



2015 HAWAII UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
ARTS, HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCES & EDUCATION
JANUARY 03 - 06, 2015
ALA MOANA HOTEL, HONOLULU, HAWAII

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM CHINA: MOTIVATIONS, CHALLENGES, AND U.S. ADMISSION POLICIES

HAGEDORN, LINDA SERRA
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Dr. Linda Serra Hagedorn
College of Human Sciences
Iowa State University.

International Students from China: Motivations, Challenges, and U.S. Admission Policies

Synopsis:

This paper addresses issues related to Chinese students applying for admission to American postsecondary institutions. Specifically the paper discusses issues of alleged cheating, the use of educational agents, and the widespread use of shadow education. The paper provides some policies to assist students to find appropriate institutions.

International Students from China: Motivations, Challenges, and U.S. Admission Policies

Linda Serra Hagedorn, Ph.D.

Associate Dean College of Human Sciences and Professor School of Education
Iowa State University

E262 Lagomarcino
Ames, IA 50011-3191

Lindah@iastate.edu

515-294-5746

China leads the world in the number of international students studying in the U.S. According to The Institute of International Education (2013), there were 819,644 students from China (academic year 2011-2012) studying in the U.S. representing 28.7% of all international students. While in many cases international students are welcomed by the U.S. postsecondary institutions to which they apply, there are several reasons why students from China may represent a unique situation and challenge for international admissions decisions and their aftermath. This paper examines those factors and makes recommendations for related policies.

First, I examine why so many Chinese students are attracted to and ultimately arrive for study in the U.S. Secondly, I examine the situational aspects of education that can provide complications and consternations when considering admission decisions specifically for Chinese students. Finally, I suggest policy not only to enhance fair decisions for students from China but to maintain diversity and fairness for all groups.

Motivations

Reputation. When it comes to postsecondary education, the United States enjoys the top reputation in the world. According to the *Times Higher Education* World Reputation Rankings, in response to Thomson Reuters' 2013 Academic Reputation Survey administered in 133 countries, the U.S. remains the world's top destination choice for college. Of the top 50 universities in the world 27 are in the U.S. (Times Higher Education, 2014). The results of this survey allowed the *Times Higher Education* to proclaim the US the "undisputed superpower when it comes to academic prestige" (p. 6).

Between 2010 and 2012, working with my international graduate students from China, I conducted several focus group interviews (mostly in the Chinese language) with parents of high-

school aged children who wanted their child to go to college in the U.S. These parents had sent their child to a special program specifically designed to enable them to score high on American college entrance tests (the ACT or SAT) as well as the TOEFL exam, and to ultimately attend an American university. Over and over again, these parents stressed their belief that an American college degree will guarantee their child a bright future (Hagedorn & Hu, in press; 2014). The parents consistently affirmed that they were willing to make significant financial, time, and other sacrifices if it would enable their child to study in the U.S. They consistently stressed that the goal was not to gain admission to just any American university, but to a highly prestigious one.

Fear of the Chinese National Exam. An important factor that pushes students and their families away from the Chinese postsecondary institutions and toward study abroad is the fear of the Chinese national exam, the *Gaokao*. It is important to note that students must decide early if they are going to attend college in China or abroad. This is an important decision because if the students decide to come to the U.S., for example, they will need to conform to a different type of study consistent with the SAT or ACT as opposed to the *Gaokao*. Whereas the *Gaokao* relies heavily on memorization, the ACT or SAT tests are designed to test students' ability to reason, communicate and apply logic (Conway, 2013). Chinese parents and students consistently stressed that a student could not study for one test and score high on the other.

