DESIGNING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE CAMPUS INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH THE HIGHER EDUCATION CLASSROOM

By

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A dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School of Education

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Graduate Program in Education Culture, and Society

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

October 2021
ABSTRACT

Internationalization has become a buzzword in many US higher education circles. Despite the variations in how institutions define this concept, the common denominator seen in all definitions speaks to a simple principle: the inclusion of international perspectives to educate and promote a global sense of being for students. To limit the scope of this vast concept, this study looks at internationalization as the attempt to successfully integrate international students on US campuses to have valuable academic and life experiences. To fulfill this feat, university leaders have utilized a range of administrative designs and programmatic add-ons to ensure a smooth transition for international students coming to the US; however, what seems to most often be missing from the discussion is the role that the classroom plays in assisting these successful integration and promotion efforts for international students. This study inquires faculty perceptions of the internationalization process occurring at a US university and further looks into the preparedness of faculty as they are at the frontline of encounter for most international students; yet ironically, faculty are most often left out of this component of the internationalization equation.

As a result of the inquiry, the study sheds light on how faculty are often deprived of the skills, trainings, or awareness required to promote an inclusive environment to create impactful opportunities that can assist the internationalization efforts being espoused by university leadership. To bridge this gap, the study proposes a professional learning community model that focuses on campus internationalization and puts faculty and the classroom at the forefront of internationalization efforts and discussions.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those involved in the Ed.D. program at the Graduate School of Education. The program not only cultivates the individual strength of the educators studying in the program, but also empowers us to use education as a tool to fight for global equality and broad social justice.

This study could not have been possible if not for the work of those around me. My deepest thanks go to my dissertation advisor Dr. Saundra Tomlinson-Clarke who patiently guided me throughout this project, continuously supported my efforts, and painstakingly edited my work. I could not have imagined a better advisor and I will forever be in your debt. Additionally, I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Mary Curran for her insight and thoughtful recommendations as this study took shape. Of course, I cannot forget my dear professor, Dr. Tanja Sargent. I was fortunate enough to have taken multiple courses with Dr. Sargent over the years and lucky to have benefitted from her input on writing this study. I will always cherish your wise lessons and aspire to be like each one of you in my academic endeavors.

As I write this acknowledgement, I think of the many individuals who have helped me not only in the completion of this project, but those who have guided me throughout the years as a doctoral student. But in every instance of the retrospect, my thought always goes to the only person who was by my side every step of the way – Samira, my dear wife. Samira, it was you who “pushed” me to pursue this lifelong goal. It was you who encouraged me through all my course work. It was you who held my hand when I wanted to give up and it was you who made me feel pride for the accomplishments. And I am better for all of it! I cannot find the words to express my love and thankfulness for everything you have done and all the sacrifices that you have made.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The 36th president of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, said, “America is not merely a nation, but it is a nation of nations.” This quote speaks to the foundation of how this great nation was build – the collection of immigrants and their respective cultures, ideas, inventions, thoughts, and much more. While the integration of individuals from other nations has always been enshrined in the American psyche, politics and regulations throughout the 20th century have limited the flow of internationals to the US; Thus, leaving those seeking access to the US in search of more unconventional means of immigration. One of those “unconventional” methods of entry throughout the 20th century has been to attend a college or university (Bu, 2003).

Aside from those with the simple intention of choosing America as their new country and gaining access through international student visas, many internationals have come to the United States to pursue higher education. Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, the United States led the world from an academic standpoint; and this amalgam of policies, economic growth, and academic superiority made the US the most attractive nation for those seeking formal education (Mariange, 2010). With the conditions being ideal, US campuses became microcosms and provided early previews into globalization and much of how we know the world today.

The sudden geopolitical and economic shifts led to the creation of new label on US campuses: international students. The influx of international students on campuses led educational leaders and experts to designed systems and programs to alleviate any challenges that might occur with this new demographic present. Although the educational leaders’ initial call for efforts to alleviate expected challenge was prudent, those experts had a limited scope of the complexity and vastness of the role that this demographic will play in light of the norms and needs for campuses of the 21st century.
Over the past decade (2010-2020), higher educational institutions in the US have seen a dramatic increase in the enrollment of international students. In its annual Open Doors report, the US Institute of International Education (IIE) reported that there has been a 72% increase in international students over the past 15 years; the number of students rising from approximately 50,000 in 1999 to over one million in 2018 (IIE, 2019). Despite the sense of achievement expressed by proponents to internationally diversify campuses, educational professionals are still skeptical of the extent to which US institutions are adapting their organizational and pedagogical philosophy and approaches to accommodate international students’ needs while creating a globally competent student body (Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to review the internationalization process at Green Forest University (referred to as GFU from here on), a leading Liberal Arts college, to identify potential gaps in internationalization efforts, and further provide a model professional learning community for internationalization. Here, we refer to internationalization as the strategies and approaches being taken by the institution to bridge the academic gap and better integrate international students as they arrive on US campuses — a completely new environment for some students. The study particularly focuses on the institutional efforts that GFU has taken to prepare its faculty and proposes a professional learning community model that will help prepare faculty to take on the in-class aspect of internationalization as defined in the study.

**Statement of the Problem**

In 2013, Green Forest University (GFU), a pseudonym for a liberal arts college in the Northeast region of the United States, decided to diversify its campus by aggressively seeking to increase the number of international students it annually accepts; a number which rose from under 10 in 2013 to approximately 200 in 2017. While the administration at GFU has set
structures and programs in place to ensure positive student experiences, it seems to have overlooked faculty preparation for this sudden surge. From my vantage point as a faculty member at GFU, this oversight has caused significant faculty concerns and an overall sense of deficiency in dealing with international student populations in their classrooms.

The purpose of this study is to design a model for a professional learning community that focuses on enhancing the internationalization efforts through the perceptions and understandings that faculty members have regarding international undergraduate students at GFU. In this study, faculty ‘perceptions’ are defined in terms of the academic and participatory expectations they have regarding the international students who are in their classrooms. Thus, the study will focus more on how faculty currently perceive the classroom dynamics with this newly added demographic group. Additionally, the research aims to look into faculty perceptions towards institutional level efforts taken to prepare faculty for internationalization. Ultimately, through a quantitative and qualitative means of inquiry, the researcher learns of these perceptions and sets out to design a professional learning community that looks to particularly assist GFU faculty in optimizing their practice.

Research Questions

The proposed study is guided by the following research questions:

1- How do GFU faculty describe their experiences with international students enrolled in their courses?

2- In what ways (if any) have GFU faculty been professionally prepared to include international students in their classrooms?

3- What is the sentiment of GFU faculty towards participation in a professional learning community to help campus internationalization efforts at GFU?
Definition of Key Terms

Before moving forward, I should clarify a few definitions and the usage of terms that are crucial to the understanding of this study. In this study, *international students* are defined as students who meet two criteria: (a) learners who have been admitted to GFU with a student visa (e.g. F1 visa), in addition to (b) being a non-native speaker of English. Although this study aims to inquire the perceptions and understanding of faculty, it is still important to operationalize a working definition of international students to better observe the interactions that occur in the classroom between the participants of this study, the international students, and the domestic students.

Additionally, it is important to note here that in this study the terms international and intercultural are often used synonymously. Dunne (2011) points out this issue in the field of international education as an overlap between the two concepts that only get muddled as more and more research is done. Unfortunately, to date, there has not been a single reference to clearly outline and distinguish the terms, and this study is no exception. Overall, I aim to use *international* when referring to the origin of a student and *intercultural* when describing practices and curricula suitable for diverse groups of students. The efforts, whether it be institutional or individual, is referenced to as internationalization throughout the text.

Significance of the Study

This study is of significance from several perspectives. Numerous international students are on US campuses today, and this trend only seems to be increasing. The number of international students in higher education is estimated to reach four million, globally, by 2024 with the brunt of this influx hitting US colleges (MacGregor, 2013). The presence of international students and forecasted increases are both valid points that show urgency and
attention needed by researchers/administrators. Moreover, the rationales behind successful internationalization of campuses dovetail well with the significance of this study. There are numerous driving factors in internationalizing campuses; however, the overall consensus from institutions of higher education is that international students help *increase college revenue* and *add valued skills through new, diverse views*. Increase in college revenue is an essential aspect that must be considered in the discussion of solvency for liberal arts colleges. Buss, Parker, and Rivenburg (2004) predicted through an economic analysis of tuition and enrollment of institutions of higher education in the US that liberal arts colleges will face a downward slope in the future. We are more than a decade past that study, and private liberal arts colleges still face hardships for remaining solvent. In recent years however, these schools have seen international students as a quick fix to increase revenue. Despite the surprising reliance on international students funding, liberal arts colleges have done very little, if anything, in terms of preparing their faculty to better teach and interact with this specific student population (Green & Siaya, 2005). In a review of international students at liberal arts colleges, The American Council on Education found a statistically reported disparity among institutional eagerness to attract international students (over 60%) and institutional support for faculty international training (less than 10%). From my vantage point, GFU is not an exception to these statistics. Many international students and faculty express their frustration with lack of “care” towards their needs and expectations; a sign that there is a clear mismatch between the administrators’ theory of internationalization and what faculty and students are experiencing each day in the classroom. As a faculty member at GFU, I feel that the institution, particularly faculty, will reap the benefits of having a professional learning community to gain insight on how intercultural efforts can be used to better engage international students -- a major source of diversity and cultural capital.
In addition to the academic and financial importance, this study brings to light the undertones of social issues at play in institutions of higher education and captures the significance of racial issues that immigrant populations may face while studying in the US. The discussion of hegemony, racial disparity, and dominance is not new to the American narrative. While much of this attention in the past has gone to domestic racial tensions and disparities, the era of Covid-19, has potentially shifted this narrative towards the immigrant community in the US, particularly towards Asians (Gover et al., 2020). Gover et al. (2020) use the othering theory lens to inquire and reveal an uptick in macroaggressions, harassment and blatant violence that has been aimed at East Asian population in the US due the Covid-19 pandemic. What is more disturbing is the nature of the hate crimes that are targeting this specific demographic. Zhang et al. (2021) look at the type of specific incidents that has increased since the beginning of the pandemic. Surprisingly, the hate crimes observed are from various sources – a sign that all groups and races in the US have united to spew their anger and hate towards East Asians. Ironically, Asian-Americans have been routinely targeted by other racial groups in US educational settings – a narrative in line with the “model minority” framework (Zhang et al., 2021). Thus, educators should be concerned that with COVID-19 as an excuse, we may begin to see more aggressions towards Asian international students.

It goes without saying that East Asians make up the largest population of international students in US institutes of higher education – a whopping 47% to be more specific (iie, 2019). As we are still in the midst of this pandemic, this research does not set out to fully assess the effects and outcomes that such tensions can potentially have on international student trends; however, it is of utmost significance to observe the findings presented in this inquiry to help
define, understand, and predict necessary adjustments required in preparing institutions of higher education to confront such injustices that can occur on campus.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Internationalization of higher education has been the subject of discussion for some decades; however, with the advance and momentum of globalization, the topic of international students has gained significant importance for institutions across the US (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2002). In the first section of the literature review, I look at the historic and current interpretation of internationalization and how internationalization of US campuses is a crucial part of larger institutional and national initiative in the global setting. To supplement the literature on top-down initiatives, I look at specific approaches and strategies utilized at the institutional level to facilitate the internationalization process; particularly looking at the definition and evolution of “intercultural competence” as a skill set crucial for cross-cultural interactions. As a final, yet essential, component to this review, I look into the research guiding professional learning communities to ultimately build a foundational understanding for how a professional learning community on internationalization can best serve GFU.

The History of International Students on US Campuses

It seems mind boggling how a nation built by immigrants, somehow in time, came to label new immigrant populations as ‘internationals.’ To understand this, it is important to look back at certain political and social shifts throughout the 20th century and how the term ‘international student’ became a category within US institutions of higher education.

Pre-WWII policies and internationals in US higher education

International students, or what Americans referred to as “foreign students” at the time, were never an alien concept to US institutes of higher education. In fact, in the 19th century, many highly educated scholars in top American universities would brunt the journey to Europe in search of an elite education. In turn, educators and students from Europe would come to US
institutes in search of answers and new frontiers for their research and practices. However, in the early 20th century, foreign student enrollment in the US institutes increased markedly. In 1930, US colleges were hosting 9,643 students while in 1953, this number had risen close to 34,000 (DuBois, 1956). This 300% increase over two decades significantly outperformed domestic student enrollment over the same time period (domestic student enrollment almost doubled over the same period). Many in the field of higher educational administration would justify these number as pure statistics; however, the reasons driving this sudden increase over this particular period more complex that simple statistical comparisons.

Governmental policies of the 1920s and 1930s essentially brought about the term “foreign students” on US campuses of higher education. Two of the major policies rolled out that directly affect campus internationalization: The Immigration Act of 1924 and The Good Neighbor Policy of the 1930’s.

The demographics of the US changed dramatically in the first two decades of the 20th century. Immigrants from southern Europe and Asia were pouring into a US as a result of wars and global economic decline. Up until the 1920’s, the United States had essentially employed an ‘open boarders’ policy, in which all immigrants from all nations were welcomed and granted legal entry. However, with these shifts in demographics, came ‘American’ opposition to the concept of open borders and allowance of flooding the US populous with individuals looking for new opportunities (State Department Archives, n.d.). Many members of Congress and politicians in Washington were also aligned with these sentiments. President Warren Harding’s policies and further Congressional Acts in the early 20’s began placing legal restrictions on the entry of immigrants by introducing skill and literacy requirements for visa approval. In 1924, the election of President Calvin Coolidge alongside Congressional efforts solidified the curbing of
immigrants to the US. The Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson – Reed Act, was officially passed in an effort to limit (and sometimes bar) the entry of immigrants of certain nationals from around the world. This Federal law mandated a quota that the US will annually issue legal entry to only 2% of the populous of a nation, while severely restricting the entry of immigrants from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa; in addition to the banning of Jews. To put this in perspective, in 1921, 222,260 immigrants were admitted to the US from Italy. After the passing of this Act, the number of immigrants admitted from Italy had been slashed to a mere 6,203 (US-History.com).

