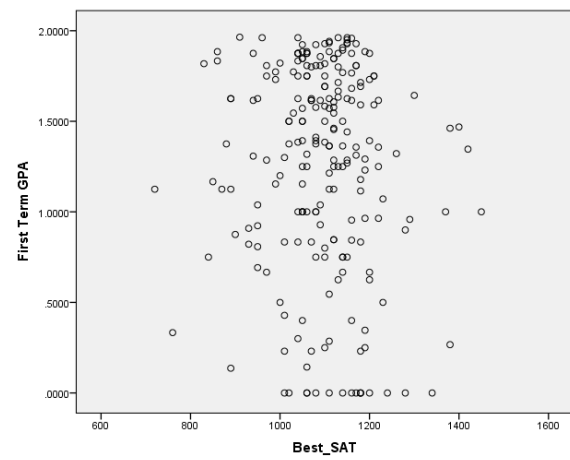
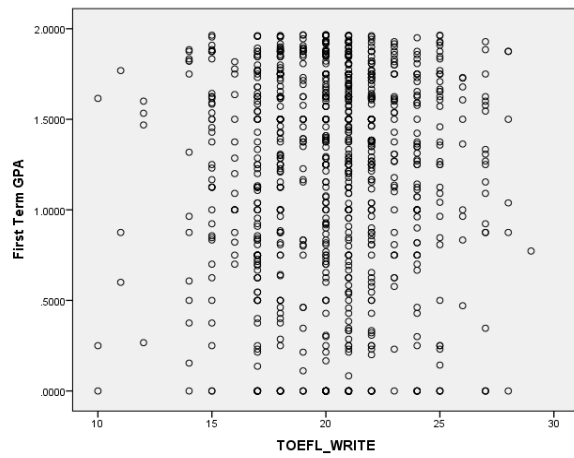


Figure 12 (cont'd)

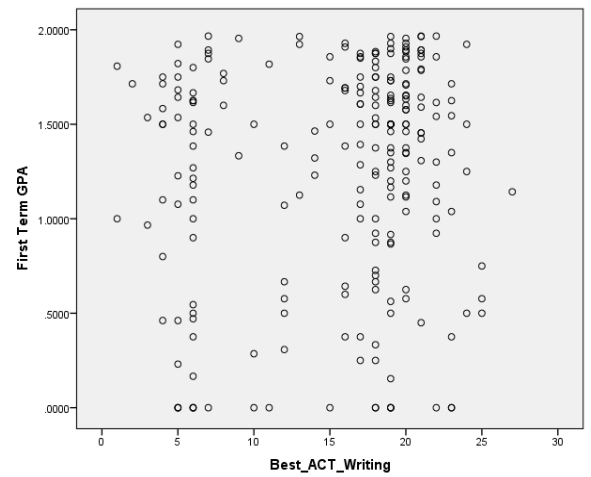
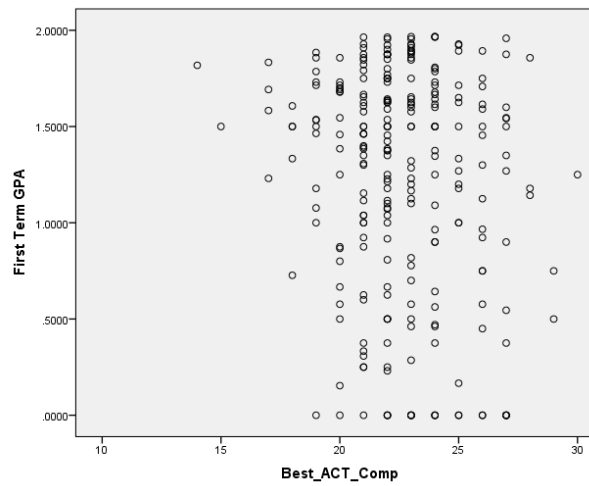
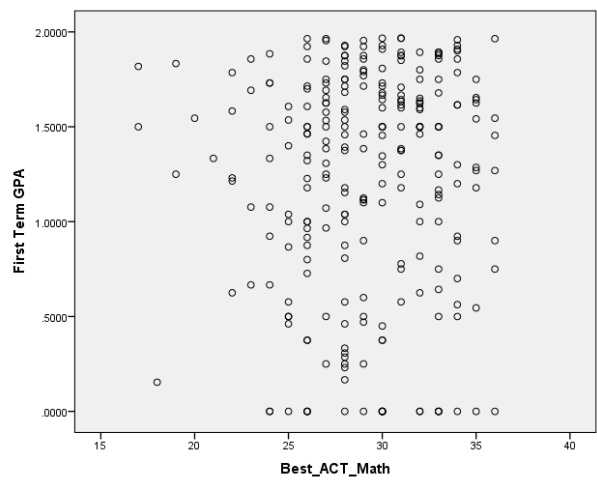
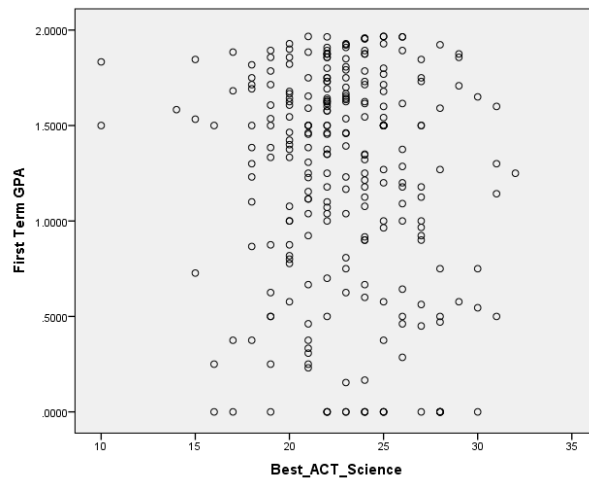
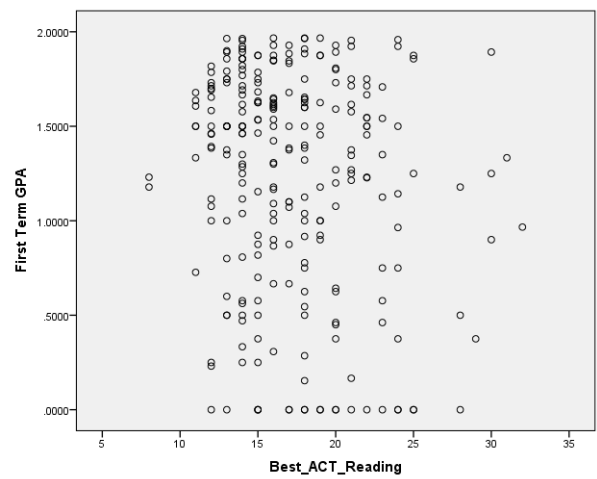
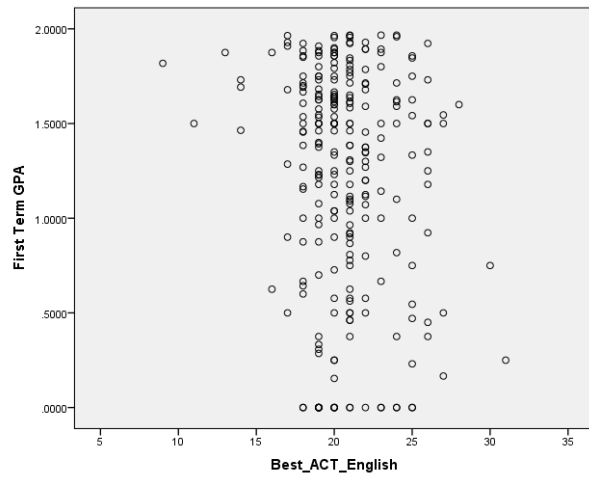