The *Gaokao* is notorious for its intensity and the pressure it places on college hopeful students. In China, whether or not a student will be accepted into *any* university depends on scores on the *Gaokao*. Scores will also limit the choice of universities available to the student. Through 2014, the test was administered once a year. Close to 9.8 million students took the two-day exam in 2014 that will determine their fate (Knowlton, 2014). The *Gaokao* consists of three major sections; mathematics, English, and Chinese as well as other sections within the options of

science or humanities. In China, the highest scorers are praised and even worshipped as heroes. For example in 2010, Beijing's highest super scorer, Li Taibo, became a national sensation and a larger than life-size picture of him was erected at his high school (China Realtime, 2010). The pressure on students and their families to score high is tremendous and sometimes more than the students can bear. There is evidence linking *Gaokao* pressure to cheating and with a rising suicide rate among China's teens (Roberts, 2014).

Due in part to the intense pressure and consequences, the proportion of students electing to forego the *Gaokao* has increased in current years. Many of these students will take admissions tests to study in other countries and subsequently study abroad. And many of those students will choose not to come back to China after they receive their degrees. Hence there is a high correlation with the decrease in *Gaokao* takers and Chinese "brain drain." The Chinese Ministry of Education has taken note of statistics released by the Centre for China and Globalization (2014), stating that 9.34 million Chinese citizens emigrated, mostly to the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while only 848,000 people migrated; creating a deficit of 8.5 million. The increase of students electing to study abroad has prompted the Chinese Ministry of Education to recently release plans for revisions to the *Gaokao* test (Chen, 2014). Rather than rely solely on the score for the two-day test, the new plans include the testing of some subjects during high school thus spreading the testing time over a longer period of time. The new plans also include revisions on the subjects tested. It is hoped that these revisions will lighten the tensions and encourage more students to take the National Exam.

Complications

Cost. Attending college is costly—so costly that most Chinese cannot afford to send their child. An article appearing in the New York Times (Bradsher, 2013) illustrated how the high

costs of postsecondary education is virtually impossible for most Chinese families. The article followed the sacrifices of a poor Chinese rural family who struggled to save sufficient funds to send their only child, a daughter, to college. The father earned only \$500 a month as a miner while the mother toiled in an orchard to earn \$12 a day during the growing season. Although the family is supporting the daughter's study she was not able to get into a top university but rather a lower ranked institution that in China costs more than the elite. Another article from International Business Times (FlorCruz, 2013) cited a study reported in the Chinese news outlet Xinhua News reporting that the average farmer in China would have to spend about 13 years of net income to support a child's college education in China.

While the cost of attending college in China is financially impossible for most Chinese, studying abroad is significantly more costly. For reasons of comparison, the average costs for a student to study at the university level (tuition, room, and board) in China is between \$400 and \$2,200 per year (Foreign Credits, 2012); a small amount compared to the average costs for a year of study in America. The average costs of just tuition and fees for one academic year in the U.S. is \$30,094 for private colleges and \$22,203 for out-of-state residents at public universities¹ (Collegedata, 2014). One must add to the tuition costs the cost of housing, meals, books, supplies, transportation, and other miscellaneous costs; all of which are much higher in the U.S. than in China. Hence, coming to the U.S. to study would not be a decision made easily or in haste.

Why are Chinese parents willing to place all of their resources into their child's education? For the most part due to China's one-child policy that was instituted in 1979, today's

¹ The costs for an instate student at public universities is considerably lower at \$8,893. International students, however, must pay the out of state fees.

students are the only child in their family². Moreover, China is experiencing economic transformation with the emergence of a powerful middle class with discretionary income (Barton, 2013). In addition, cultural norms, traditions of filial piety, and necessity dictate that a child will help provide for their parents in old age (Salili, Fu, Tong, & Tabatabai, 2001)³. Thus, more parents can find the means and feel compelled to provide “the best” for their only offspring who will provide some “payback” when the parents are no longer able to work and may need financial assistance.

Difficulty taking the ACT/SAT. For those students who elect to forego the *Gaokao* and study in the U.S., another hurdle is taking the necessary American admission tests. Notably, the Chinese government does not allow American admission tests to be administered in mainland China thereby forcing students to travel elsewhere to take the test. The closest test center for many students is Hong Kong, but some students travel to Korea, Vietnam or elsewhere solely to take the test. Obviously, this complication is not only inconvenient but also adds significantly to the cost of studying abroad. And like so many other situations, entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the situation. For example, education companies offer group travel to Hong Kong complete with teacher supervision, hotels and meals for the purpose of taking the SAT or ACT tests (China Realtime, Oct. 16, 2013). Thus, the added costs of taking the tests escalates the bottom-line of costs for Chinese students with hopes to study in the U.S.