The causes leading to the issuance of this Act, as well as, the effects this Act had on the broader US is intensely beyond the scope of this study. However, two sections of the Immigration Act of 1924 stands out when looking at how this policy shaped US institutions of higher education.

Section 4 of the Act draws out a series of “exclusions” and identifies five specific categories as non-quota immigrants. Interestingly, the Act stipulates in section four that individuals seeking entry to the US for academic purposes are excluded from this quota. Section 4(d) reads:

“An immigrant who continuously for at least two years immediately preceding the time of his application for admission to the United States has been, and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of, carrying on the vocation of minister of any religious denomination, or professor, or a college, academy, seminary, or university; and his wife, and his unmarried children under 18 years of age; if accompanying or following to join him.”

and it is further stated in section 4(e) that
“an immigrant who is a bona fide student at least 15 years of age and who seeks to enter the United States solely for the purpose of study at an accredited school, college, academy, seminary, or university, particularly designated by him and approved by the Secretary of Labor, which shall have agreed to report to the Secretary of Labor the termination of attendance of each immigrant student, and if any such institution of learning fails to make such reports promptly the approval shall be withdrawn.”

This is of particular interest as we can see institutes of higher education become ‘gateways for immigrants’ into the US – an action that still continues to exist almost 100 years after the passing of this law! The correlation between the rise in international student populations on campus against the decline of overall immigration in the US strongly supports this gateway theory. In addition, we can begin seeing the grassroots of how institutes of higher education were required to identify and report a specific group of students on campus: seeing the birth of a new group labeled as international students (Swanson, n.d).

Other global shifts also indirectly influenced admissions, student populations, and the overall mission of US institutes of higher education. In the 1930’s, the US government became aware of a new ideology of a political group that was growing in Germany: the Nazi party. Americans feared the Nazi doctrine and what implications the spread of this doctrine may have on the US and its European allies. To curb the advance of the Nazi ideology, politicians in Washington began designing policies that fostered intercultural exchange and understanding. One main policy that should be scrutinized at that particular time is The Good Neighbor policy. This US government policy which was rolled out in the 1930’s and continued well into the 1940’s simply emphasized that the US have reciprocal relations with neighboring Latin American countries without interference in national affairs (Swanson, n.d.). This reciprocity and
exchange occurred on many fronts including student exchanges. The International Institute of Education (IIE) which was founded only a decade prior to The Good Neighbor policy was a strong advocate of this policy. The IIE quickly embraced this policy by initiating professional and scholarly exchanges with Latin America. After the roll out of The Good Neighbor policy, the president and cofounder of the IIE, Stephen Duggan (a.k.a. the apostle of internationalism) immediately commissioned his son, Laurence Duggan, to travel to various Latin American countries in search of reciprocal student exchange programs (Bu, 2003). Throughout the 1930’s, we can see various results of governmental efforts focusing on building cultural bridges between the US and Latin America. The IIE reports instance such as fellowships for Argentinian students to study in the US with thousands of students studying English in Buenos Aires and funding for international scholars to pursue educational opportunities in the US.

While the Good Neighbor policy is deemed as a successful political strategy and policy by individuals, it is visible that the intentions of the US government in this time were somewhat ulterior. The increase of international students and intercultural exchange is a direct result of governmental initiatives with an independent agency, the IIE, being a front for political sway. It seems that the political aura of the pre- and during-war years was simple: keep an eye on nations around the world through ‘international education.’ The heavy involvement of Washington in this initiative is also visible in the various appointments to the IIE and other federal agencies. For instance, upon Laurence Duggan’s return from advocating for international education in various Latin American nations, he returned to a critical position in the US Department of State (Bu, 2003).

Other explanations for the increase in international students in the years of WWII could be attributed to simple facts. The immunity of North America from the war is important to
consider. Most institutes of higher education were closed in Europe and East Asia as a result of the war; thus, giving US institutions the position of monopolizing on the greatest minds of the time (Bu, 2003). Additionally, more facile methods of transportation helped lead to more international scholars and those pursuing education to choose American institutions as opposed to their counterparts.

All in all, the category of international students developed as a result of federal policies and social adjustments during the mid-20th century. At the height of the largest war in the history of the world, the US sought to show the world a new view of America. The US did not want to be viewed as a nation piecemealed from other nations, but rather wanted to portray a new nation: a nation with “American” values and the “American” culture as a new entity in the world.

Institutions of higher education in America became the arenas in which this national identity formation began playing out. As historians have noted, students (both American and internationals) were viewed as “cultural ambassadors” and US institutions assumed that educating international students on US values would have two benefits: prevent any future hostile acts of war, and invade the subconscious of individuals with US values to permeate other cultures. While this predicted intention has somewhat been true in terms of using universities as platforms for awareness building, the ideals envisioned by policymakers in the early pushes for internationalization has not occurred as simply as expected.

**Campus Internationalization – Latter 20th Century**

As cultural anthropologist, Cora Alice Dubois, notes in her work, “the mere willingness to accept foreign students does not necessarily assure an institutions capacity to handle them competently.” While federal mandates increased the number of international students in the US, the majority of US schools were far from prepared to accommodate for the needs of these
students. This concern was more so related to land grant and state universities than their more elite, private counterparts who had always served and trained foreign (mostly European) students prior to the 20th century. In fact, land grant and state universities began receiving backlash from domestic individuals on how these institutes must have “educational obligations to local citizenry” and that “foreign students were being admitted without proper due diligence.” Interestingly, these concerns were not invalid. Institutions lagged in any specific linguistic and/or cultural programming for foreign students. Many institutions did not even have the means to evaluate the educational background of a foreign student.

With these concerns, institutions of higher education understood that measures needed to be taken to address issues hovering round campus internationalization. In 1942, over 100 universities gathered in Cleveland, OH in the first national conference on foreign student affairs. This conference, which was spearheaded by the IIE and the State Department, later (in 1948) came to be known as NAFSA (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers). NAFSA’s main focus was to provide colleges with more on campus tools for advising, international student integration, and addressing language issues. Foreign student advising became a significant part of campus counseling centers. Not only did advisors need to provide assistance on academics, but also needed to have information on immigration rules and regulations that were changing frequently. At the same time, some were against the idea of allocating all this support for international students on campuses. John W. Gardner wrote in 1952 that paying all this attention can negatively single out foreign students and further damage their self-esteem (Gardner, 1952). The confusion on whether to “nurse and pamper” international students, or “to throw them in the deep end” basically continued into the next decade. Regardless of the debate, by 1961, US campuses had employed approximately 1,073 foreign student advisers; a number that indicated
how important the presence and success of foreign students was (and continues to be) for US institutions. Despite specialized support, foreign students were still struggling on US campuses. Many advisers started holding ‘intercultural’ training sessions to help international students integrate with domestic students; however, international students rarely participated in these sessions. The president of NAFSA, at the time, offered four particular reasons why international students were struggling: weak English skills, financial challenges, poor study habits, and cultural mismatches. It was in the 60s when institutes of higher education began employing full-time employees to fully staff their offices of foreign student affairs. This time was marked with a systematic turn in efforts to attract international students, as well as, restart Fulbright scholar exchanges.

Throughout the 70’s and 80’s, campus internationalization remained relatively stagnant on US campuses. Students were trickling in at an increased, yet less than projected, number. Institutions in ‘newer’ nations in the world (i.e. Canada and Australia) were coming to realize the benefits of having international students on their campuses, which translated to a net loss of international students for US institutions (de Wit, 2001).

However, the last decade of the century was marked by a new wave in campus internationalization. This wave in internationalization was created by a socioeconomic tsunami: globalization.

Maringe (2010) writes on how globalization and internationalization work hand-in-hand to complement one another. He provides evidence from the World Survey of the Impact of Globalization to show how globalization has driven campus internationalization and how internationalization, in turn, has been an impetus for globalization. Many argue that higher education has become more ‘corporate’ in nature by trying to seek influence in the economic,
social, and political arenas and by being treated as a commodity in the global market (Taylor, 2010). Through surveying numerous institutions of higher education around the globe, Maringe (2010) found that most US universities were aligned with the notion that internationalization helps lead to “spontaneous world social, political, and economic integration (p.29)”, while respondents from Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa viewed internationalization efforts as a new tool for the West to exert its hegemony.

The historical review sheds light on how the concept of campus internationalization in the US has been (and will continue to be) intertwined with larger social and political agendas – being top-down more so than how institutions themselves think they are leading internationalization efforts. Despite the negative underlying tone in the literature, internationalization has also significantly boosted the economic, social, and political aspects of our world in ways that we will probably never be able to fully understand or measure. What we can surmise is that internationalization has become a crucial part of higher education in the US, and as educators, it is our responsibility to better address the needs of or international student populations on campus.

**Internationalization Efforts on US Campuses – Present**

In today’s world, the term *internationalization* can be interpreted in various ways and on various levels depending on the context this term is used (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004). This term can refer to the attempt of exporting educational practice to new nations (Knight, 2004), while in other works internationalization is thought of as the activities and pedagogy utilized by a university to appropriately include a range of students (de Wit, 2002). For some, internationalization means the development of international and diverse perspectives for their current, native students to pursue a position/career in the international world (Leask, 2001; Paige
& Goode, 2009). Despite differences in interpretation, scholars in the field have come to a consensus on Knight’s (1999) definition that “internationalization of higher education is the process on integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of the institution.” This definition serves as an appropriate starting point for the focus of this study. That is, I do not seek to define integration, but search for the “how” in which integration and interaction between agents (in this case, the GFU campus community) occur at the practical level; And more so, how can we build a platform to further cultivate internationalization efforts for those (particularly faculty) who are less experienced in educating/working with international student populations.

**Rationales for Internationalization**

The significance of internationalization of higher educational campuses is obvious in many regards. Knight (2004) discusses the rationale behind internationalization of higher educational institutions and outlines two main forces to this growing phenomenon: a national-level rationale and an institutional-level rationale. At the national-level, rationales such as human resource development, building strategic alliances, commercial trade, and social/cultural development can be seen. While I do not go into the details of each rationale, we can see how these larger ideologies behind internationalization are more focused on building the economic/political/social aspects of a nation through post-secondary platforms; thus, leading to numerous domestic and international benefits. At an institutional level, internationalization has helped build institutional reputations, assisted faculty development, fueled research and development initiatives, and most importantly, helped generate income for the host institution (Knight, 2004). Bhandari and Koh (2015) also emphasize the significant financial impact of international students on educational campuses, and report that in 2005-2006, international
students in the US contributed $13.5 billion to the US education industry with approximately 75% of the funds coming from overseas. Officials are able to provide hard evidence on the economic benefits of internationalizing college campuses; however, direct, tangible data cannot be given to show the significant impact that internationalization is having on the culture and ethos of US colleges and, on a larger scale, the US public. In fact, many see “revenue generation” as the most important factor to pursue internationalization (Andrade, 2006; de Wit, 2002); however, rationales and motivations for pursuing internationalization are fluid concepts and shift depending on various underlying factors from nation to nation (Knight, 2007).

As discussed here, as in chapter one, it seems that colleges are eager to reap both the financial and diverse benefits that international students bring with them to the campus, but again, the “how” comes into question. That is, how are campuses attracting students and truly working to create meaningful experiences for all parties? Most institutes of higher education simply design infrastructure (e.g. hiring new staff in departments and building supplementary programs that address language skills) without addressing the heart of the matter: What is happening inside the classroom? To clarify my perspective on the difference between what colleges are doing, and what most colleges need to do, I review some of the most common strategies used in internationalization and provide a tangible analogy of how intercultural competence and professional learning communities that foster intercultural understanding are the drive needed to effectively internationalize.

**Structures and Strategies in Place for International Student Success**

For decades, US institutions of higher education have attempted to make their campuses more international friendly (Andrade, 2006). These attempts have mostly been in two broad areas: (1) building academic support structures, and (2) creating programs which support social
campus engagement. Although both aspects are intertwined when designing platforms for students’ success, in this section, I only look into some of the common initiatives taken by institutions/faculty to help international students meet the academic goals and have better schooling experiences. My endeavors led me to find that in very limited and exceptional cases do faculty engage in training to deal with international students. Most often this burden is on the international students, themselves; or on the institution which uses third-party, non-academic departments/programs to help international students succeed (Andrade, 2006).

One of the main concerns, if not the most significant concern, that is often brought to attention in scholarly research is the issue of international students’ language proficiency. Many believe that international students fall behind academically or fail to engage in class due to weak language skills (Andrade, 2006; Otten, 2003). Otten (2003) writes how language skills push international students into enclaves of co-nationals further polarizing a campus community looking to integrate domestic and international students. Trice (2003) also adds how language barriers can discourage international students from building solid relationships and social networks on campus. In a survey study, Berman and Cheng (2010) found that non-native speakers of English reported significantly less confidence when it came to tasks that required language production, speaking and writing, in comparison to their native English-speaking peers. For these reasons, institutions often resort to building linguistic support structures that look to help international students improve their language proficiency. Berman and Cheng (2010) discuss how their institution has set up English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs to help international students get a better grasp on fundamental writing skills and specific linguistically academic conventions used in English. EAP courses run in conjunction to other mainstream courses and/or are provided as an introductory course before students begin their mainstream
classes. Additionally, they discuss how departments are required to provide students (all, not just international) with a glossary of the key vocabulary that is used within their specific discipline of study.

Many institutions of higher education also utilize some sort of peer partner/mentoring programs to help international students socially engage. Peer programs in international education typically account for the purposeful intervening of campus student affairs officials to pair international students with a domestic partner from the host country in housing, campus activities, etc. The results of such peer programs have yielded higher social engagement of international students with individuals of the domestic cultures in comparison to groups that lack peer partners; However, studies attempted show weak construct validity and do not provide any substantive roadmap to effective integration of international students (see Abe, Talbot, & Geelhoed, 1998). In a follow up study of an intercultural peer program (Geelhoed, Abe, Talbot, 2003), the domestic students remarked how they gained “intercultural knowledge”, but expressed how they (domestic students) would had liked more training, structure, and guidance from the institution in understanding and engaging with international students; a comment which clearly shows the necessity for active training in intercultural competence.