Table 6

Correlations between TOEFL Scores and GPAs, SAT Scores and GPAs, and ACT Scores and GPAs

| Variables | Person Correlation | Sig. (2 Tailed) | Sample Size |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| TOEFL total & GPAs | -0.088** | 0.007 | 920 |
| TOEFL reading & GPA | -0.093** | 0.005 | 920 |
| TOEFL listening & GPA | -0.100 | 0.002 | 920 |
| TOEFL speaking & GPA | 0.021 | 0.534 | 920 |
| TOEFL writing & GPA | 0.028 | 0.399 | 920 |
| SAT total & GPA | -0.084 | 0.206 | 226 |
| SAT verbal & GPA | -0.093 | 0.165 | 226 |
| SAT math & GPA | -0.023 | 0.732 | 226 |
| SAT writing & GPA | 0.021 | 0.758 | 226 |
| ACT total & GPA | -0.152* | 0.014 | 260 |
| ACT English & GPA | -0.146* | 0.019 | 260 |
| ACT reading & GPA | -0.161** | 0.009 | 260 |
| ACT science & GPA | -0.120 | 0.054 | 260 |
| ACT math & GPA | 0.046 | 0.456 | 260 |
| ACT composite & GPA | -0.147* | 0.018 | 260 |
| ACT writing & GPA | 0.106 | 0.105 | 237 |

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Figure 13

Distribution of Students' First Semester GPAs in Cohort Fall 2007 to Cohort Fall 2017

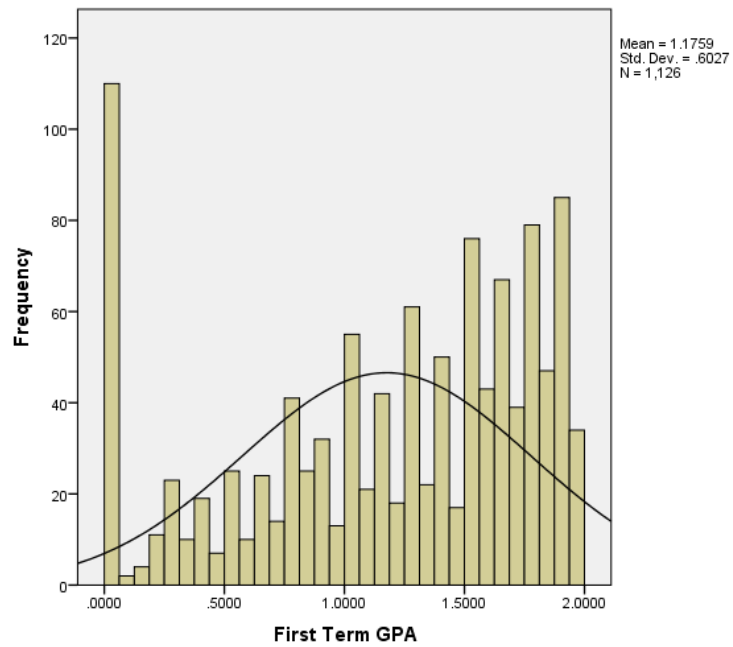


Table 7

Significance in One-way Anova Analysis between TOEFL Scores and GPAs, SAT Scores and GPAs, and ACT Scores and GPAs

| Variables | Sig. | Sample Size |
|-----------------------|-------|-------------|
| TOEFL total & GPA | 0.098 | 920 |
| TOEFL reading & GPA | 0.087 | 920 |
| TOEFL listening & GPA | 0.044 | 920 |
| TOEFL speaking & GPA | 0.874 | 920 |
| TOEFL writing & GPA | 0.364 | 920 |
| SAT total & GPA | 0.200 | 226 |
| SAT verbal & GPA | 0.649 | 226 |
| SAT math & GPA | 0.121 | 226 |
| SAT writing & GPA | 0.593 | 226 |
| ACT total & GPA | 0.103 | 260 |
| ACT English & GPA | 0.067 | 260 |
| ACT reading & GPA | 0.035 | 260 |
| ACT science & GPA | 0.113 | 260 |
| ACT math & GPA | 0.284 | 260 |
| ACT composite & GPA | 0.092 | 260 |
| ACT writing & GPA | 0.177 | 237 |