Agents. Most Chinese students wishing to go abroad use agents for some aspect of the application or college search process. Educational agencies or consulting companies are booming and oftentimes lucrative businesses in China. An educational agent is a third party

² Recent revisions to the policy now allow adults who were singleton children to have two children.

³ Culturally it is the male who is responsible for providing for aging parents. But more of today's singleton daughters feel the same pressures and are taking a role in assisting parents.

mediator who can assist students in the full process in the application to a postsecondary institution. Agents can assist students with university choice, university applications, visa procedures, admission tests, and other activities related to attending college out of the country. In China, agents are ubiquitous. There is no data on the number of educational agents in China, but according to a 2011 study by the National Association for College Admission and Counseling (NACAC), approximately 60% of students who apply to US universities have used agents. In another study of high school students in China, researchers found that close to two-thirds of the students planning to study abroad were using or planned to use an agent to assist them in the college application process (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011). And, the use of these third-party agents is increasing. Agents are almost always paid by the student but may also receive payment or commission from the postsecondary institution; a practice that is considered questionable by many. A recent survey of American college and university admissions directors found that 19% of public and private nonprofit institutions reported that they retain agents paid in part or in full on commission and another 19% of those who do not use agents admitted to considering their use (Jaschik & Lederman, The 2014 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College & University Admissions Directors, 2014).

Not all agents in China, or anywhere else in the world, adhere to high professional standards (Clinedinst, Hurley, & Hawkins, 2012; Franklin, 2008; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011). While many may be dedicated to assisting students find the appropriate college home and be successful, there is evidence that some agents falsify transcripts, write false recommendation letters, and/or practice in ways not focused on the success of the student but rather on maximum personal financial gain (Bergman, 2012; Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011). Some agencies operate with a sliding pay scale that is based on the prestige of the institutions to

which the student is accepted. Hence the pressure on agents is high and may encourage dishonest behaviors.

In 2011, The National Association for College Admission Counseling convened a commission on international student recruitment to study the use of agents and to forward recommendations regarding practices. While the recommendations suggested that best practice would ban incentive compensation based on the number of students, the commission stopped short of banning the practice (NACAC, 2013a). Based on the Commission's recommendations NACAC reviewed revisions to their Statement of Principles of Good Practice to include "all members agree that they will not offer or accept any reward or remuneration from a secondary school, college, university, agency, or organization for placement or recruitment of students in the United States. Members who choose to use incentive-based agents when recruiting students outside the US will ensure accountability, transparency and integrity" (NACAC, 2013b, p. 3). NACAC and others believe that there are legitimate reasons for the use of agency-based recruitment practices. In fact, the use of agents is accepted and popular in Great Britain and Australia. Clearly, for many students, especially those who do not have parents, friends or relatives with experience or knowledge of study abroad, agents play an important role in assisting students in their study abroad plans (Hagedorn & Zhang, 2011).

Shadow Education. For all Chinese students, regardless of whether they decide to attend college in the US or in China, the road to a postsecondary degree must be heavily paved with advance planning, high finances, intense study, and many sacrifices. As earlier indicated the competition for high scores on the *Gaokao* is fierce and on the other hand preparing to go abroad is also demanding and costly. The competition to be accepted into a university is so severe virtually all students must augment their education with tutoring, special classes, test prep, and

other forms of non-mainstream education, termed shadow education, if they are to be accepted into a top university either in China or elsewhere. Shadow education is that sector of education that runs parallel to and supplementary to the mainstream system. Shadow education includes but is not limited to private endeavors such as tutoring, supplementary programs, private lessons, sports, and arts-based instructions (Bray, 2009).