Creating infrastructure to facilitate international students’ needs is a vital part of internationalization, however it is not an end in itself. I often use a computer analogy that better conveys the complexity of campus internationalization. A computer has two main components: hardware and software. The hardware, similar to infrastructure on campus, is necessary; however, it cannot do much with the software. The software is the underlying command for the hardware to perform an action. In our case, the competence is that very command, and infrastructure will be lifeless without it. In the following section, I look into the concept of
intercultural competence and the variation in interpretations it has yielded in international education.

**Intercultural Competence – A Key Component to Internationalization**

Intercultural competence is a relatively new term; however, as a concept, international competence dates back to as early as the seventeenth century. Although this concept is widely recognized by experts in the field of international education, scholars have yet to reach a consensus on a definition for intercultural competence. The reason behind the haziness in defining this concept is rooted in the scholars’ interpretations of the various elements building this concept. Intercultural competence is an interdisciplinary concept that draws on numerous aspects of behavioral, social, cognitive, and affective learning and the interplay between them (Deardorff, 2006; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). Additionally, intercultural competence is the acquisition of specific skill sets relevant to one’s immediate setting. Bennet and Bennet (2004) define intercultural competence as “the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts (p.149).” Bennet and Bennet’s definition provides valuable insight into the elements that undergirds this concept: communication, cross-cultural situations, and appropriateness based on cultural context. In framing her study on intercultural competence, Krajewski (2011) uses awareness, attitude, openness, and communication as the key elements of this concept. Thus, intercultural competence can never have a “one-size-fits-all” model of acquisition; however, once this competence is gained it can be applied to a variety of settings (Cushner & Mahon, 2009). This vagueness in definition, however, does not diminish, nor challenge, the significance and reality of this concept.
While the elements of intercultural competence wax and wane based on the context of study, the core element of *effective communication across cultures* is consistent in most studies. Perhaps the Darla Deardorff’s definition of intercultural competence has become the benchmark of this concept in the field of international education. In a seminal study, Deardorff (2006) used a Delphi technique to create a definition of international competence through compiling the definitions of numerous intercultural scholars. Her use of a Delphi technique allowed for twenty-three experts in the field to anonymously collaborate and come to a consensus on a definition for this concept. The result of Deardorff’s studied yielded, in fact, that the understanding of this concept is more complex than anticipated. Scholars, anonymously, were not able to pinpoint specific elements that go into building this concept. However, through this study, the scholars had almost all agreed that the field should err on the side of a “broad and general” statement when defining intercultural competence. Through a more specific analysis of the outcomes of the Delphi, Deardorff presents a logic model of how intercultural competence is built through elements specified as significant by the scholars. Deardorff’s model follows a hierarchical, pyramid model (similar to Maslow) in that lower levels of the pyramid are gateways to access the upper levels of the pyramid which is the rendered interculturally competent (see Figure 1).
Odag, Wallin, and Kedzior (2016) recreated Deardorff’s seminal study with one key variation: inquiring undergraduate students’ opinions about the definition of intercultural competence as opposed to intercultural educators. The results from their survey of one hundred and thirty-seven students revealed that students also lacked unity in providing a uniform definition of the concept; however, as opposed to Deardorff’s study, students emphasized on more practical elements, such as collaboration and cooperation, when defining intercultural competence (Odag, Wallin, & Kedizor, 2016). A new level of complexity in defining this concept comes to light in comparing the studies that look for definitions of intercultural studies from scholars (Deardorff, 2006; Krajewski, 2011) with definitions from students (Krajewski & Jones, 2010; Odag, Wallin, & Kedizor, 2016). Scholars see intercultural competence more as an internal phenomenon of awakening and understanding, while students view this competence in acquiring the practical skills needed to better interact interculturally.

Understanding the variations in interpretation and elements that go into this concept can be crucial to this study. The faculty at GFU are neither students, nor experts of international
education. Moreover, there is a consensus that intercultural competence is an essential trait that must be developed in organizations seeking to increase their diversity (Bennet & Bennet, 2004; Krajewski, 2011; Otten, 2003) and as a valuable skill needed for students to function on the international scale (Paige & Goode, 2009; Odag, Wallin, & Kedzior, 2016); the very two goals GFU has set out to achieve by admitting more international students. This study aims to build a professional learning community that can create and reinforce this competence in faculty members to enhance their experiences with international students given this new competence. Otten (2003) claims that internationalization in itself, does not lead to international competence. In other words, faculty at GFU cannot assume contact with individuals from other cultures alone is sufficient in gaining new skills. Participants must actively seek to build new understandings of intercultural learning which ultimately leads to intercultural competence (Otten, 2003). However, here is where the challenge arises for institutions such as GFU. Institutions such as GFU do not have the resources, nor the expertise to build this area of competence amongst its community members. In fact, there is a body of literature that looks into methods of training individuals of become more interculturally literate; Unfortunately, however, there is a dearth of literature that shows faculty taking an active role in attempting to gain this skillset. Most often, the burden of adjustment to the host culture is on the student rather than faculty (Andrade, 2006). Developing a PLC can be a potential solution to creating a space in which the GFU campus community can come together to support and foster the acquisition of this competence for the sake of their international student success. Reflecting on Otten’s work, I find it hard to imagine how faculty can competently include all their students, without having such a space to share and converse on strategies to better integrate international students.
In the following section, I delve into two well-known intercultural trainings that have been developed throughout the years to better understand their strengths, weaknesses, and how they are executed to help develop this competence. Essentially, the aim is to see what can be done if we can’t lead the horse to the water, then how can we get the water to the horse! Through this analysis, I can better learn how to utilize some of the strategies of the training as a framework and guide for developing the professional learning community at GFU.

**Two Intercultural Training Models**

I am often faced with an intriguing question when designing workshop sessions on intercultural competence: How can we (educators of intercultural competence) train individuals to become “competent” in something that we don’t even know how to define? There is no simple answer, but when we accept intercultural competence as a body of skills that certain individuals have acquired, then it must also have the feature of transferability to others. The methodology of intercultural training is applicable to all fields of study, most markedly business, government, and education (Fowler & Blohm, 2004). The method and techniques used to frame the training sessions greatly depends on the purpose of the sessions and educational discipline of trainees attending the sessions. Paige (2004), a reputable scholar in the field of intercultural training, reviews thirty-five intercultural training instruments and compares their idiosyncrasies and uses based on various purposes. Paige (2004) defines an *intercultural training instrument* as “any measurement device that identifies, describes, assesses, categorizes, or evaluates the cultural characteristics of individuals, groups, and organizations (p.86).” For the purpose of this study, I specifically look at two approach that are commonly used by intercultural experts in the field of education: the Intercultural Developmental Approach and Culture General Assimilator.
The Intercultural Developmental Approach

When institutions (whether it be educational, business entities, etc.) think of building an intercultural skillset for their employees, the name Milton Bennett is most probably brought up in the discussion. Bennett, a well-known educator in the field of intercultural education, contributed markedly to the field, particularly with the development of The Intercultural Development Instrument (known as IDI) – a fifty-item instrument developed to assess intercultural competence at the individual and institutional level, while providing insight on areas in which the trainee needs to improve. This metric is a first step tool to assess the “level of intercultural awareness” of any institution. The IDI is designed off of the Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity in which Bennett identifies six levels on a continuum with denial (lowest stage) on one end and integration (highest stage) on the other. The four stages in between, meaning defense, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation are intervals in which each is characterized as having a deeper, more aware understanding of the other culture. The items in the IDI are designed using a five-point Likert scale for responses ranging from “agree” to “disagree”. Although the IDI has had its share of critiques on reliability and validity, this instrument is considered to be a crucial instrument in the field because of its developers’ rigor in insuring the very two qualities mentioned above. Once concern still exists here for institutions and individuals seeking to build this competence amongst its populous: even if we assume the IDI to be of ultimate validity and reliability, how can we actualize the training to ensure individuals are gaining the skills to better accept international students?

In a seminal review, Bennett and Bennett (2004) drew on their previous work and put forth a model that aims to train individuals: the intercultural developmental approach. The scholars discuss that the most effective way to advance diversity training is to first assess the
institution (implying use of the IDI) and later creating intervention events that are sequenced from light-hearted topics shared amongst group members and gradually moving towards activities that draw on higher levels of self-awareness. The article calls for “a focus on subjective cultural differences over a long period of time (p.162)” to enhance diversity work (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The work of these researchers provides a general outline as to how intercultural competence can be instilled; However, their work fails to provide any concrete methods and strategies on how to actually execute the model.

The Culture General Assimilator

Another approach used by trainers to assess individuals and develop intercultural training sessions is the Culture General Assimilator. Developed by Cushner and Brislin, this approach sets out to train participants through a series of vignettes of “critical intercultural incidents” in which participants are presented with. To respond, participants are given four options in which they are to choose the most appropriate response which best addresses how they would approach the incident. The validity of this instrument is relevant to the context being used and the “target culture specialist’s” interpretations (Paige, 2004, p.120). Paige (2004) outlines three benefits to the Culture General Assimilator: (1) students can be “analyzed” without being threatened; (2) it can be used in a self-study format; and (3) this instrument is an excellent way to engage whole group discussions.

In both trainings, the method of delivery and execution are essential to consider. Fowler and Blohm (2004) contend that an ideal, effective intercultural training series should include a balanced combination of both didactic and experiential learning episodes for participants. Many trainers of intercultural competence utilize Kolb’s four stage framework of experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active
experimentation which itself becomes the next concrete experience) when designing sessions (Fowler and Blohm, 2004). The method of delivery and success of a training is also affected by the culture of the participants. It seems ironic that trainers would need to be mindful of “culture” when training individuals to be intercultural. Many individuals misinterpret intercultural competence training as a mechanism of giving all individuals a uniform culture. On the contrary to this misnomer, intercultural training aims to create dialogues for mutual respect and awareness toward others’ cultural norms (Wang, 2008); thus, highlighting cultural difference, even in, delivery of training methods is considered as a thoughtful practice of intercultural competence.

I briefly discuss these two approaches for the sake of better understanding the practices that are currently being used on campuses across worldwide in regard to intercultural training to promote diversity awareness; however, the present study does not aim utilize either of these approaches directly. In fact, I contend that no single training design can be a “perfect” fit for two training contexts; and that is why this study does not seek to actively “train” faculty on how to be more interculturally competent. I argue later in this study that the use of a single method – even the most comprehensive -- seems to be antithesis to the very nature of inclusion and mutual understanding – the very pillars of intercultural competence. Thus, leading the researcher to a position to design a more comprehensive model to internationalize through designing a professional learning community. I believe a professional learning community takes a more holistic approach to tackling challenges that currently exist and will continue to arise on campus. In the section below, I look at the features and guidelines governing and ensuring building effective PLCs.
Professional Learning Communities

The phrase, Professional Learning Communities (or PLCs) has become a familiar phrase that we can find applied to a variety of professional fields. In its simplest definition, a PLC collects a group of institutional stakeholders to address complex issues related to the workplace. Given the two pillars of PLCs – collaboration amongst stakeholders and the solving of complex issues – this organizational tool has become an effective go-to for educational institutions across the US, especially in the realm of K-12. While this simplistic overview of PLCs seems rudimentary, it in fact entails more than just a group of colleagues sitting around a table making decisions. A PLC is a comprehensive and inclusive collection of both stakeholders and tactics that are employed to effectively re/solve institutionally complex issues. And the development, balance, and maintenance of the components that comprises a PLC is a managerial feat in itself.

Hord (2009), a leading scholar on PLCs, writes that “true” PLCs should include five characteristics. The first feature is that PLCs should be supportive and be guided by shared leadership. This can be interpreted as institutional leadership having an active role to initiate the PLC and to continue to be an active participant. The second feature is for participants to have shared values and vision. Here the concept of an institutional image becomes a major player -- what is the image and what intrigues members of the institution to work towards a “preferred image.” It is essential that a shared vision is developed and agreed upon and that all decisions made later in the PLC are aligned with this vision. The third characteristic of PLCs is to have collective learning. In this feature, the focus is on bringing stakeholders from all departments/sections together to identify issues and reflect on measures taken. Fourth is to build supportive conditions. Here, the focus is on the logistics of how to bring staff together in terms of physical location, time commitment, etc. It is noteworthy how Hord points out “time” as
having the potential to be both a debilitative factor or a facilitative factor depending on the way leadership is able to creatively alter schedules to build in time for PLC efforts. The fifth feature guiding PLCs is to have *shared practice*. Hord discusses the value of peer observations and peer learning as a means to share effective practices amongst members of an institution. She noted that peer learning through observations, feedback, discussions, roundtables, etc. should become the norm of an institution. It is also noted that this is probably the most difficult aspect to develop because of the high trust that is needed amongst members of the PLC (Hord, 2004).

A common underlying theme that can be seen across the five elements that Hord points is the sense of shared responsibility and trust. An interesting question Fleming and Thompson pose at the beginning of their article is “How do we create a culture where all staff members take collective responsibility?” Not surprisingly, they claim that *leadership* is the starting point for this culture. Through a PLC lens, effective leadership means *shared leadership* and *supportive leadership* – two aspects that are vital in building trust amongst PLC members and creating a culture of shared responsibility. Fleming and Thompson (2004) saw that in multiple successful PLCs, administrators had faculty/staff play an active role in decision-making which in turn increased trust amongst faculty members. Their study finds that for building trust an effective strategy can be to work in proximity to one another to increase interactions. Other strategies can be to hold weekly/monthly meetings, publish newsletters, and of course, to designate time from leadership to create more opportunity for interaction amongst PLC members (Fleming & Thompson, 2004). However, Fleming and Thompson note that shared leadership is easier said than done. Both sides, meaning already-leaders and newly-appointed PLC leaders, must learn how to navigate their new roles/powers while still maintaining the institutionalized leadership
structure in place. The challenges expressed in terms of leadership seem to point to a deeper shift that needs to happen within an institution: a change in the culture.