Figure 14

Means Plots of Each Pair of Variables Generated by the One-way ANOVA Analysis

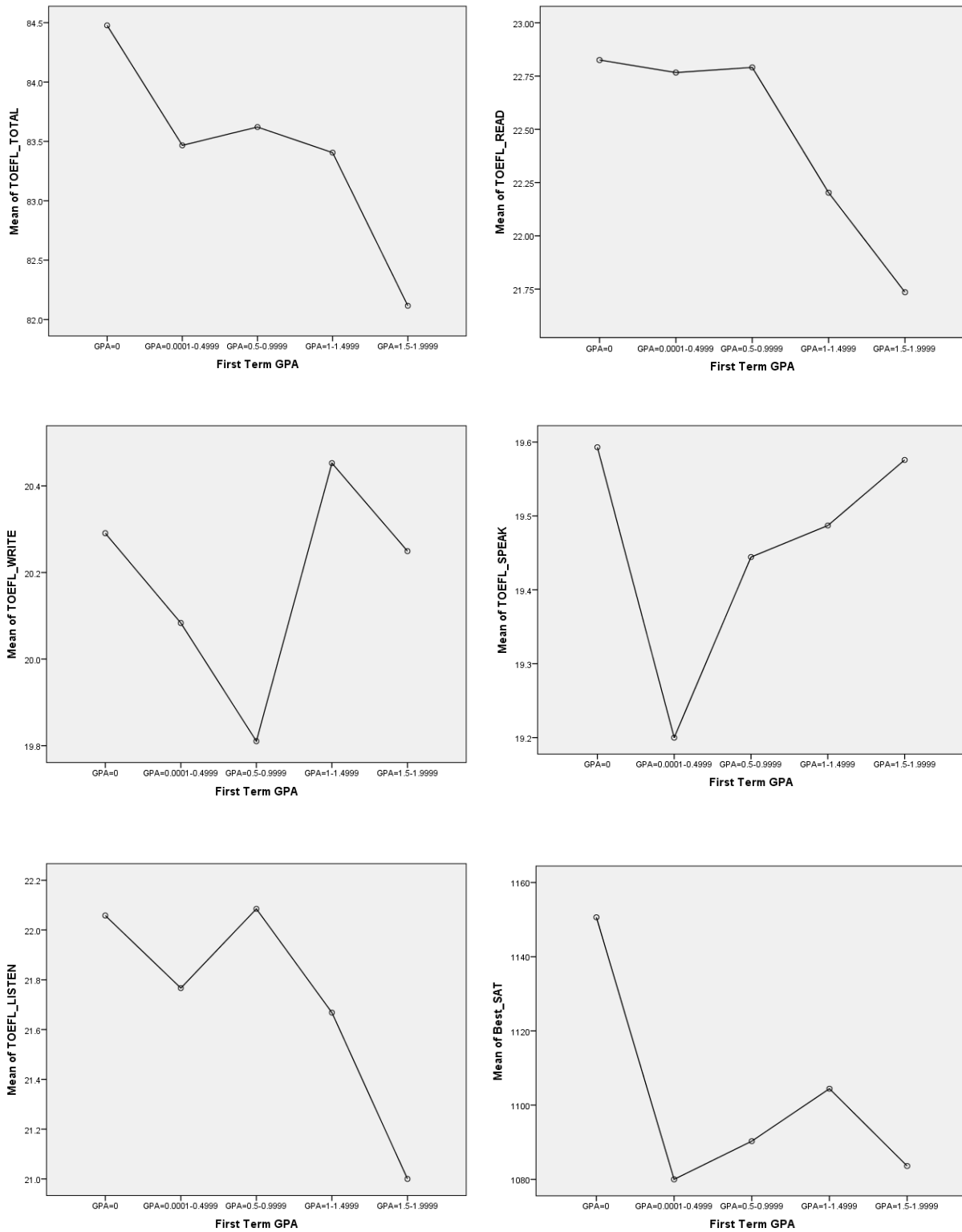


Figure 14 (Cont'd)

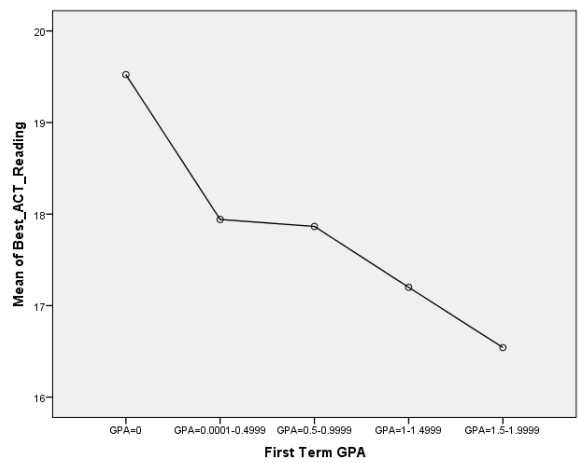
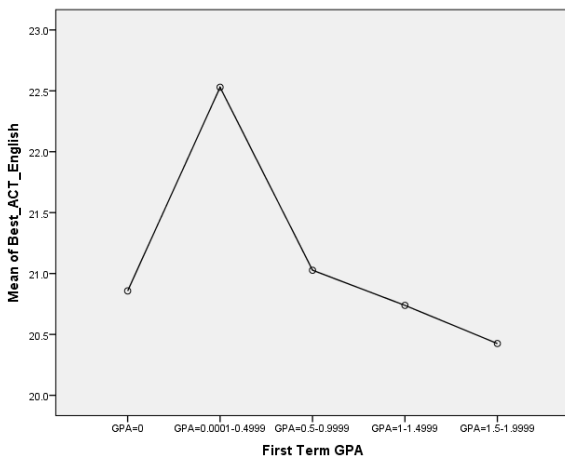
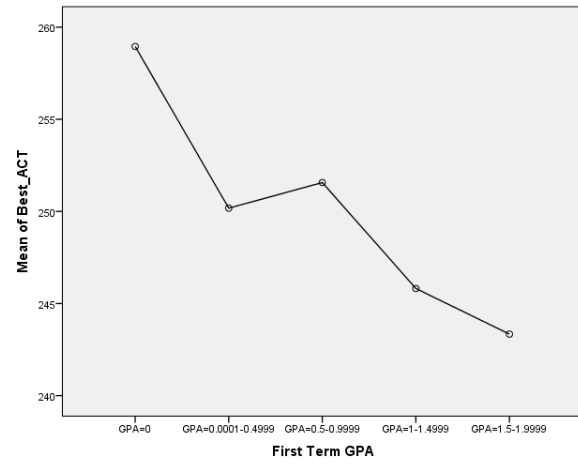
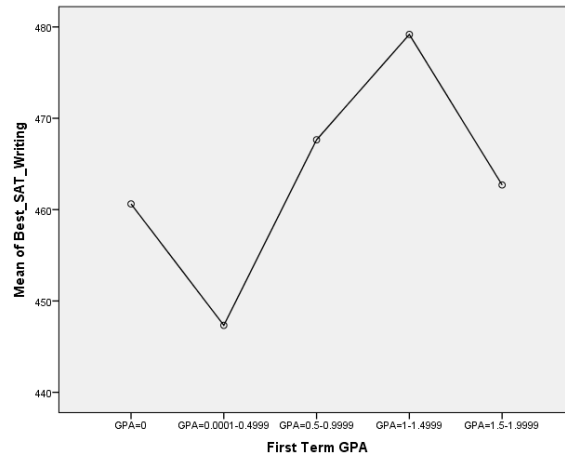
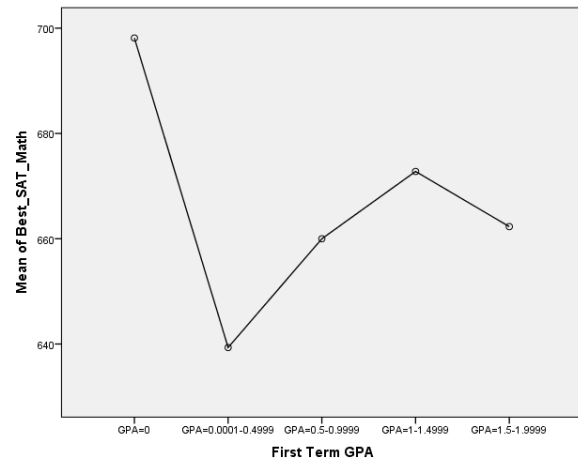
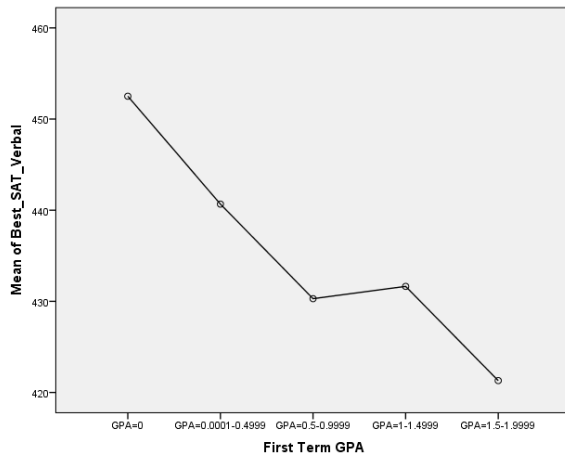