Getting data specifically on the numbers of students receiving supplemental education in China is virtually impossible. First there is little documentation of the practice, and what is documented is typically only available in China and in the Chinese language. However Zhang (2011) reports that according to the 2004 Survey on Urban Household Education and Employment, 55% of students indicated the receipt of private tutoring (Shen, 2008 as reported by Zhang, 2011); in the Gansu, Hunan, and Jiangsu Provinces a 2008 survey found that 74% of students in the 9th grade received tutoring (Hue & Ding, 2009 as reported by Zhang, 2011). The issue of shadow education is complex. Perhaps the most structured form of shadow education is that provided by commercial firms and global franchises such as the Global Access Certificate program offered by ACT Education Solutions, Limited (a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACT Inc.). The GAC, like other programs of this type, purports to provide the academic knowledge, independent learning skills, English language skills and confidence to enter and successfully complete a bachelor's degree at a foreign university. The GAC program operates within designated high schools by offering a series of courses held during the regular school hours. "Graduates" of the program are awarded with a certificate as well as up to 31 hours of college credits that are accepted at 24 US universities. In this way the GAC operates in a comparable manner to dual enrollment program in the U.S. where students may accrue early college credits that can be applied after high school graduation to a foreign university (Hagedorn

& Hu, in press). Hence the GAC, and other credit based programs, not only prepare students for the university experience, but also give them a head start in accruing credits.

Another example of a corporate program is Kumon. Kumon purports to be the world's largest after-school program and operates in 48 countries including the U.S. (Kumon, 2014). Kumon, however, focuses on younger children by offering after school enrichment programs. The Kumon method utilizes independent study outside of class and an abundance of worksheets. Their China website⁴, written in halting English, promises “Children will be full of courage and strength to pursuit their dreams after they master the knowledge and possess the problem solving skill [sic]” (Kumon, 2012, paragraph 7).

The GAC, Kumon and similar programs are very expensive and hence out of reach to most Chinese families. Yet their reach is wide and “stoke student and parent anxiety through aggressive advertising in newspapers and on buses and billboards” (Bray & Lykins, 2012, p. 31).

Despite the ubiquity of the big and small businesses offering shadow education service, the most common offering of shadow services is the practice of China's public school teachers “moonlighting” teaching additional courses, often to the very same children they teach during the regular school hours. Teachers, who are not paid well in China, may more than double their salary through offering additional shadow education. This practice has been forbidden in some of the provinces but still flourishes in most parts of China (Beijing Review, 2010).

An extensive study of shadow education throughout Asia concluded that “shadow education maintains and exacerbates social inequalities” (Bray & Lykins, 2011, p.44). Children receive the best education that their families can afford. In fact, a study by the China's Industrial

⁴ http://www.kumon.com.cn/KCN/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=105&Itemid=312&lang=en

Bank Co. and the Hurun Report found that 90% of the wealthiest parents in China plan to send their child abroad (International Business Times, 2012).

Cultural Challenges. Since respect for education has long been a part of the Chinese Confucian ideals (Kwok, 2001), there may be intense pressure for children to succeed. A popular non-scholarly book by Amy Chua (2011), entitled *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* describes the intense cultural expectations of some Asian parents for academic excellence from their children. Chua coined the description of the “tiger mother” who relentlessly pushes her child to excellence and aims for nothing less than excellence. Important targets for family expectations is to score very high on tests and to enroll in one of the most prestigious universities.

There are also cultural differences that may affect the college application process. Chinese students are generally unfamiliar with the practice of writing a personalized essay. But perhaps even more challenging is representing themselves in ways that will be attractive for American admission decisions. Often the admissions essay is to be focused on extra-curricular participation; a foreign concept for Chinese students who may have been so wrapped up in shadow education and other academic endeavors that left little time for such activities. Moreover the essay is designed for students to display their individuality while the cultural norm in China is to be part of the collective.

Another challenge is the dizzying array of majors and programs offered across the U.S. Chinese students are often too busy preparing for college and have not had the time or the support to nurture their aspirations for what they want to study once they arrive at college. Hence, students may not be ready to proclaim with certainty what they want to do as their life’s work. And yet another cultural complication is that it is often the case that Chinese parents make the decisions about what college their child will attend as well as the major (Bodycott & Lai, 2012).