Change in the institutional culture requires the first step to come from leadership (Talbert, 2010; Fleming & Thompson, 2004; Hord, 2009; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2007). Talbert has an interesting take on how effective PLCs are typically found in educational centers that go through a cultural metamorphosis at the institutional level. Specifically, Talbert compares developing a PLC in institutions both through a traditionally bureaucratic approach (top-down) and a relatively modern professional approach (bottom-up). Talbert clearly shows how bureaucratic approaches are mandated, forceful, and thus, insincere and lack real substance; As opposed to a professional approach which is about building culture, empowering and creating rich networks of resources and ultimately leading to student success. However, in order to see this shift in institutional culture take place, several challenges exist that can be summed up in the following three overarching considerations:

1) Often, to change the system, the bureaucratic perspective clashes with the professional perspective.

2) Change in system needs to stem from the “top” because the “bottom” is not in a position to initiate change.

and

3) Changing the professional culture is often a developmental process and requires time and systemic nurture (the top may often abandon PLCs due to lack of funding because immediate results cannot be seen).

Considering these three challenges, top leadership plays a significant role in creating effective cultural change and without the initiation from the top, the professionals within an institution
cannot effectively create cultural change, even if they wanted to take charge. The last challenge, the consideration of time, in this framework is of interest from numerous standpoints. While PLCs need time to develop and flourish, institutional leaders are often pressed for time and require their staff to deliver results within a limited timeframe.

Kruse and Seashore Louis (2007) reviews a case-study where an education institution went through a 5-year cycle to successfully build and implement an effective PLC. Not surprisingly, the PLC began as a top-down effort in year one, and began moving toward a more instructor-led effort in subsequent years. The study again shows the importance of how educational administrators must carefully and diligently give instructors power to take charge of PLCs. In a reflection of the 5-year study, the researchers provides five takeaways from the project: (1) extended time is crucial; (2) teaching and learning come first; (3) there needs to be an initial top-down push; (4) resilience; and (5) inter-institutional collaborations/communities need to be part of the discussion (Kruse and Seashore Louis, 2007).

The shift in culture begins at the top and flourishes over time, however, the factor of time is not a guarantee in itself that a PLC will succeed. Going back to the shift in institutional culture, another significant component needed for PLCs to thrive goes back to how the members within the PLC engage and interact with one another. Mulford (2007) uses social capital theory as a lens to look at how individuals within a PLC are able to use/build networks to advance the effectiveness of their work. He builds on the work of Grooteart et al. (2004) to point out that there are three distinct types of social capital: *bonding*, which occurs within members of a group; *bridging*, which occurs amongst counterparts in different but same-level groups; and *linking*, which occurs between members of different level from different groups. Regarding the domain of *bonding* (the interaction that takes place amongst coworkers within an institution), the article
emphasizes that collective efficacy is a prerequisite to successful PLCs. Efficacy in simple terms is the “belief about individual or group capability (Goddard, et al., 2004).” It is how an individual or a group perceives itself to perform in reference to a specific task. Goddard et al. (2004) provide numerous examples in their review of how collective efficacy can be a determinant of student success and positive group work amongst faculty if this is misconstrued and only built superficially. The research points here to the fact that instructors need to be empowered and have an active role in decision making to have a stronger sense of collective efficacy. It is worth further elaborating here that many cases of failed PLCs are due to the lack of such bonds.

Sims and Penny (2015) provide a review of a failed PLC and blame the main culprit as a “fundamental lack of collaboration” – or in other words, lack of collective efficacy – due to excessive focus on student results. In the review of a school, Sims and Penny observed that PLC participants are only determined to “deliver better results” to the district, rather than spending time to build bonds and organically discuss the status of their school and pedagogical practice.

Thinking back to the initial simplistic definition of what PLCs are and how PLCs can be effective, it would seem naïve to think of PLCs as a simple gathering of colleagues to vent about institutional issues. A PLC is a space that members gather to disassemble complex issue and find ways to tackle these issues through collective professional practice and dialogue. For this to happen, PLCs require a shift in institutional culture that begins from leadership and trickles to faculty. As leadership relinquishes some decision making authority to faculty/staff, faculty/staff in turn will become more committed to the success of the PLC and students. However, PLCs are not a call for hierarchical leadership to end. Leadership still needs to play an active role in
providing support for the PLC to thrive. This can be done through understanding the duration required to change the culture and the investment needed in building this source of capital.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods design to inquire faculty members’ perceptions, experiences, and adjustments in the teaching of international students at GFU in light of a deeper understanding of faculty participation in a professional learning community focused to enhance internationalization efforts at GFU. To achieve this, I initially collected survey data from the faculty body at GFU using Qualtrics, a reputable survey software. Through the survey, I then inquired to see if survey participants were open to participation in a follow up interview. In designing the interview questions, I took a phenomenological approach in to capture the emic features of the participants. A phenomenological approach is well suited to describe the experiences that individuals have lived and shared in reference to a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the particular phenomenon was the shared experience of teaching international students at Green Forest and an elaboration of how they view the planning and execution of a professional learning community.

Research Site

Understanding the atmosphere and culture of the research site was essential to the framing of this research. Green Forest University is a private, liberal arts college which is located in the greater New York City metropolitan area. Traditionally, GFU has carved a niche by attracting students who are undecided to commit to a specific major, or students who are motivated to pursue two majors simultaneously. While this niche does not negate the admission/rejection of particular groups of students, international students had not been a main focus of GFU administrators. However, in recent years, with growing economic concerns and trustees’ calls for diversifying the student body, GFU administrators have seen recruitment of international students as a new priority; thus, the initiation to aggressively recruit international
students through global partnerships. Currently, GFU has approximately 400 international students on campus, a number which has grown exponentially from previous numbers of international student intake. As a faculty member who was hired to directly work with incoming international students, I can see institutional efforts in designing infrastructural checks and balances to ascertain that international students are getting the “best” experience; However, it seems that the college has taken little effort in preparing faculty to teach this ‘new population’ in which they have so actively recruited. In my current role, I am responsible for teaching English to incoming international students. In the department I teach, international students are required to pass a year-long, intensive English course to become familiar with academic English skills and acclimate themselves more to US classroom norms. However, faculty still find international students “underprepared” when they are enrolled in mainstream courses at GFU.

Sample

To answer the questions guiding this study, I initially surveyed the faculty-body at GFU and subsequently followed up by interviewing eight faculty members who participated in the survey and met specific criteria outlined for the study. In the outline, I sought to get invaluable input from faculty who teach in various academic disciplines; in addition to teaching to first-year, undergraduate international students. Through this purposeful sampling strategy, I used a maximum variation approach to capture a wide range of faculty in terms of teaching experience and international teaching background/awareness. Creswell (2013) asserts that through maximum variation sampling, researchers can “increase the likelihood that the findings will reflect differences or different perspectives – an ideal in qualitative research” (p.157). I think Creswell’s point becomes exponentially important for this study, owing to the fact that cultural variation amongst the student and faculty at any institution can be infinite; thus, the emphasis on
variation sampling is particularly valuable. The sample serving this study was selected from a total population of approximately 60 Liberal Arts faculty members at GFU. To identify the sample, I requested the Dean’s office at GFU to send out the survey link to the whole CLA (College of Liberal Arts) faculty population. Out of approximately 60 possible participants, the survey yielded in collecting data from 43 faculty members at GFU. Through the survey, I inquired faculty members interest in learning about international students, past experience with international students, curricular/pedagogical modifications because of international students, and certain demographic information. In addition to the aforementioned, I inquired about their willingness to partake in an interview regarding the “internationalization of GFU” – as a follow up to the survey. Ultimately, out of a total of 14 whom had expressed their willingness to participate in the interview, I selected eight faculty members. The selection of the eight attempted to capture the maximum variation based on two factors: years employed at GFU and the academic discipline/background of the faculty member.

**Data Collection Process**

In this study, data was collected through two different modes: survey questions and interviews -- the two most common data collection methods employed in a mixed-method designed study (Creswell, 2013). In fact, the survey of this study has two distinct purposes: (1) to collect data from GFU faculty and (2) more specifically, to identify potential candidates for the interviews to maximize variation.

The survey was created using Qualtrics, a leading survey software. After getting institutional approvals, the Dean’s office administered the survey by sending out (email) a link to the CLA faculty-body. After a period of seven days, a follow up email was sent to remind faculty
to participate in this survey by a specific final date. After 15 calendar days and a total of 46 participants the survey was “locked” and no longer available to potential participants.

Through the survey data, I learned of 14 participants whom had expressed interest in further participation with a follow-up interview. The interview served as the means of collecting data to identify detailed and specific views regarding international students’ presence on campus and how faculty would view the development and participation of a professional learning community at GFU. These semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions about how faculty view international students in their class, and how faculty perceive their teaching practices in regard to international students while considering the needs of international students. In addition, the interview protocols inquired about institutional efforts taken to internationalize and the role faculty could play in the development of a professional learning community at GFU. The interview questions were designed from the key themes and research questions guiding this study. It should be noted that the interview questions were piloted before the study with a non-participating faculty member to ensure linguistic clarity and potential themes that may arise during the actual study. Themes of the interview protocol included, but were not be limited to: perceptions on international students on campus/in the classroom, teaching practices used to engage and integrate international students, language/cultural barriers, and curriculum adjustments for international students in their class, institutional support/professional development for faculty, and views to the development of a professional learning community. All interviews were administered by the researcher virtually, using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Using the recording functionality on Zoom, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture the full context of the discussion.
**Data Analysis Process**

Considering the quantitative and qualitative nature of this data set, I used multiple methods to understand how faculty view the influx of international students on campus and how GFU is adapting (or better say, needs to adapt) in the face of these changes.

Through the use of Qualtrics, I looked at four distinct topic areas through the 16 Likert scale questions. The four areas inquiring faculty views were (a) international student classroom behavior in comparison to domestic students; (b) general faculty observations of international students; (c) faculty pedagogical modifications because of international students; and (d) institutional initiative/support taken in regard to internationalization. In addition to the above mentioned Likert scale type questions, the survey included an open-ended question requesting any “additional participant comments” and a binary (yes/no) question inquiring participants’ further participation in the interview portion of the study. Qualtrics is a leading survey analysis software that provides researches with the capability to draw on comparisons and analyses that allows to show statistically significant meaning to the data set. However, due to the nature of the study at hand, the researcher only analyzed descriptive statistics to point to notable variations and skewedness observed in faculty responses. The main reason for this was because the ultimate goal of the study was to design an effective PLC for internationalization.

The interview recordings are the most telling of what is actually happening on the ground at GFU. Initially all interviews were transcribed and subsequently coded. I developed a set of preliminary codes from the interview protocols and from the common themes that had risen through conversations and that were visible in the transcripts using a thematic analysis approach; while trying to breakdown and look for data that shows details of faculty perceptions toward international students, perceptions toward the institution, and perceptions toward the
development of a professional learning community on campus. To fulfill this, I reviewed each transcript two times while coding each with the thematic coding scheme. As I progressed and learned more from each interview, I developed additional sub-codes that revealed detailed insight as to how the development of PLC needs to occur at GFU. I reviewed all interviews for a final third time with the newly added codes to ensure that all potentially relevant details had been captured.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data collected from the survey and interviews guiding this study. The purpose of this study was to view past and current internationalization efforts at GFU, identify any shortcomings, and to ultimately use this information to develop a professional learning community to help faculty better understand and address the influx of international students on campus. To do so, the study set forth to answer the following research questions:

1-How do GFU faculty describe their experiences with international students enrolled in their courses?

2-In what ways (if any) have GFU faculty been professionally prepared to include international students in their classrooms?

3-What is the sentiment of GFU faculty towards participation in a professional learning community to help campus internationalization efforts at GFU?

In addition, answering these questions to understand the present state of internationalization at GFU, the study aimed to develop and design a series of sessions and a broader professional learning community that can be used as a space for fostering meaningful practice/development to support faculty internationalization efforts at GFU.

The Survey

As stated in the methodology, this study utilized a mixed methods approach. From the survey administered, a total of 46 participants participated successfully in this survey. This number was anticipated, as there are a total of roughly 65 faculty teaching full-time at GFU. Thus, the survey yielded a participation rate of 82% -- a number which is institutionally in line with other surveys conducted at GFU. The survey did not include any demographic identifiers,
with the exception of participant indication of two factor: full-time faculty status and experience with having had international students in class. While the data provided by the survey portion provided insight into what the broader faculty body at GFU are thinking/feeling, none of this data was analyzed to reveal statistically significant results. This was due to a small sample size and nature of the very study at hand.

The survey included a total of 16 Likert scale question types and can be classified into four distinct categories: (a) international student classroom behavior in comparison to domestic students; (b) general faculty observations of international students; (c) faculty pedagogical modifications because of international students; and (d) institutional initiative/support taken in regard to internationalization. In addition to the above mentioned Likert scale type questions, the survey included an open-ended question requesting any “additional participant comments” and a binary (yes/no) question inquiring participants’ further participation in the interview portion of the study.

In terms of the thinking of international students in comparison with domestic students in the classroom, the data showed that the majority of faculty at GFU (close to 68%) of participants expressed a degree of concern by “agreeing” when asked about international student classroom participation in comparison to their domestic peers (table 1).

**Table 1**
*Survey Portion that Compares International Students with Domestic Students in Class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that international students participate less in class.</td>
<td>28.26%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel that international students find the course content difficult to understand.</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another interesting takeaway from this portion of the survey is that the overwhelming majority of faculty had a very positive outlook towards the presence of international students in their classrooms – with close to 90% of participants expressing that international students have strongly or somewhat added to the academic value of the class and 72% stating that international students have helped a better social dynamic in the classroom (Questions 5 and 6 in Table 1). The remaining questions in this portion did not show a significant variation between aggregated percentages of participants that ‘agree’ and those participants who ‘disagree.’