Figure 14 (Cont'd)

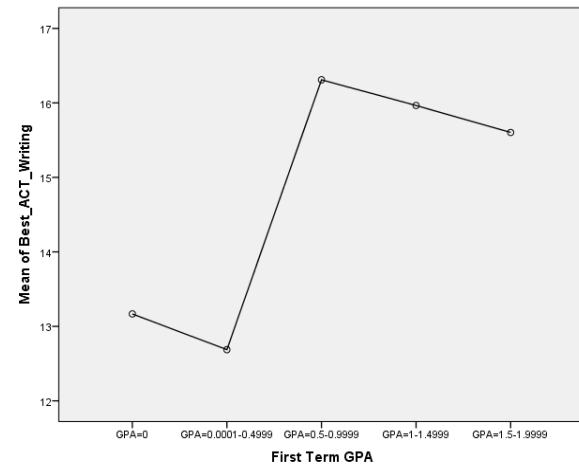
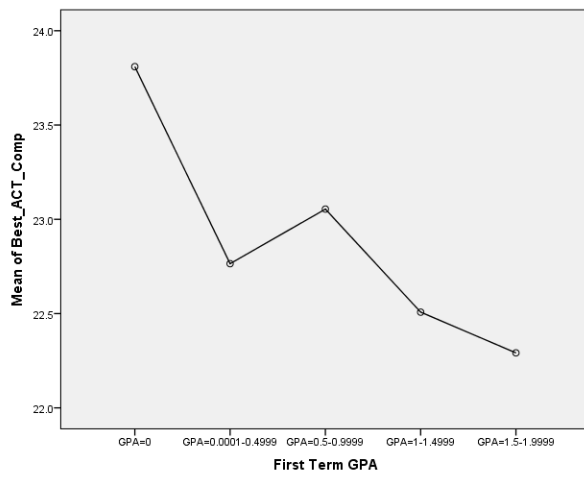
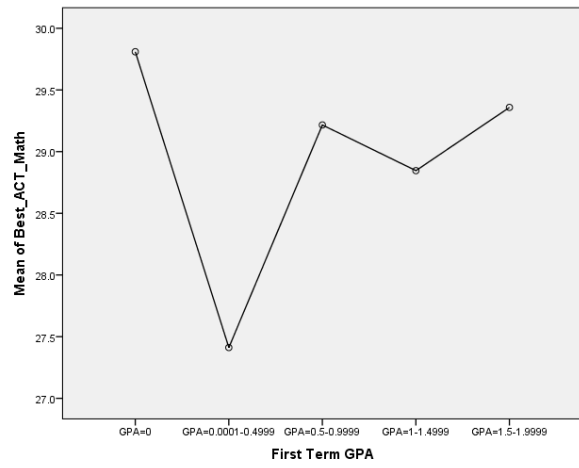
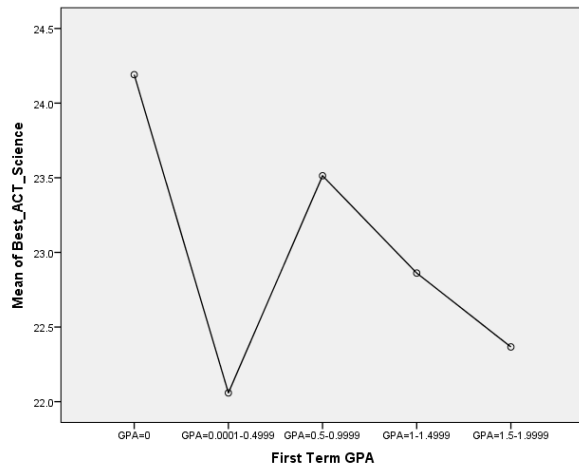


Figure 15

15 Subjects with More Than 50 Students Enrolled in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

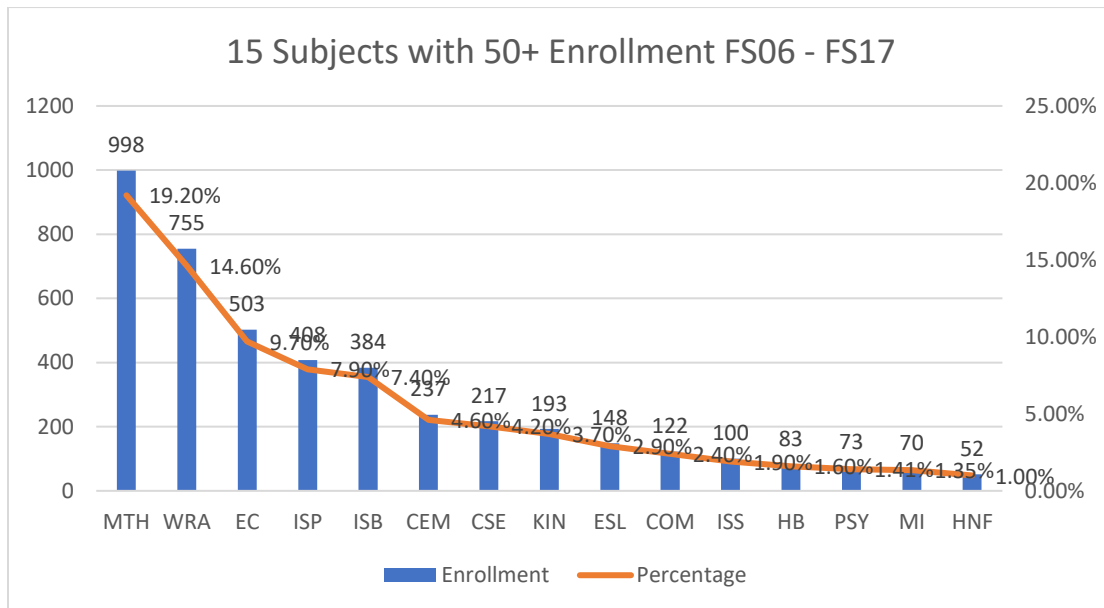


Figure 16

Top 11 Courses Most First-year Chinese International Students Who Were on Academic Probation after Their First Semester Enrolled in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