Cheating. According to a 2010 study done by Zinch China, a San Francisco based company that matches students with colleges, cheating may be rampant among Chinese college applications. Specifically, they estimate that: 90% of recommendation letters are forged, 70% of essays are not written by the student, and 50% of transcripts are altered (Forbes, 2010). Much of this type of fabrication is blamed on agents. Whatever the source, admissions professionals from most colleges and universities can relate examples of applicants who on paper appeared too good to be true and in fact proved not to be as represented on their application materials. There are examples of prospective students with perfect SAT scores yet who struggle with the language in a personal interview. And there is evidence that in some rare cases of very desperate students, a professional test taker was hired to impersonate the student and take the admissions and/or TOEFL test (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011).

However, a part of the cheating may be laid on the doorstep of American policies requiring applicants to submit letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors. Since most high school teachers in China do not speak or write English well enough to accomplish this task, the requirement may be asking for the impossible. Moreover, Chinese high schools typically do not have counselors or others in similar roles who can write the letters, hence students and their families may feel compelled to get these letters somehow thereby encouraging cheating.

There is also a grey area that cannot be termed cheating, but results in achieving higher admission or English language test scores in questionable ways. Assistant director of admissions at Iowa State University, Pat Parker, can attest to stories from several Chinese students who are

proud of their accomplishments in memorizing long lists of vocabulary and learning shortcuts to score high on admissions tests (Parker, 2014). Thus test scores may reflect how well a student studied to take the test rather than knowledge.

Admissions—The American Side

In an effort to find out how admission professionals view the applications of Chinese students in light of contemporary issues such as charges of cheating, the widespread use of agents, and the prevalence of shadow education, a colleague and I tried to interview admission officials in Ivy League institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and others as well as top California universities that are both the desired institutions of many Chinese students but have also been accused of quotas or anti-Asian bias (Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011) (Hagedorn & Hu, in press). We know that these institutions receive many more excellent applications than they can accept and thus wanted to pursue how they sorted through the multiple applications and derived the target number of students that would enhance their campus as well as how they deemed which students were best suited for their institution. In each case, however, either our request was denied or our email and voicemail messages went unanswered. These experiences should not have been unexpected as others have reported that it is almost impossible to find data related to who applies and who is accepted at America's top institutions (Espenshade & Radford, 2009). Although disappointed, we knew that we could also learn from institutions not necessarily at the top of the Ivy League yet have received an increase in the number of Chinese applicants. We therefore shifted our focus and decided to work within a more familiar environment and to begin our inquiries in our home state, Iowa. We interviewed admission professionals in 14 of the state's top postsecondary institutions to find out how the applications of Chinese students were evaluated (Hu & Hagedorn, 2014).

In short, most of the admission officials indicated that there were no special considerations given to applications from China. Admission policies and procedures are posted on websites indicating a heavy reliance on high school transcripts and in test scores. While Iowa's public universities do not require letters of recommendation or an interview for undergraduate study, many of the private colleges required the letters and a few required an interview that in the cases of international students could be conducted virtually. Of course, universally all of the colleges and universities would deny admission of any applicant that presented an application package or transcripts that was clearly fabricated or altered. But most admission officers admitted that their ability to separate "cheaters" from "non-cheaters" was unscientific. All admission officers acknowledged that most Chinese applicants worked with an agent. While whether or not a student worked with an agent was not important, if the admissions professionals believed that a personal statement or a letter of recommendation was written by the agent, the application would be denied. But most officials confessed that except for flagrant situations (one professional received the exact same personal statement from two students), it is virtually impossible to know if the student actually wrote the statement. Several admission officers reminded us that "American students sometimes cheat too!"