In the next portion of the survey which focused on faculty observations of international students, participant responses once again revealed an inconsistency (or what I will later discuss as potentially, a great degree of consistency) in how international students behave in class (Table 2).

Table 2
General Faculty Observations of International Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that international students cluster together during class/group work.</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel that international students are at a disadvantage because of their oral language skills.</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I feel that international students are at a disadvantage because of their written language skills.

While the percentages of responses show some variation, a closer look at the mean, standard deviation, and variance of this portion of the survey reveals how consistently and evenly distributed survey responses were across the three questions (SD is close to 1 indicating a “normal” distribution).

Table 3
General Faculty Observations of International Students – Data Dispersion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Minimum (Strongly Agree)</th>
<th>Likert Midpoint</th>
<th>Maximum (Strongly Disagree)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that international students cluster together during class / group work.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel that international students are at a disadvantage because of their oral language skills.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel that international students are at a disadvantage because of their written language skills.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the questions related to pedagogical modifications, faculty once again revealed variation in their responses and gravitated towards a center point by characterizing their pedagogical modifications toward international students in class as *usually* and *sometimes* (Table 4).

Table 4
Pedagogical Modifications because of International Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I make adjustments to my course materials to better serve international students.</td>
<td>15.56%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31.11%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I think of international students when designing my teaching session (lesson plan).</td>
<td>24.44%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.11%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the final portion of the survey that focused on institutional initiatives and support was able to shed more light in the research questions guiding this study. The data set shows that close to 70% of participants expressed “disagreement” in that the institution doing a sufficient job for bringing faculty together to address international student issues. This item on the survey is well in line with the initial motives driving this study (Table 5). An item that further supports the lack of institutional awareness for faculty development in preparation for international students can be seen in question 3 of this portion of the survey where close to 76% of respondents expressed “agreement” to more professional development when it comes to having international students in class (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Institutional Initiative and Support in Regard to Internationalization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel that it is the responsibility of the campus international center to prepare and deal with all international student related issues.</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.89%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I feel that campus leadership has done a sufficient job in bringing faculty/staff together to address issues related to international students.</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24.44%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>53.33%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.56%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I feel that my practice will benefit from participating in a series of professional development sessions that specifically focus on international students.</td>
<td><strong>26.67%</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>48.89%</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td>17.78%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I would be open to being a member of a professional learning community that focuses on teaching international students.</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.89%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, I should emphasize the while the survey does not aim to provide any statistical significance, the data collected here is in line with what has been mentioned in the overall sentiment that is seen at GFU: positivity towards having international students on campus/in
class, faculty eagerness to welcome international students in their classes, yet a sense of lack of institutional support for faculty professional development and faculty preparedness.

The final portion of the survey included an open ended question for participants to add comments regarding international students, in addition to inquiring if they would be open to participate in a follow-up interview. From the 46 total survey participants, only 14 expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview.

However, the open-ended question recorded 19 responses and yielded very interesting information. A common theme that participants expressed in their comments was the “variation” that can be seen amongst international students and how we cannot view all international students with the same lens. One participant wrote, “International students exhibit much larger variance in terms of their academic performance: the good ones are extremely good and the bad ones are extremely bad. It's hard to rate their average behavior as just one umbrella group of international students.” Another comment reads, “I’ve had a variety of international students. They’re all different. Like our American students they come in with different strengths and challenges.” One participant attributed the difference s/he sees in international students to the student’s language proficiency. A participant wrote, “It's really split. I have international students with good English skills (or native English speakers) who have been phenomenal in class and who contribute a great deal. I have had others who barely or never participate and seem to struggle with both oral and written English. I am not sure how well I am serving them...”

In fact, language proficiency was another common theme that was seen in the comments. Survey participants expressed concerns with international students’ writing skills, speaking up in class, and reading skills – all areas rooted in students’ language proficiency. “The language skills
of international students vary tremendously, so it is hard to generalize and give responses that characterize them as a group”, writes one participant. This shows the extent of how faculty view international student success as intertwined with good language skills.

The Interviews

From the survey, 14 participants had expressed their willingness to further share their experiences with a follow up interview, and from the 14 a total of eight participants were interviewed. The interviews included, but were not limited to, 11 open ended questions that were designed to further capture the GFU faculty views on international students and their overall sentiments towards the development and participation in a professional learning community that focuses on internationalization. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

The coding principle utilized by the researcher to analyze the interviews was reflexive thematic analysis. In this approach, codes are developed as themes are conceptualized through the distillation of participants experiences and stories (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In addition to this, a more deductive approach to coding can also be utilized though the use of a codebook that is predetermined by the studies hypotheses. To this end, following the first 3 interviews, the researcher attempted an initial coding scheme to ensure that the research protocol is effective and, in fact, capturing thematic data required for the development of the PLCs. Following this process, all remaining interviews were successfully conducted, recorded, and transcribed. Using the thematic analysis approach, all transcriptions were analyzed and read multiple times. After familiarization with the texts, codes began emerging. This approach resulted in 3 overarching codes and seven sub-codes that capture the essence of the interviews and assist in the development of themes and considerations that were considered for the development of a professional learning community at GFU.
Faculty Concerns about International Students

In all the interviews conducted, when asked about some of the challenges faculty are facing with international students in their classes, participants expressed concerns with students’ level of language proficiency at GFU. While all noted that this issue is not applicable to all students, each participant was still interested in expressing this issue without any sort prompt from the interviewer and attributing classroom challenges to students’ language levels. One participant’s comments when asked about classroom challenges with international students responded,

“Okay, so, so it's a mixed bag because international students are just students like everybody else. Exactly right. So I do find that participation for international students can be much more difficult. For all the classes that I teach, I do like to have a strong component of group work during class time and for students who are struggling with (language), it's more for students who feel like they're struggling with their English skills. Those students tend not to participate.”

Interestingly, participants were generally heartfelt as they were expressing their concern and frustration when responding to questions on challenges with international students. One participant captured the essence of this feeling by saying,

“They have to grapple with the language and I would say, you know, I feel for those students a lot, especially the ones from Asia because…Okay, you gave me six months, a year, something like that to learn Mandarin and then threw me into a college level science class…. I'd still be clueless. I would not be in any way, shape, or form be prepared to handle that and the fact that they give it a go and can get 60 70% of it is, is a miracle.”
Another participant brought an interesting point to light when asked and pressed on the issue of concerns faculty at GFU were having with international students in class. The participant said,

“I can see that there are certain challenges that some students face. Certainly language acquisition is the first thing I go to in my mind. Some (students) were phenomenal, you know, writing skills were strong, oral skills were strong, reading comprehension was great. And then we have students…. I have students who really struggle and who, who don't ..... You know, I have a couple who are really struggling right now. You know, it's, I think, academically, I think it will be hard for a professor to know otherwise. I think when I see students struggling academically, that seems to be highly related to the language piece.”

This participant points to an interesting factor of how faculty at GFU particularly identify academic issues as language issues. In other words, it seems like as though faculty are looking at this multi-faceted and complex issue with only a single lens and most are choosing to simple blame language proficiency as a scapegoat to properly internationalizing the campus. In fact, in the next section, I look the past and current views at GFU as an overarching theme to see how participants view current institutional efforts.

**Current State -- Internationalization at GFU**

Current state of internationalization is a label that became associated with many of the discussions that emerged in the interviews with participants. This overarching code was utilized more than 20 times when reviewing the interviews and in a variety of ways – all which led to sub codes that assisted the researcher in getting a fuller picture of present efforts at GFU and how this study can use this information to design a PLC.

**Past Professional Development --** Participants all expressed a shortcoming of professional development when it came to internationalizing the campus. Other than a rudimentary
discussion at the beginning of a fall semester, GFU has had almost no professional development for faculty in regards to having international students in class. One participant mentioned, “Yeah, I think minimal (for international students), but there's minimal faculty training on lots of things ....we need faculty training.” What was most surprising is that the majority of participants expressed interest in learning more about how to better accommodate international students in their classes. Participant #4 sums up this sentiment well by saying,

“For international I'd be interested. I try to attend a lot when there are opportunities for teacher training and development. I tried to attend and I noticed, quite a few people in attendance. Not all the faculty but I, I do see genuine interest in people all around me interested in.... let's talk about ways we can work better in the classroom. So I think it would be welcomed.”

**Milieu at GFU Regarding International Students** --When participants were asked interview questions regarding the experience international students have in class and how the international students are shaping the overall social and academic dynamics, they shared a range of vignettes that capture how GFU is adjusting to the increased number of international students. Overall, almost all participant indicated that GFU has benefitted from a presence of international students in their classes. One participant shared an interesting instance of how international students were truly bringing to life and contextualizing instances that could not be readily possible without the presence of this diverse group on campus.

“My feeling is that having international students is a huge contribution and enriching to our classrooms. Oh, they are a source of different ideas, different, diverse perspectives and wonderful questions and cultural knowledge that. I guess one example that I want to share that comes to mind was recently in my environment society class. I had a student say “Oh, the
Germans have got it figured out for environmental policy, they have such better environmental policy than the United States” and I had a student said I'm I am German And let me tell you about how the coal industry influences our environmental policy and You know, that's just really. Oh, okay. No, you know, I can intervene and make comments but it's nothing like having it real.” Examples similar to the one provided above were typical in the majority of the interviews.

However, faculty did mention instances of discord that had occurred due to the presence of international students. One of the participant’s comments is indicative of how domestic students view international students as “getting a free pass” when it came to academics.

“They (international students) have those um…. Tech dictionary things. I say use whatever you want, right, like I'm not testing you on your ability to learn English or to know English. That, by the way, has annoyed some of my domestic students right. Why does this kid get a dictionary and I don't. I need a dictionary, too. That’s not fair.”

This comment brings to light some of the underlying tensions that at play at GFU. Another participant shared a clear example of domestic student frustration with an international student and his/her language proficiency.

“Oh, okay, so I'm in the statistics class that I'm teaching, specifically this semester, there was there's an issue of learning to work with other people who aren't like you and group work is required as part of the class that I'm teaching and I had to shuffle a group around because there was one particular American born student who had it and couldn't deal with two members of his group whose language proficiency was poor....And so I ended up having to shuffle the group's a bit because you know as much as, like, Well, listen, you know, you got to work with all kinds of people. And he just like....wouldn’t!”
In fact, many participants brought to light issues that they are seeing in group work with international students and how to cultivate a sense of group work in their classes. While some participants attribute this issue to language shortcomings on the student’s part, some view this as a cultural difference. What was most interesting is that no participant made any reference to their own style and approach in the classroom.

“I mean, it's interesting that group work has been an issue. Even if I say, all right, like these four people you work together and it just based on where they are right. I'm not purposefully doing anything. It's almost as if the international student doesn't know how to interject or doesn't feel comfortable interjecting or participating in the group or the domestic students, almost like just kind of shut them out. It's……I stopped doing it in one class because it was just, it was uncomfortable for me to watch and I didn't want it.”

All in all, the overall details shared by participants through their vignettes showed a complex dynamic at play. On the one hand, international students have added an important and invaluable component to the classroom, yet there are frustrations and challenges that were clearly expressed in participants’ comments.

**Development of a PLC at GFU**

Another series of questions focused on the development of a professional learning community at GFU. Here, the researcher aimed to understand the specific needs and expectations to optimize faculty participation and experience.

*Faculty Commitment to Potential PLC* -- When asked about how faculty would view the rollout and participation in a professional learning community that focused on international students, the participants expressed what I refer to as *conditional enthusiasm*. As previously mentioned, almost all participants expressed interest and the need for a systemic space for discussion and
growth when it came to internationalization at GFU. Yet, many expressed concerns with how a PLC would look in terms of faculty commitment. One participant’s comments captures the essence of conditional enthusiasm by saying,

“I mean, most of us want to do well and we want to do right by students and we, you know,... We don't want to make like bad mistakes, especially if they are about misunderstanding. So, so yeah I think, I think that's fair to say. But, but I don't think the burden should fall on faculty for this. If they get into my classroom and they don't have the support, I can't give them what they need. This is not my area of expertise. I mean, they... Mean if you think about it. Oh, it's, I think that is a rational thing to say because GFU did not hire me as an expert in this. They have an expert in science. So I mean, the fact that I am have any expertise at all in this area is bonus.” What stands out for the researcher in this comment is the juxtaposition of “doing right by students” and the fact that participating in a PLC feeling like a “burden” for this participant.

Interestingly, this comment was not the exception as many other participants expressed workload concerns and felt that any sort of PLC would simply not have any room on their current bandwidth. These results, while worrisome, displayed a stark reality as participants used phrases such as drowning, exhausted, and tricky when asked about commitment and participation in the learning community.

Three of the participants mentioned that to maximize faculty participation, it would be best to run “single sessions” that focus on minor pedagogical tips, as opposed to a whole learning community that would look to meet over a duration of time. Participant #3 said,

“I do think so, especially if it's like on the quick... Stuff like that. Like, yeah, the nice thing is a lot of these fixes when it comes to assessments and homework and wording, except that will actually help everyone, not just international students.”
Another participant said,

“\textit{It might be hard (to get faculty to participate). Because they don’t recognize the need, but it's just that it's... It's too great an ask... I can't. I'm just going to keep doing it wrong. If this is how far I have to go and like if you give me 20 solutions to problems... I won't even know where to start. I won't know how to decide which one to try if it's too much and so honestly with this kind of thing, I personally think less is more. So if you can find two specific problems and give two specific solutions and let's try that and see how that goes. And then check in six months. I know it’s more incremental but I think it’s actually more likely to work.}

These comments speak to the very challenges that has led GFU to the current status and are antithesis to the development of any internationalization effort that would be effective at an institutional level.

**Members of the PLC** -- Participants were provided with a scenario that if a PLC on international students were developed at GFU, who should be part of it. When given this question, participants seemed motivated and interested in being part of such an initiative. Obviously, “international students” was the most obvious answer participants provided. Having domestic students as part of the PLC was also viewed as crucial. What’s interesting was that not much emphasis was given to senior leadership participation. As mentioned in the literature, the success of any PLC heavily relies on leadership participation; however, this fact seemed to be irrelevant in the view of participants. Participant #1 expressed concerns regard how a faculty-heavy PLC without student participation would be ineffective not yield in any necessary change.