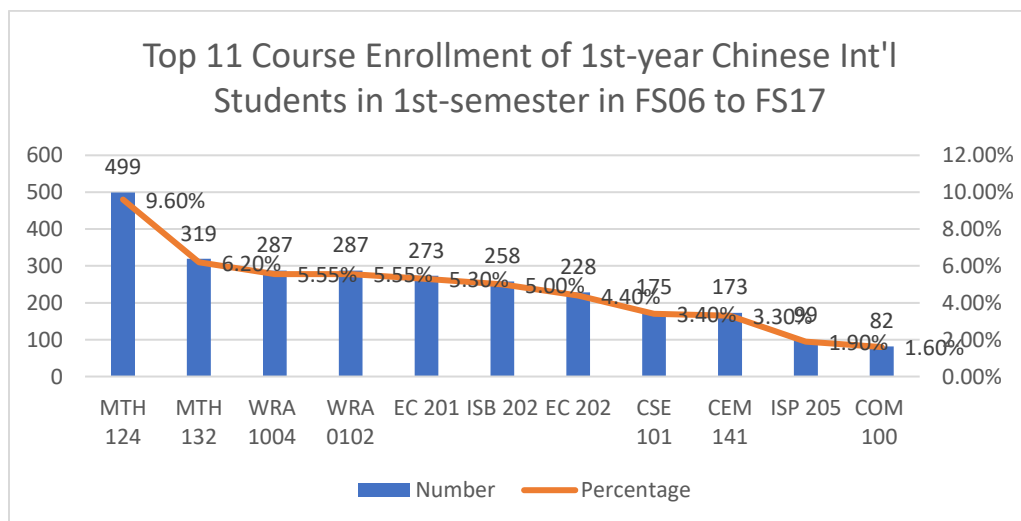


Table 8

Mean and Std. Deviation of Top 11 Courses Most First-year Chinese International Students Who Were on Academic Probation after Their First Semester Enrolled in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

| Course | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------|--------|----------------|
| WRA1004/0102 | 1.7631 | 1.38345 |
| EC202 | 1.6404 | 1.02073 |
| MTH132 | 1.6176 | 1.29019 |
| MTH124 | 1.5904 | 1.23369 |
| EC201 | 1.3535 | 1.11497 |
| ISP205 | 1.1263 | 0.97243 |
| CSE101 | 0.8571 | 0.94208 |
| CEM141 | 0.7977 | 0.99100 |
| COM100 | 0.7134 | 0.96235 |
| ISB202 | 0.6492 | 0.91039 |

Figure 17

Fail Rate of Top 10 Courses that Most First-year Chinese International Students Who Were on Academic Probation after Their First Semester Enrolled in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

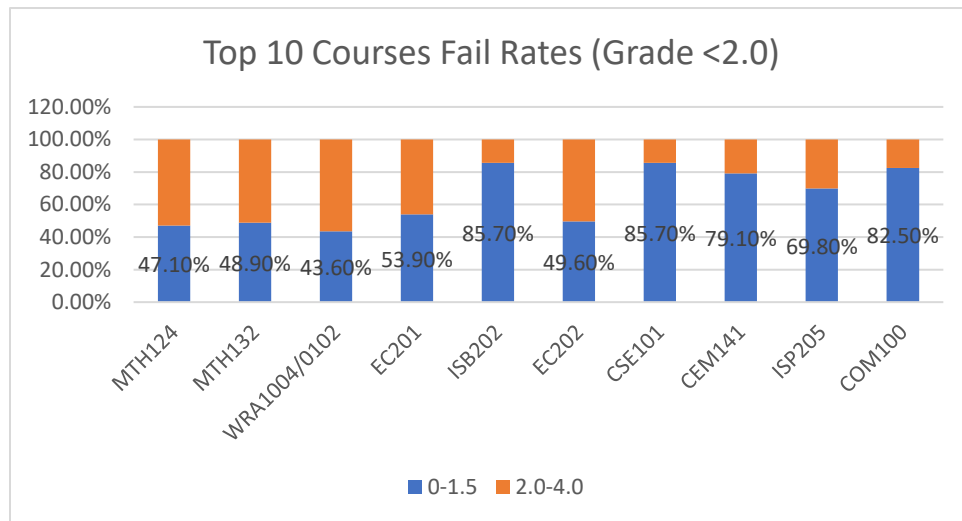


Figure 18

Grades Distribution of Top 10 Courses that Most First-year Chinese International Students Who Were on Academic Probation after Their First Semester Enrolled in Fall 2006 to Fall 2017