“In the end, I mean we should all be getting together. I mean, what if, what if we invited a few students to a couple of those. It's them. It's on them in each other. So I don’t understand. The narrative has to turn back inward. So having an internationalization workshop would be
helpful because and that's why we have students ..... so 15 more faculty are going to sit around and think about what they need at this at this point, I'm not sure what they (students) need. I probably got to hear from the students.... snowballing I think we should. I mean, it says your thing (the study at hand), but one idea I would have toward this as is like just always keeping the students in it, so like we the faculty are on the sideline. So like me and my diatribe I just went off on... just keep that out. Like I just have to be quiet. And then like, like for example, keep bringing the narrative back to them.”

Potential Themes for Discussion—Direct Inquiry. When directly asked about the “topics” that would help GFU faculty better internationalize their classroom, participants provided a range of themes that they thought might assist in light of the current situation. In this portion of the interview, I truly wanted to hear what participants wanted to learn more about by participating in the PLC. The old adage that says “We don’t know, what we don’t know!” is applicable here. I purposefully highlight this segment as a direct inquiry because throughout the interviews participants consistently revealed elements of how internationalization efforts were lacking at GFU; yet in the direct inquiry portion, participants were not able to specifically point to topic areas that they would like to see discussed. Participants used phrases such as I guess, maybe, and probably repeatedly while simply going back to the same, obvious culprit: language issues! This portion of the interview process was most telling in the extent of deficiency and lack of preparedness GFU faculty have towards the internationalization taking place on campus.

Final Notes on Interviews

Throughout the interviews, the researcher observed that participants were unaware, confused (at times), and overworked; yet, they seemed genuinely interested in seeing the
development of a PLC that will better their practice in addition to assisting the institution as a whole. A sense of positivity can be seen when participant #8 said

“The only thing I would add is like.... it's okay if it's not perfect the first go around. I think just like put it (the PLC) out there and have the first go around. And honestly, like you could keep improving every year. One thing I’ve done with XYZ program every semester has been different, because I always find something that can be improved and I'm okay with that. So I just like, like, don't let something not being perfect hold you back from trying it out.”

Conclusions

This chapter contained the results of the survey and interviews to answer the questions guiding this research. The surveys provided insight into specific areas that were supportive of the hypotheses the researcher had regarding faculty views – particularly in reference to a lack of any “training” or institutional development to discuss the presence of international students in GFU classes. The interviews further supported the data collected in the survey while adding a descriptive narrative to contextualized much of the sentiments faculty at GFU are encountering because of the presence of international students on campus. Through analyzing the transcripts, four themes became crucial as the researcher aims to develop the PLC: (1) faculty outlook towards the development PLC is positive and much needed at GFU; (2) faculty are committed, albeit stretched for time; (3) student participation is essential for the PLC sessions; and (4) structure of sessions needs to be limited in time and specific in scope of discussion. Additionally, these narratives indirectly provided insight to some of the issues faculty are presently challenged with -- student collaboration in the classroom (for classwork), the development of culturally-neutral lessons, cultivating better integration of international and domestic students, and moving
past language. These topics will be used as the inaugural framework for the development and roll-out of the internationalization learning community at GFU.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to review the current state of internationalization at GFU from a faculty perspective and ultimately develop a professional learning community that can help extenuate efforts taking place at GFU to better internationalize the campus. This chapter provides an overview of the major findings from the faculty survey and interviews related to past institutional efforts, present challenges, and overall outlook to the development and execution of a PLC at Green Forest. Additionally, this chapter provides a series of sample sessions and session designs that can potentially be executed to initiate the PLC. The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of this study and provides suggestions for future studies.

The questions guiding this study are a crucial starting point for the interpretation of the current status at GFU and potential for the development of a successful internationalization PLC. The questions were:

1-How do GFU faculty describe their experiences with international students enrolled in their courses?

2-In what ways (if any) have GFU faculty been professionally prepared to include international students in their classrooms?

3-What is the sentiment of GFU faculty towards participation in a professional learning community to help campus internationalization efforts at GFU?

These questions, in addition to trying to capture the views and sentiments of faculty, also attempt to look into the progression of internationalization that has taken place at GFU. That is, question one and two examine the past and present status of internationalization, while the final question here aims to capture insight for the future of internationalization efforts at GFU.
The results from the study revealed an obvious, yet complex reality to the state that GFU faculty are in when referencing international students. The majority of participants expressed a sense of institutional apathy when describing past GFU efforts to professionally prepare faculty. This is while a majority of participants expressed interest in professional development. However, when pressed on the matter of professional development, participants’ responses revealed a certain level of complexity and nuanced balance that will be required for the development of any systemic effort aiming help internationalize faculty at GFU. This balance should be navigated through the consideration of key takeaways provided in the results: (1) faculty outlook towards the development PLC is positive and much needed at GFU; (2) faculty commitment and eagerness is apparent for participation, albeit with conditions; and (3) student participation is viewed as crucial for the success of any PLC.

**Interpretation of the Finding**

While faculty described a range of experiences, thoughts, and sentiments regarding internationalization efforts, common themes became obvious through analyzing the results. Each of these common themes revealed insight to the level of complexity and caution required in designing a successful professional learning community.

To frame the interpretations, the study looked to the *culturally sustaining pedagogy* framework put forth by Django Paris. According to Paris, culturally sustaining pedagogy aims to “perpetuate and foster – sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling (Paris, 2012, p.93).” While Paris’ concept of CSP addresses bringing pluralism to the forefront in the context of schooling in the US, this mindset can well be applied to the situation present at GFU. In fact, in the interpretations I outline the very tenets that speak to a deficit pedagogy
approach – an outdated pedagogical mindset that aims to ‘mold’ students to conform to the ‘educational norms’ that have been set in academia (Paris, 2012).

While educational researchers and leaders have lauded Paris’ concept and call for CSP, two main constrains remain: (1) What are we trying to sustain, and (2) how do we do that. In response to the first concern, Paris and Alim (2014) better elaborate on the word “sustain” and go on record that sustain here is not equivalent to maintain. CSP calls for the sustenance of the nuances that students bring from a variety of cultures, races, languages, and literacies. In their work, they emphasize the importance of asset pedagogy in contrast to the use of a deficit approach. The second critique has been less expanded on due to the vastness CSP incorporates. Cole (2017) discusses using CSP to design a specific course at the higher education level. In her work, which focuses on the BLM, she outlines how her course design specifically taps into the lives of her students to bring a sense of empowerment to minorities while building awareness for students on a range of cultural and social issues.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy, while usually applied to issues hovering around pluralism in the domestic educational context, can be well applied to internationalization in the US. Using this lens, the researcher interprets five common themes discussed throughout the interviews that speak to an unfortunate truth: GFU faculty require further training and discussion on how to better utilize the cultural capital present in their classrooms. In each of these takeaways, one can draw connections to how the language and actions have been (and continue to be) antithesis building a classroom environment that aims to embrace plurality rather than have students conform to norms set by the university.
“International students range…. just like domestic students”

In both the survey and the interviews, one phrase was prefaced before any participant shared his/her response: international students are not all the same. This fact, itself, supports the complexity at hand. Participants would often claim challenges they are facing with international students, and then, negate themselves by providing opposing anecdotal evidence. This matter came up frequently when I pressed participants to share their views and challenges. The very fact that view exists is a challenge for any professional development. While I agree that variation exists amongst any group, we cannot simply dismiss internationalization efforts because of outliers and/or variation amongst target populations.

To me, this simply equates to the old argument that if certain people fail, it is their own fault. All people have the same opportunity, so why do a few succeed and others fail? is a common “cop out” culture that unfortunately presides within the populous – sometimes unintentionally. This mindset, which is often brought up in the context of race and inequity issues, connects back to a privilege and lack of awareness that leaders and empowered members of the group have and the ignorance and/or laziness to not want to take the effort to become change agents (Vaught & Castagno, 2008; Nelson, 2013). Going back to international students at GFU, this “acceptance of variation” amongst the international student body can be a significant roadblock in the development and flourishing of a professional learning community. How can we internationalize if we justify that all is well because not everyone is struggling? On some level, this position resonates with the minimization level of intercultural competence Bennett and Bennett note as the “low level” an individual/institution can have towards the intercultural skill set. In the minimization stage, “elements of one’s own cultural world-view are experienced as universal, so that despite acceptable surface differences with other cultures, essentially those
cultures are similar to one’s own (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p. 152).” The point that stands out here is that GFU must learn embrace these difference, not simple dismiss since domestic students also vary in academic performance.

“*It’s all about the language*”

A common theme that was particularly highlighted in the results was the notion of international student language proficiency. An overwhelming majority of interview participants expressed the main challenges that we witness with some international students at GFU being rooted in some students’ weak language proficiency. While we cannot deny the fact that good language skills are a necessity in any academic context, it becomes exponentially underscored for faculty because it is the first element (and sometimes the only element) that they encounter in students. As one participant pointed out when talking about student challenges, it seems that faculty have nothing else to reference other than language when they think of academic performance. The participant said, “I have students who really struggle and who, who don’t .....You know, I have a couple who are really struggling right now. You know, it’s, I think, academically, I think it will be hard for a professor to know otherwise. I think when I see students struggling academically, that seems to be highly related to the language piece.” I think this clearly shows how simplistic and unidimensional some faculty at GFU are viewing the challenges international students are having in the classroom. However, I should note that this mindset is not an exception to GFU, but rather it is an indicator of lack of preparedness of faculty and shows the long trek required to internationalizing the campus. Gallagher, Haan, and Lovett (2020) describe of a difference in linguistic expectation between faculty and non-native students at a US institution of higher education and how faculty often lack the initiative to take measures to assist student needs. Through surveying faculty and international students, the researchers
found that faculty view international student language as deficient, while at the same time international students viewed their language skills as adequate to fulfil class needs. What is interesting is that faculty expressed how they often forego the use of “supportive instructional adaptations” – an element that international students appreciate and find extremely useful (Gallagher, Haan, & Lovett; 2020).

The study by Gallagher, Haan, and Lovett speaks to the sentiments and details shared by faculty at GFU. While it is most difficult to understand is why such a mismatch exists in the first place, the goal of this research is to provide GFU faculty with the means to move forward in the internationalization efforts and to provide faculty with the means and tactics to overcome challenges that they are facing. Thus, drawing on literature and specific supportive instructional approaches that faculty can take to successfully move past some linguistic hurdles international students face, such as use of more visuals, small group work, and pre-class delivery of materials – issues that I will be addressing in sessions of the internationalization PLC.

“You don’t know what you don’t know”

One of the most compelling aspects of the results is that participants were reticent when asked what they would like to see be discussed in the learning community and potential sessions. As the saying goes, “The silence was deafening.” Almost all participants had a long pause when questioned on topics that they would like to work on to better their practice regarding international students. While the researcher is not claiming that the “absence of evidence” equates to the “evidence of absence” (Alderson, 2004), in this particular context, it is important to note that the absence of ideas, potentially, confirms the lack of dialogue that exists among GFU faculty on how to better approach/integrate international students in classes. Interestingly, GFU faculty are not unique in this respect. Jin and Schneider (2019) surveyed 261 faculty
members to collect data on faculty perspectives towards international students. What is relevant to the discussion here is that their study also showed a significantly low number of participants (only 14%) expressing “explicit challenges” that they think international students face (Jin & Schneider, 2019). Jin and Schneider’s findings are in line with the current sentiments expressed by GFU – a deficiency in expressing the issues of international students in the classroom and how they can be tackled.

What is most interesting is the few answers that I elicited through the interviews of this study were again around language issues and managed to shift the narrative towards ‘students’ and what they need to do to improve themselves. One theory here can be that participants were not prepared for the questions; thus, they were able to quickly think of areas that they would like to learn more about. Another position to take on the matter is the fact that participants lack the “background knowledge” to discuss and think cogently on the issue of internationalization. O’Reilly, Wang, & Sabatini (2019) look at the concept of background-knowledge and its correlation with overall understand by analyzing more than 3,000 participants reading performance. While their research focuses on reading comprehension, their findings on how knowledge-threshold hypothesis is a predictor of how an individual understands and views situations can be potentially applicable to this scenario. In this study, it is worth considering this theory as a possible explanation to the lack of clear responses from participants that speaks to the deficiency of institutional preparation of faculty for international students.

“Aren’t they here to learn the way we do things?”

The results implied an addition subtle dynamic amongst GFU faculty: the fact that institutions of higher education remain amongst the most traditional of institutions that hold students to ‘standards’ that may not be valid measures for the purpose they serve. In an article on
student disability, Morina and Carballo (2017) discuss the shortcomings and lack of empathy of faculty to change their practice in order to accommodate students with disability. While international students in the US and students with disabilities seem like an illogical comparison, one factor in both of these scenarios remains consistent: the fact that faculty are set in their ways. Having preconceived notions that one’s own pedagogy/practice as superior is not only detrimental to internationalization efforts, but questions the institutional morale as a whole.

Although GFU faculty did not explicitly mention of any “superiority” in their practice, a number of the participants did discuss the fact that the international students have “come to the US to broaden their horizon and learn new things.” This matter speaks to the exact issues raised in the seminal work of Ladson-Billings and later Django Paris. According to Ladson-Billings, three fundamental pillars educators should consider: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014). While these three features encapsulate the essence of any education, GFU faculty seemed to be more focused on academic success, and less on the latter two components discussed. To elaborate, it seems as though faculty describe international student success in terms of how they (faculty) assess students, yet no participant mentions instance of how they promote or lead the classroom to help students build on their own cultural origins (cultural competence) and build on the application of what they are learning to their own backgrounds (sociopolitical consciousness). While this point is subtle and is not discussed in the results explicitly, I feel that it crucial to review and embed in all aspects of the PLC that is aimed to assist with internationalization efforts at GFU.

“This was not part of the deal! Unless….”

One of the biggest takeaways from the results was that GFU faculty were not willing to commit to a “traditional” professional development series. Despite signs of eagerness to help
international students and acknowledgment of the need for professional development, it was clear that GFU faculty are overworked and do not have any bandwidth to sit through a professional development series. Even when pushed on the issue of professional development in the interviews, participants pushed back by shifting the narrative back to the students and excusing themselves of the “burden” to learn skills to accommodate international students in their class. Hence, choosing a professional learning community as opposed to a training session, seems more logical and effective at this point. However, a crucial question comes to mind: If faculty at GFU do not have the “time” to participate in any training for internationalization, then what guarantees faculty participation in a professional learning community? Two points are important to consider as I try to answer this question.

Firstly, a plan ensure meaningful participation is crucial to consider as we outline the architecture of the PLC at GFU. Designers of professional learning sessions often resort to top-down ‘administrative mandates’ as a measure to boost faculty participation (Morina & Carballo, 2017). A mandate may seem effective in boosting the quantity of participants across large institutions; however, a professional learning community is not simple about numbers – It is about shared vision, persistence, determination, confidence, and quality of the interactions among community participants (Hord, 2004; Kwakman, 2003; Sims & Penny, 2015).

Secondly, it is important to note the word “traditional” and how view faculty perception of past professional development experiences. There is a reliable body of literature that looks into elements of successful professional development, and almost all point to the idea that to ensure impactful, meaning, and motivated participants, collaboration amongst faculty is key (Durksen, Klassen, & Daniels, 2017; Kwakman, 2003).
What seems to be the discrepancy between what GFU faculty are saying and the present study is the understanding of what a PLC is and what this study’s efforts are set out to accomplish. Participants consistently expressed in the interviews that they would be open to active participation in PLC efforts as a ‘replacement’ to other campus duties that they currently have; however, I feel that since this is a completely new initiative, faculty still cannot envision the learning community and how their participation will be meaningful to themselves and their students since it will be all about themselves. Thus, the anticipation is that the PLC will become a space that will organically attract faculty for the betterment of their students and themselves from a professional perspective.

**A Professional Learning Community Model for GFU**

The results of the study suggest that there is a gap in the current internationalization model at GFU, particularly from a faculty preparedness perspective. The following section outlines a PLC model that can be more comprehensive in inclusion of topics and members of the campus community. This model has been designed based on the existent literature and the collection of data from GFU faculty. In essence, it is the anticipated to be fit for where GFU currently stands on the internationalization spectrum and is tailored based on the institutional needs and data collected.

While designing the overall scheme of the PLC, the researcher drew on the literature review and specific components that were mentioned throughout the interviews. Additionally, the PLC draws on research from intercultural competence development. At the heart of the present study is the discussion of plurality and educating educators to take on the challenge of developing spaces that embrace difference, not promote conformity and perpetuate hegemony. In a study on developing intercultural competence, Holmes and O’Neill (2021) point out the
importance of an active role that participants need to play to develop this competence and
understanding. Smith and Paracka (2018) present their work on the development of a year-long,
campus-wide initiative that aimed to help the campus-community develop intercultural
competence. The findings of most importantly revealed the importance of how “each university
must define and tailor its approach to institutionalizing intercultural competence by taking into
account the specific contexts (p.24).”

Therefore, to revamp the internationalization efforts at GFU, this study puts forth a
conceptual model for a PLC aimed to internationalize the campus. In this model, members of the
PLC are each assigned to a “committee” within the PLC that has its own specific functionality
and purpose. Based on the findings and interpretations, the design outlined five committees:

**Logistics Committee:** Members of this committee are in charge of overseeing “housekeeping”
of the PLC. Potential responsibilities may include securing location of meeting, procurement of
refreshments, coordination of emails that need to be sent out to campus community, etc.

**Discourse and Deliberation Committee:** Members of this committee are to look at present
challenges that exist in reference to internationalization and design the meet-up sessions. Tasks
include looking into finding materials, theories, and practices to be analyzed in the actual hourly
meet-ups. It should be noted here that this committee is responsible for the “design” of the
session and this should not be misconstrued as if members are sole executers of the session. In
other words, members can decide priority of discussions to take place and can coordinate
speakers and guests that are slated to lead the session.

**Institutional Implementation and Assessment Committee:** Members of this committee are
tasked with looking at the campus community to assess the implementation of PLC efforts and
report back on the efficacy and changes occurring at a broader institutional level.
Faculty and Institutional Development Committee: Members of this group are responsible to assist faculty and other members to grow professionally in their respective field. Potentially, members of this group help other PLC members present and publish their work. The efforts of this group help members grow professionally.

Outreach and Advocacy Committee: This group is tasked with building bridges with the broader campus community and beyond. The purpose for this is to involve as many voices as possible. Instances of tasks would include potential meetings with members of the community to potentially develop new programmatic roadways that help internationalization efforts.

An important aspect that should be added is that each committee in the PLC has its own function, but relies on interaction and collaboration for the successful execution. A visualization of the conceptual model better illustrates the importance of how each committee, yet independent, is relevant and essential for the success of the PLC.

![Figure 2. The Pentagon of Internationalization](image)

Entitled *The Pentagon of Internationalization*, this conceptual model shows the committees that each sit on the arc of a circle to create a pentagon. A pentagon, which is created
from symmetrically dividing a circle into 5, symbolizes the importance of each committee as they are of equal distance from one another from within the same larger community – here being GFU. The pentagon – itself, a symbol of symmetry, complexity, and unity – requires all nodes to come together from within the campus to function. The model also includes a pentagram (the dotted star shape) which shows the importance of the interaction needed between each node– the crosslines are symbolic of the pillars that are required to strengthen a professional learning community. This interconnectedness is crucial to make sure the pentagon’s shape and uniformity of the nodes remain intact and while ensuring an added level of accountability for the PLC to function and remain viable. It is through the interaction of the committees that community learning takes place. The circle in which the pentagon sits is symbolic of the broader campus community – that is, members of the campus that are not part of the internationalization PLC.

An essential feature of this conceptual model is the explicit omission of the role that leadership plays in any institution. The purposeful omission lies in the foundation of Talbert’s (2010) work on PLC development. Talbert (2010) notes how mandated participation and implementation of PLCs from the top, can lead to development of ill-fated PLCs that are superficial and not substantive. To be effective, Talbert calls for a strong base from the bottom that can influence leadership and subsequent decisions/policies. It should be noted, however, that while the Pentagon of Internationalization does not have a specific space designed for leadership, the presence of leadership is can be impactful in numerous ways. Additionally, the model can be utilized by university leadership to better understand changes and nuances occurring at various institutional levels. Thus, the omission of leadership from the operations of the PLC does not aim to negate the presence and impacts of/on leadership in any way.
A question that still remains to be answered is how to start the professional learning community at GFU. The internationalization pentagon model’s design seems to be suitable for an “already in-place” group of campus stakeholders that are simply missing a structure. However, GFU is almost at ground zero when it comes to any professionally designed, active effort to internationalize. To initiate the model, it is important to reach out to interested members on campus and provide them with an initial invitation to a traditional professional development series that will act as the grassroots movement for the development of the PLC. As one participant in the interviews mentioned, “those who are participating in this study are probably the most interested to be part of anything.” A scheme for the initiation of the process includes predesigned modules and structures already in place. The hope is that the pre-designed modules (based off of what faculty expressed) will ignite the fuse for the PLC to begin its dynamic, yet organic track of expansion to ultimately reach the pentagon model.

Figure 3: Trajectory of PLC Development – From Initiation to PLC
As part of the PLC design package, a total of four modules have been outlined and will be facilitated by the researcher, a key member of the PLC. These four modules which have been designed based on the findings of this study and attempt to incorporate faculty requests while bearing in mind end goal of the development of the PLC. The modules are designed as four stand-alone session giving a rudimentary overview of needs to happen for internationalization to take place. As the illustration shows, the modules act as a starting point for the PLC pentagon. What needs to occur throughout these four modules is the transition from standalone sessions to the development of the PLC. Although the details of the transition from modules to PLC are beyond the scope of this study, the researcher will attempt to build the PLC through mentoring, bonding, empowering, and awareness building activities embedded throughout the modules. Additionally, each module will include a “deliverable”, a feature that will further lend a hand in the transition to the development of a full functioning PLC.

The Pre-PLC Modules

The modules serve two distinct purposes: (1) to address the immediate and initial concerns of the faculty at GFU, and (2) to serve as a space that will germinate the seeds for the PLC. Each module has a specific focus, while all unite under the theme of internationalization. Through a range of activities, participants will gain some insight to the literature on the issues and how other faculty are approaching, struggling and overcoming these areas in the classroom.

Module #1: The IKEA classroom

Overview: This session looks at finding ways to express concepts and explanations with the use of means other than language. The session gets its idea from the international company, IKEA, and in how it successfully develops instructions without the use of words. This session looks
aims to assist faculty in redesigning their lessons/lectures to make them friendlier to international students by reducing the linguistic complexities without losing any content.

**Session Outline:**

The session consists of three parts: the idea, real-life practice, discussion/reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Idea</th>
<th>Real-life Practice</th>
<th>Discussion/Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated Time</strong></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>This segment will look to explain the concept of “visual language” and best practices on incorporating visuals to overcome language barriers.</td>
<td>In this section, session participants will be given a real-life sample lesson to analyze and enhance using visuals. This part aims to facilitate a scaffolded and shared practice.</td>
<td>The final piece of this activity anticipates a group discussion on the practicality and further sharing of ideas on how to facilitate the linguistic component of each lesson. Session participants will be asked to attempt the IKEA method to their own lessons to later share their experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description:**

In our daily lives, we see the use of images, visual markers, and icons incorporated in our surrounding. This *visual language*, which is more or less shared in the global community, helps communicate significant meaning, without the burden of knowing a language (Martix & Hodson, 2014; Rodriguez Estrada & Davis, 2015). In any country, one would recognize the following visuals:

![Symbols](image)

While simplistic, the meaning behind each of the symbols above signifies a complex concept that can almost instantaneously be understood. Yet, in the world of academia, the use of visual and infographic information is often secondary (Rodriguez Estrada & Davis, 2015). The
world of academia mostly relies on elaborate explanations that often rely on proficient language skills. In fact, the academic world may even penalize individuals with weak language skills, despite them having a good command of the content and concept being taught. This one-hour session aims to help instructors across different disciplines to simplify the language burden of concepts (especially for language learners) by increasing non-verbal cues and other global communicative approaches.

To lead this session, the facilitator will use a range of visuals on presentation slides as the facilitator shows the importance of visuals for session participants. Here, the facilitator will emphasize on methods to can help supplement language and best practices that are currently promoted and accepted in the field by communication/language experts. Rodriguez Estrada and Davis (2015) claim that most educators make two common mistakes when it comes to incorporating visuals: treating visuals as add-ons and refining visuals to be suitable for their audience. The audience, in this case being international students, can particularly benefit from an additional visual component of not only the visualization of concepts, but also adding visuals for key academic words that are often found in their descriptions of the concept. In essence, the creation of a visual glossary that students can use to better understand concepts and remember key words.

It should be stressed here that the point being expressed by the facilitator is not to totally omit text. Arguments have been raised on learning and how one would learn if not ever give the particular words. Others cast doubt on “all-visual” documents in that they are open to misinterpretation based on background knowledge (Arizpe, 2013). In the extremist form, the IKEA session would be doing just that – depriving students of much needed language and terminology to be successful in their academics and future professions. However, the goal here is
to learn how instructors can supplement language and enhance comprehension by adding visuals and bringing visual information to the forefront.

This idea will then lead the session to the “real-life practice” portion. In this segment, session participants will be asked to rethink a lesson in terms of increasing its visual language. Session participants will be given a “sample lesson” taught at GFU. The lesson will be selected from a core curriculum course that all international students are required to take. This specific lesson selection will have two benefits: it is applicable to international students and it will be generic enough so that participants can chime in. At this point, session participants will be asked to think and design a lesson where visual language is highlighted to assist understanding and enhance the lesson. Depending on the number of participants in the session, this 25-minute segment will either be done as small group work or as a whole session group.

The discussion/reflection portion of the session will naturally follow the practice piece. In this segment, the updated, visually enhanced lesson from the practice will be presented and analyzed. The facilitator anticipates that session participants will chime in on their experience trying to add visual language and ultimately, this will lead to a more comprehensive discussion on the topic. The facilitator is under no impression that this session will be a standalone session that will solve all international student language issues, but the hope is that this session will lead to new means of thinking and help faculty at GFU redesign their lessons to address linguistic challenges they are currently seeing. As a follow up, the facilitator will ask session participants to try and apply the IKEA approach to visualize their own lessons and to report their experience back to the group in future sessions.
Module #2: Group Work: Birds of a feather, flock together?

Overview: This session looks into the notion of group work and collaborative learning with a particular focus on the dos and don’ts of group work in multicultural classrooms. The session will discuss issues related to challenges within multicultural collaborative learning efforts while providing insight on ways to maximize group work efficiency with domestic and international students in class.

Session Outline:

The session consists of four parts: the ice-breaker, the research, the discussion, the sign-off.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ice-breaker</th>
<th>The research</th>
<th>The discussion</th>
<th>The sign-off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated time</strong></td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>This part will consist of a warm-up activity to get participants thinking of group work</td>
<td>The research portion aims to provide a summary of previous studies and their findings.</td>
<td>The discussion looks to have participants apply the research to the ice-breaker activity and also allows for participants to question/reflect on their own practice.</td>
</tr>
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Description:

This one-hour session begins with an ice-breaker – an inductive task asking participants to group hypothetical students that are “enrolled” in the participant’s class. Profiles of 20 students (combination of domestic and international) will be provided to participants (all participants will be receiving the same 20 students). Once the profiles are provided, participants will be asked to group the students. After participants have grouped their 20 students, the facilitator of the session will inquire about the rationale to the way participants grouped their 20 students. This task and a brief sharing from two of the participants will approximately take 20 minutes.
At this point, the facilitator moves to providing participants with some insight to the literature on group work and group dynamics, particularly with a focus on groups with multicultural/multilingual constructs. Here, the facilitator will focus on specific aspects that comprise a group:

- **Member Designation** – Here participants will look at discussions on how group construct looks like (self-selection vs. teacher assigned) and research done on the matter. There will also be findings on multicultural group vs. monocultural group performance (a topic that has been of concern for GFU faculty).