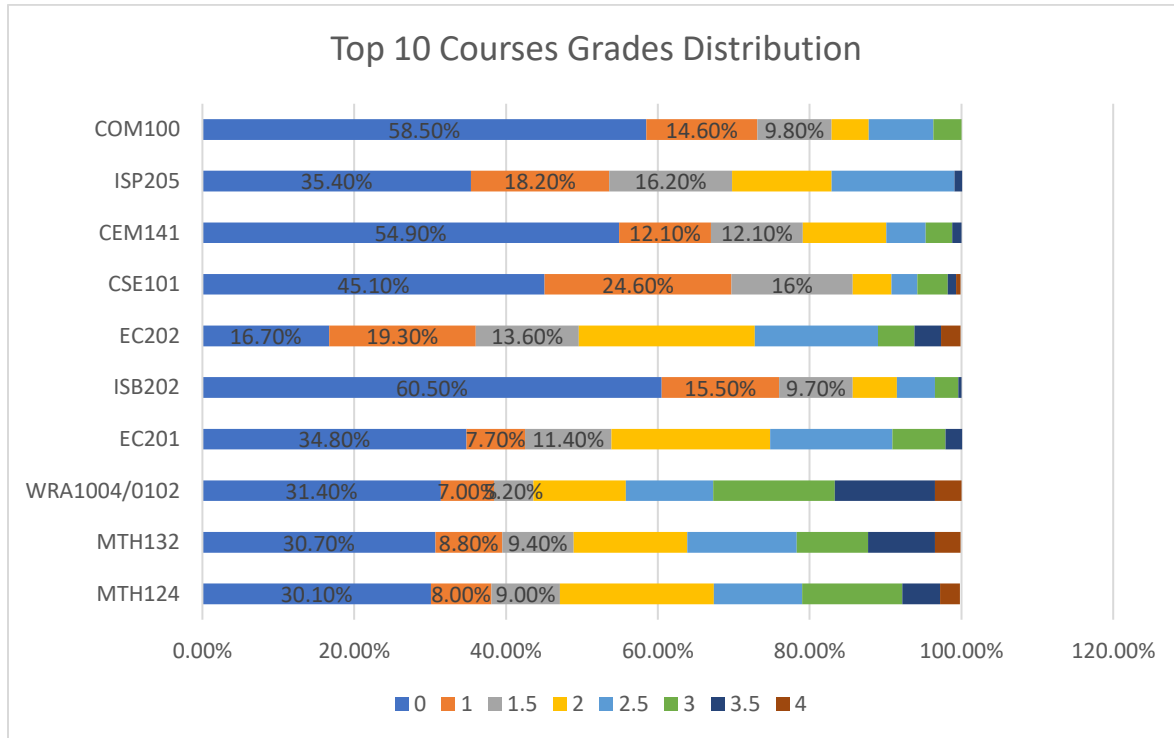


Figure 19

Number of Students Who Earned a 0.0 in at Least One Course

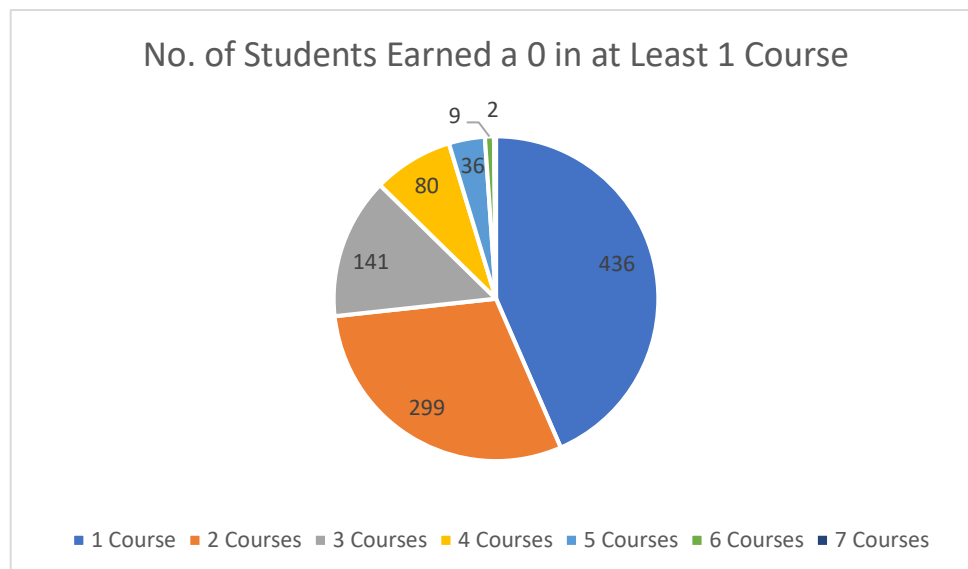


Figure 20

Percent of Students Who Earned a 0.0 in Least One Course in Each Cohort

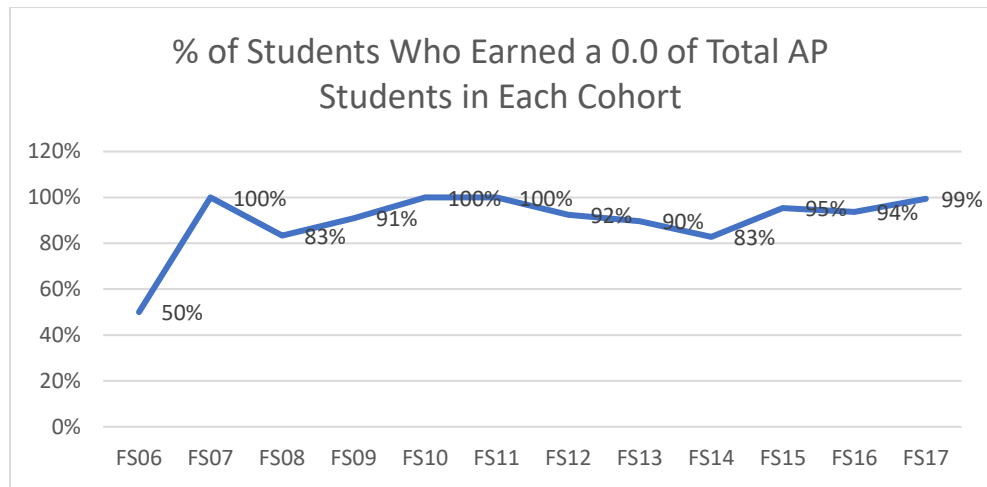


Figure 21

Rate of Earned a 0.0 in Least One Course in Each Cohort

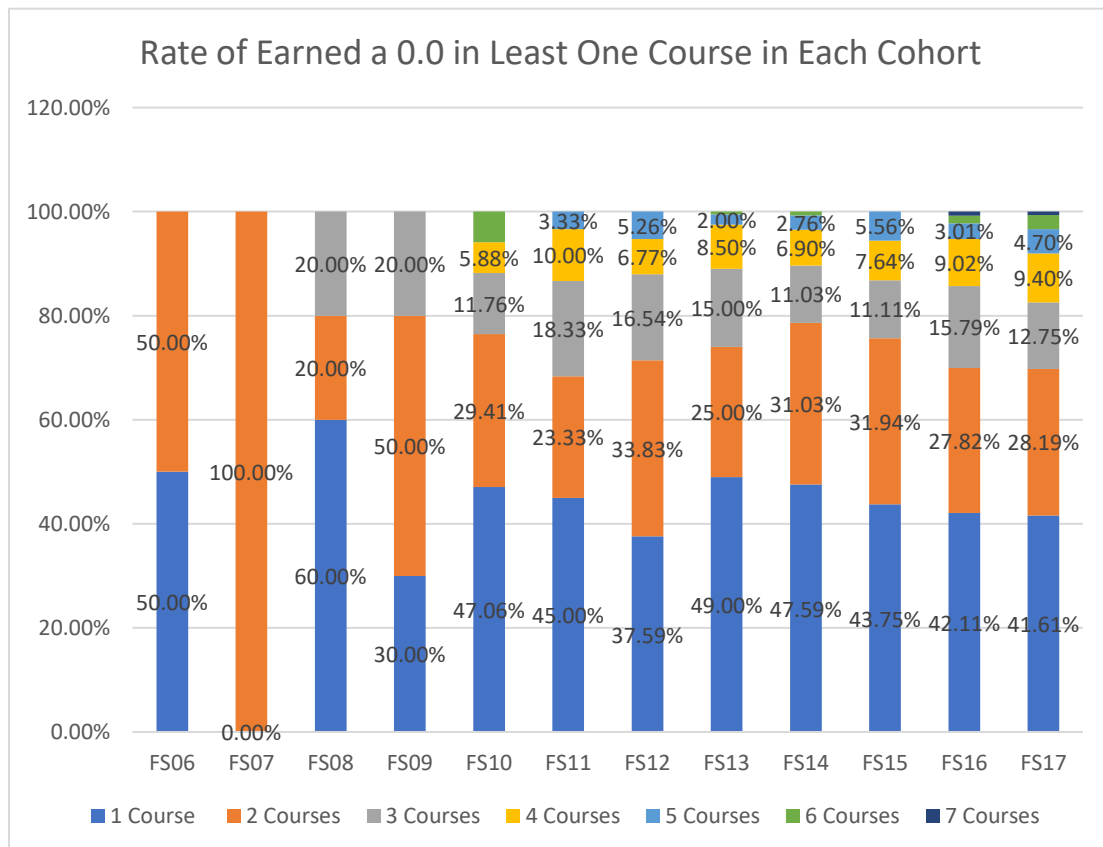


Figure 22

Tiers of Universities Could Be Admitted in China

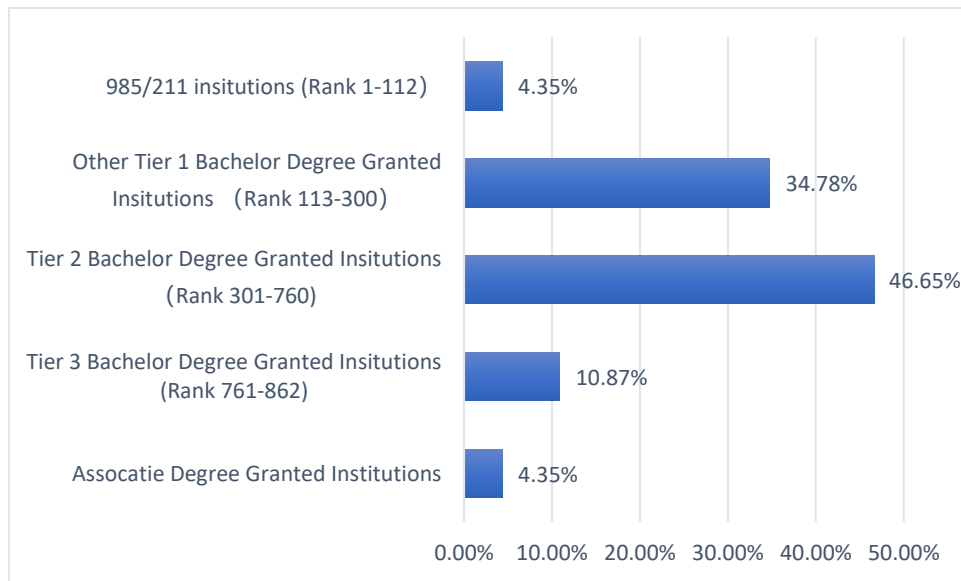


Figure 23

GPA Distribution of Survey Respondents

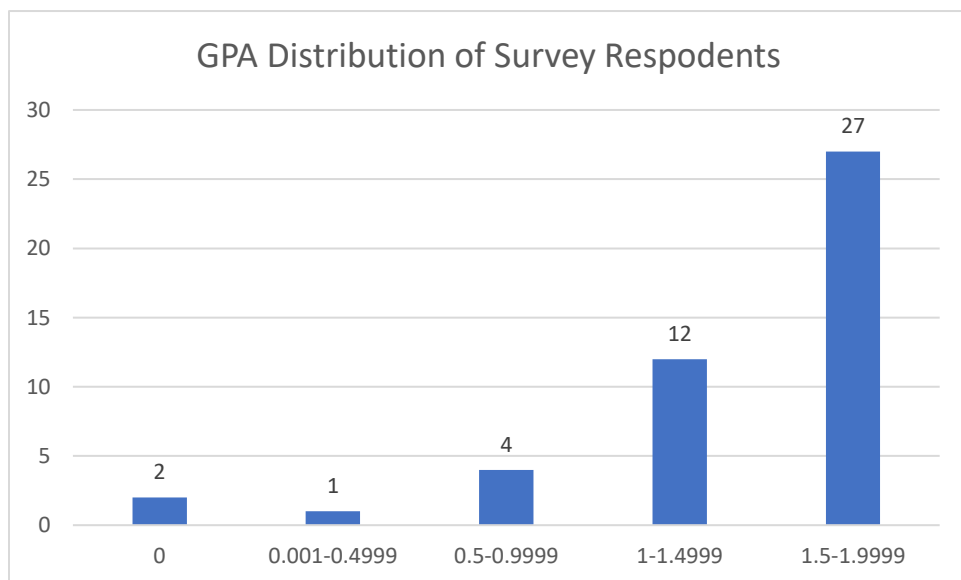


Figure 24

Numbers of Chinese Friends on Academic Probation Together

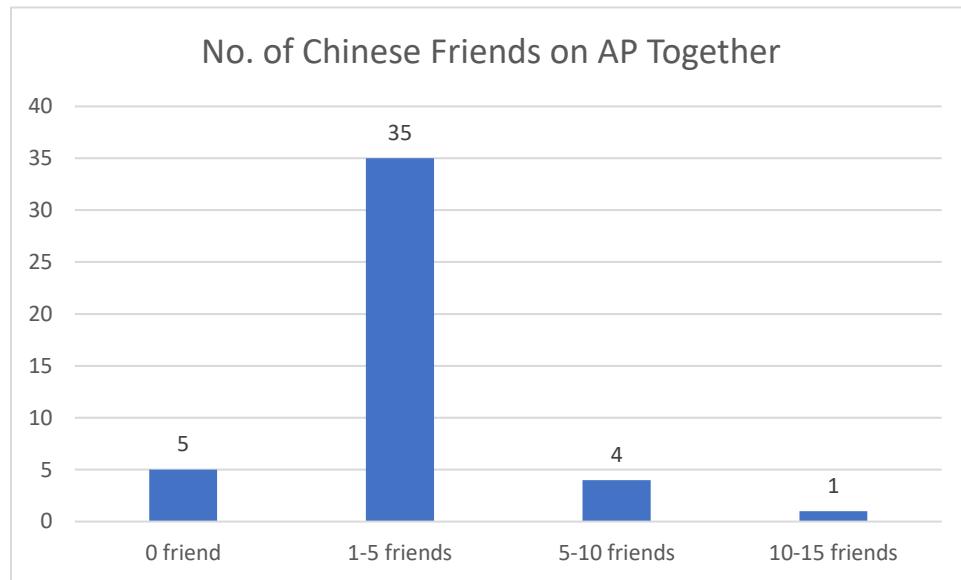


Table 9

Academic Status of Interviewees in Cohort 2016

| No. | Pseudonym | Gender | FS16 | SS17 | US17 | FS17 | SS18 | US18 |
|-----|------------|--------|-----------|--------|----------------|------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | Taidixiong | M | Probation | Final | Extended Final | Good | Good | Good |