- **Tasks Assigned to the Group** – Participants will be given insight on the importance of “task design” in multicultural groups from the seminal work of De Vita (2001). Topics for discussion will be on how *the task itself should be designed to require all group members’ input* and *ways to maximize interaction* (e.g. findings on how writing by nature is an individualistic skill and does not lead to a positive group dynamic).

- **Allocating time for Group Bonding** – Another point often overlooked in group work pedagogy is how to design and cultivate a “bond” amongst group members. This point becomes even more highlighted in multicultural/multilingual groups. Therefore, the concept of *how group members can talk about challenges that they are facing and how faculty can develop checkpoints and anonymous assessment reports from group members can help in creating successful multicultural/multilingual groups* will be discussed.

Each of these themes will be open for discussion and interpretation. Session participants will have time for their own “group work” in the session and will collectively analyze each topic with their own personal experience while hearing their peers’ perspectives. The facilitator will
provide a summary of what the present literature says on each issue and will allow time for further elaboration and discussion.

After the lesson portion, the facilitator will then move to the discussion phase and provide the opportunity for the session participants to reflect on topics mentioned as well as their application to real-life situations at GFU. Here, the facilitator will provide more tangible narratives from the works of Benediktsson and Ragnarsdottir (2019), and Baker and Clarke (2010) – studies that have insight on the dynamics of multicultural/multilingual group work from the students’ angle. If possible, the facilitator will try to include testimonies from GFU students, or ideally invite an international and a domestic student to come to the session to provide first hand views.

For the sign-off of the session, the facilitator will ask participants to apply the discussed points to their classes – an action research of some sort. Session participants will be asked to record their group work design and observations with the intention of reporting back in a future meeting to the community -- the newly minted PLC that focuses on internationalization at GFU. Additionally, some session participants can do further research on the topic by looking at seminal works on collaborative learning by Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000) and Slavin (1980).

**Module #3: A Microcosm on Our Campus**

**Overview:** This session aims to help instructors and staff maximize the cultural capital present in the class: a collection of students from all over the globe that can each add unique, invaluable component to every class. Through redesigning the curriculum and rethinking our approach to teaching, this lesson looks to help GFU faculty in becoming more culturally responsive educators.
Description:

When selecting materials, educators, often and subconsciously, go towards the materials and practices that have helped them learn the concept in the first place. In its simplest form, that is what teaching is – helping others understand the concept through input. However, if learning relies on making this cognitive connection with the materials and the instructor, then how would a learner make a connection if the materials are culturally distant and foreign. To test this theory in real time, participants will be given two activities to review, discuss, and solve in groups:

**Problem #1:** Imagine you are driving from NY to Greenville. You leave NY at exactly 8:00 am with 3 people in the car and a full tank of gas. On the road, you hit some traffic so you’re not cruising at the max speed limit. In fact, your average speed was only 27 mph! At exactly 11:20 am, you make it to Greenville.

*Question:* How far is it from NY to Greenville?

**Problem #2:** You only have two bottles. One holds five liters. One holds three liters. You need exactly four liters.
**Question:** How can we get exactly 4 liters?

**Problem #3:** Time to play some baseball! Imagine there is a baseball game between Blue and Red. Team Blue is batting and team Red is on the field. Team Blue’s player just hit the ball to 3rd base where team Red’s player caught it. Of course, team Red’s player wants to throw the ball from 3rd to his/her teammate on 1st.

As you might know, a baseball field is in the shape of a diamond, and the distance between each consecutive base is 90 feet.

**Question:** What is the distance that the player would be throwing the ball from 3rd base to 1st base?

I anticipate certain groups will solve these scenarios at a different pace and with various levels of effort. While it is difficult to predict how session participants will perform, the fact that each of these scenarios plays to a different skills set and knowledge base is undeniable. Each participant will access their knowledge base and past experiences to provide answers for the three scenarios. However, the answer to the scenarios is not of value for us here. The session begins with this activity in an attempt to understand and analyze the thought process that participants go through. While the problems here require basic logical/mathematical skills to solve on the surface, a deeper cultural understanding is also embedded and necessary for the successful completion. More than often, most educators will recognize to avoid such “culture specific” examples. However, a common concern amongst educators in internationally diverse classrooms goes back to the idea of “how” to internationalize the curriculum. One approach is for instructors to simply *infuse* a few articles and examples from around the world to create a sense of globalism and inclusivity (DeVita, 2005). In another approach, instructors tend to strip all cultural attributes from a lesson to deliver the bare, neutral science and facts. In fact, neither
of these approaches lead to an internationalized curriculum. To create a genuinely international and inclusive curriculum, instructors must move beyond the superficial infusion and/or strip design and design materials that allow students to express their identities and culture and transcend this amalgam of ideas through classroom interactions and activities.

Through a comprehensive review of the literature on international/intercultural curricula development, Dunne (2011) provides an analysis of various typologies on how to build an intercultural curriculum. While each typology uses different terminology to describe an effective internationalized curriculum, Dunne points to four common themes that need to be considered: (1) the instructor needs to take on a role of a facilitator to allow meanings to emerge in class, not be prescribed; (2) student interaction and dialogue is key; (3) the facilitator should constantly draw on the diverse background of the students to stimulate cross-cultural thinking; and (4) students should be viewed as unique sources and should be encouraged to reflect on the materials in relation to their own particular identity (Dunne, 2011).

Most educators, nowadays, would probably agree with the aforementioned principles and even think that it is they are applying these tenets in the classroom. Yet, such broad guidelines such as the four principles mentioned can often be vague and overwhelming in that instructors can literally follow infinite paths to internationalize; thus, making the process promising and acceptable in theory, but not very practical in real-life. The goal of our session is to move beyond theory and see how GFU can put these ideas to practice. Therefore, to actualize the experience for participants, the session will use Leask’s five-stage approach to curriculum internationalization. The first step in the process calls for a **review and reflection** on the existent course activities, assignments, and materials. After this review, the process asks instructors to **imagine** how activities can be designed differently. The imagine stage is to be done collectively
to bring in a variety of ideas from multiple disciplines and individuals – an ideal practice that fits well with the overall design of the session. The third step calls for revision and planning. The title of this stage sounds somewhat misleading; however, this step seeks the active thinking of the means to execute the imagine step. In this step, instructors think of the specifics required to execute what they have envisioned. The fourth step, titled act, looks at effort implantation. At this stage, the instructor is overseeing the actual designed curriculum while maintain an evaluative stance on how the curriculum proceeds. The last stage is the evaluation stage that aims to collect evidence and data to assess the success and/or challenges viewed throughout the process (Leask, 2015).

While Leask’s process is designed for “long-term” institutional efforts, for the sake of this session, the session facilitator will only focus on the imagine stage portion of this process. To that end, the session facilitator will ask session participants to write two common practices (activity/assignment/material) that are used in their classroom as a starting point. Participants will then be asked to share their practices with another member participating (this will depend on number of participants in the session). The participants will then be asked to think (in groups or in pairs) about how they can “internationalize” the practice/assignment/activity. Participants will be given a series of questions to guide them through this process:

- Will all my students understand the purpose of this practice? If not, who may have trouble? Why might they have trouble?
- How can I maximize cultural capital? That means, how can I add a component so students can share their own experiences from their own culture.
- How can I get students to then share their unique views and experiences with everyone else in class (not just with me)?
The very thought process of doing this is a starting point for session participants to internationalize their classroom practices. While there will not be sufficient time to effectively alter a whole curriculum in a one-hour session, the facilitator will ask all participants to return to a follow up meeting with an assignment that they designed and implemented to share with the whole group. This follow-up will likely roll over to the PLC that will have been implemented after all four sessions are completed.

**Module #4: Do you really know me?**

**Overview:** In this session, participants review a series of questions asked from international students regarding their learning habits, preferences, etc. The goal of the session is to shed light on the facts and debunk myths we (the GFU faculty and staff) may have regarding international students’ behaviors’ and learning habits.

**Session Outline:**

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<th>Pause and Play Discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Estimated Time</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
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**Description:**

The idea behind this session’s design is to reevaluate and potentially clarify any myths that participants at GFU may have had or developed as internationalization was left in a state of “not immediate concern” over the past few years. As the findings of the present study showed, the GFU academic community has a positive outlook to fostering international students on campus and would be highly motivated to hear their (the students) views on what they are feeling.
Session participants will be watching a recorded interview with a group of international students (potentially 5) at GFU. In this interview, the facilitator will be asking international students the following questions:

- What do you think about talking in class? (potential follow-up question: What if I told you that your professors think that you don’t talk enough?)
- Would you be open to getting called on in the class or would you prefer to share when you feel comfortable?
- How do you feel about doing presentations?
- What are your study habits? How do you prefer/like to study and learn new things?
- What do you love most about the GFU campus? (What do you like to do on campus?)

This video recording will then be played at the session as a basis for the pause and play discussion. That means, after each question is asked, the video will be paused and session participants will be asked to discuss the question and see if their responses are in line with the students’ responses. After the faculty discuss the question, the facilitator will continue with the video to show students’ responses. This format will continue until the end of the session.

As the designer of this session, I anticipate that some session participants will find the international students’ comments intriguing. Over the years, scholars have documented instances of a mismatch in faculty expectation and reality when it comes to international students in the classroom (Gallagher, Haan, & Lovett; 2020; Guo & Guo, 2017). Through directly hearing what the international students think, GFU session participants may take a more open stance rather than thinking of hypotheticals. Even if the participants do not learn of any new or surprising information in this session, the idea is to begin thinking of international students as an addition to
the GFU family and considering the potentially unique needs of these newly joined family members.

**Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The present study provides a comprehensive design for campus internationalization that specifically targets an institutional gap present at GFU. While this study employs a comprehensive design, the nature of specificity tailored to GFU undermines its application to other institutions of higher education. This point is highlighted particularly as one considers institution size, ratio of international students to domestic, and other demographic information. Finding from further study into the application of this model at varying institutions of higher education across the country would complement the present study and research.

Another area that is open to further query is the integration of other campus components in the present scheme. While the *Internationalization Pentagon* calls on all members of the campus to join and each become a member of a committee, its main focus is geared towards enhancing internationalization with a specific focus on what would be ideal for faculty. Further studies could look at how other campus components, such as student service constructs on campus could potentially add to the present model. An argument here is that how can a model such as the one provided in this study be dubbed as “comprehensive” if only focusing on faculty and classroom experiences for international students. To elaborate, this study uses the word comprehensive in the sense of the need for broad inclusion of different university/community entities for improving student learning through awareness building and professional development of faculty. By no means is the study using the concept of “comprehensive” in the sense of its absolute meaning. Any model has room for reevaluation and expansion. As mentioned above, an area for future research can look into ways that internationalization efforts can be facilitated.
by developing more in-class-out-class partnerships to enhance both student living/learning experiences.

It should also be noted that the present study is a conceptual model with various components designed based on the GFU faculty input and literature currently present. In reality, this model has not been put to use; thus, opening the question of whether this model can even come to realization. While the question of “realization” take on the most extreme stance of questioning the validity and execution of this model, we can anticipate that since this model has never been used in practice, some modification may be required.

Conclusion

Internationalization has become focal point for most institutions of higher education today, and GFU is no exception to this phenomenon occurring across the US. This study set out to understand and evaluate the current state of internationalization at GFU to foster and design a professional learning community that meets the specific and unique needs of the school in relation to where they are in the internationalization process. The study particularly focused on how GFU faculty were left out of the internationalization equation and what measures needed to be taken to design a more comprehensive professional learning community that will likely meet the needs of the campus, enhance classroom experience and move GFU one step closer to achieving a more intercultural/internationalized campus. To this end, the researcher collected data through an initial survey of all GFU faculty and interviewed eight participants. Through this mixed methods analysis, the research was able to identify gaps in the current internationalization process and overall sentiments to participation in a professional learning community focused on internationalization. The result yielded in the design of a professional learning community model and the design of four sessions need to launch the community at Green Forest.
The fact that internationalization is still in its infancy at GFU and many other institutions should not be a surprise. Unfortunately, most institutions have taken a superficial and piecemealed approach to the internationalization process. The goal of this study is to show that internationalization efforts will yield significantly better outcomes when all campus parties come together to address this concern – the essence of what a PLC stands for. Until then, it is the responsibility of change agents to rethink and design more effective means of communication and collaboration to create better experiences for all.
REFERENCES


Gallagher, C., Haan, J., & Lovett, S. (2020). Faculty and international student perceptions of


**professional learning communities.** Teachers College Press.


Mc Graw Hill


Appendix

Interview Protocol

The interview consisted of several open-ended questions aiming to better understand faculty perceptions regarding the creation and their participation in a PLC that is geared toward internationalizing the campus.

Interview questions:

1- Please tell me how long and in what capacity you have worked at (name of institute)?
2- Have you had international students in your classes?
3- How do you feel about their (international students) performance in class? [Further clarification, their participation, academic habits, absences, etc.]
4- Do you feel that international students’ presence in your classes has added to the overall classroom experience? How so?
5- Do you think that international students are benefitting from all that is offered at [name of institute]?
6- Do you think that faculty can do more to assist international students to have a better academic experience?
7- Has the institution ever offered any form of training on how to educate and engage international students in your classes?
8- Would you be open to being part of a professional learning community (PLC) that focuses on improving campus and classroom practices for international students?
9- What topics/issues would you like to be discussed in this PLC? What topics do you think faculty would benefit from?
10- Regarding time commitment, how often do you think PLC members should meet? Would you (as a member) be open to doing some research and facilitating discussions?

**** How do you think we can incentivize their participation ****
11- Other than faculty, who else should be involved in the PLC?