| 2 | Sirius | M | Probation | Final | N/A | Good | -- | -- |
| 3 | Jenifer | F | Probation | Good | Good | Good | Good | Good |
| 4 | Bojack | M | Probation | Recess | -- | Good | Good | N/A |
| 5 | Oscar | M | Probation | Final | Recess | -- | -- | -- |
| 6 | Angela | F | Probation | Recess | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 8 | Gabriel | M | Probation | Recess | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| 9 | Vincent | M | Probation | Good | Probation | Good | Probation | Final |
| 10 | Anna | F | Probation | Good | N/A | Prob | Final* | N/A |
| 13 | Varina | F | Probation | Good | Good | Good | Good | N/A |
| 16 | Colin | M | Probation | Recess | -- | -- | -- | -- |

Note. -- means interviewee did not enroll at ODU at that semester.

Table 10

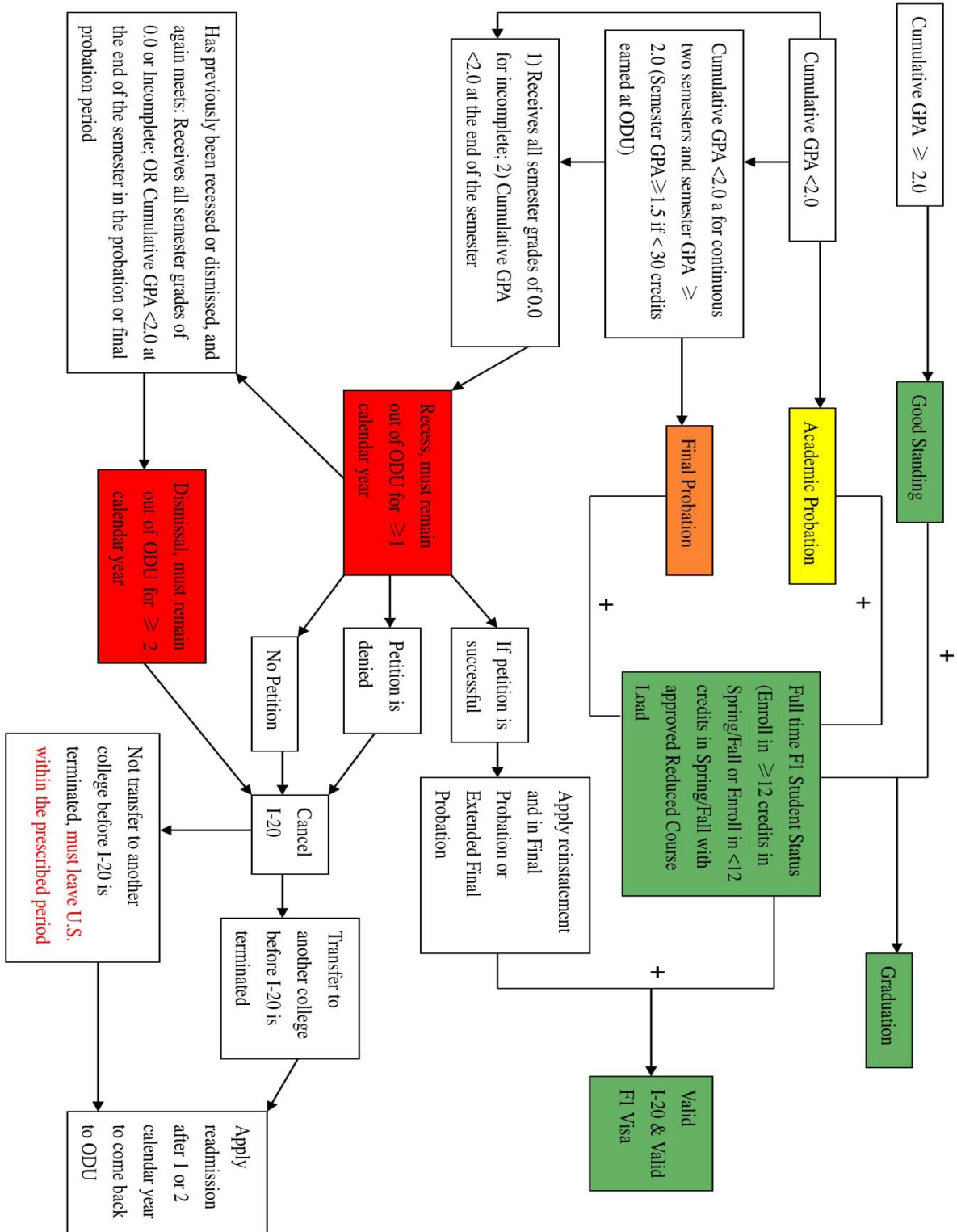
Academic Status of Interviewees in Cohort 2017

| No. | Pseudonym | Gender | FS17 | SS18 | US18 |
|-----|-----------|--------|------------|--------|------|
| 7 | Jimmy | M | Probation | Final* | N/A |
| 11 | Neo | M | Probation | Final* | N/A |
| 12 | Vivian | F | Probation | Final | Good |
| 14 | Elda | F | Probation | Good | Good |
| 15 | Kelvin | M | Probation | Good | Good |
| 17 | Billy | M | Probation | Recess | -- |
| 18 | George | M | Probation | Final | N/A |
| 19 | Maria | F | Probation | Final | N/A |
| 20 | Andy | M | Probation* | Final | N/A |

Note. * means the original academic status is recessed, interviewees applied for reinstatement (the appeal) and they were readmitted, then their academic status changed to the one as shown in table. -- means interviewee did not enroll at ODU at that semester.

APPENDIX H

International Students Academic Status Map



REFERENCES

REFERENCES

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