Iowa's three public universities (called the Regents) indicated that they accept all applicants who meet the admission criteria that includes minimum SAT/ACT and English Proficiency test scores as well as can provide the appropriate financial records showing sufficient means for support. There are no set limits or quotas either by country or major. In answer to my question "what would happen if 300 applicants from China wanted to major in engineering and had the appropriate test scores and other materials?" they answered that they could not deny

admission and would have to figure out the next steps should such a well spring of interest occur.

One admission officer described their stance as reactive rather than proactive.

Iowa's private liberal arts colleges had different policies designed to attract a diverse pool of qualified international students. None of the colleges had anything like a quota or target percentage from any one specific country. One of the colleges worked with some agencies to bring additional international students to their campus (from China and elsewhere). Two private colleges required an interview that could be done virtually. They wanted to be sure that their college was the right one for the applicant. One college related stories of trying to discuss topics such as international travel or service projects that were included on the applicant's personal statement but the prospective student clearly had no idea what the admissions officer was talking about. Thus it was apparent to them that the statement was likely written by an agent or someone other than the student and hence that application was denied.

Despite the large numbers of students coming specifically from China, international students are still very welcome to Iowa colleges and universities. The welcome at Iowa public universities may be especially warm as they pay a higher (out-of-state) rate of tuition. Of course a study of Iowa colleges may not be the same as other states. Indeed, there is evidence that the welcome is not uniformly warm throughout the western world. In 2010 there was a major controversy over an article published in Maclean's magazine of Canada that exposed the feelings of some that Canada's universities were attracting too many Asians (Findlay & Kohler, 2010). In 2006 there was an article in *Inside Higher Ed* about discussions at a NACAC meeting where admission officers and high school counselors discussed perceptions of bias against Asians in college admissions (Jaschik, Too Asian?, 2006).

While international students are seeking American degrees, the U.S. is desperately trying to increase the numbers of American baccalaureate holders, especially among low-income and domestic students of color. The newly formed University Innovation Alliance, a coalition of 11 public universities funded by the Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is designed to improve college attendance and success among only American students.

Unlike Canada, the U.S does not have a coordinated recruitment strategy for international students at the federal or state level. Our neighbor to the north, Canada, has systematically and purposefully increased their number of international students. In fact, the number of international students in Canada has increased by 84% over the past decade (OECD, 2014). Canada has instituted a strategy to attract more international students and researchers to “foster innovation and create jobs and opportunities in every region of the country (Government of Canada, 2014).

[Face the Facts.](#)

It is uncertain if the number of Chinese applicants with American dreams will continue to increase or has plateaued, but there is certainly no indication that the tide will turn into a trickle. Iowa’s regents, as well as all public universities have a responsibility to the citizens of the state they serve. In fact in Iowa a new funding model was just approved in June of 2014 that bases the largest proportion of appropriations on the number of undergraduate residents (in-state) enrolled. It remains to be seen how this new model may affect international recruiting.

Despite the complexities, there is evidence that the universities and colleges of Iowa value international students from China. Admission professionals acknowledged that international students bring significant resources to the system and the surrounding location. They also provide diversity and an international perspective to domestic students.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations:

Cheating. Unfortunately some students will cheat. Cheating is not reserved to international students from any one country. World Education Services, a non-profit organization that provides assistance and research for international education recommends adhering to strict documentation rules that require transcripts and other documents be sent from the issuing school. They also recommend close scrutiny and returning documents to the institution for verification if any of the following are observed:

- “The grades are very high by the standards of a system where grades are typically clustered at the lower end.
- The format of the document is unusual for the institution or the system of education.
- The document contains inconsistent typeface.
- The document contains spelling errors.
- The document is marked as “confidential” and yet it is submitted by an applicant.
- The transcript or diploma is a colored photocopy.
- Lines, words, numbers, etc. appear crooked on the page.
- Lines, words, numbers, etc. are missing from the use of whiteout.
- The document is not signed and/or sealed” (World Education Services, 2014) p. 6)

It is unrealistic to assume that cheating can be eliminated. But for those students, who for whatever reason, have entered the postsecondary institution through fraudulent means succeeding within the American curriculum will be fraught with difficulties. These students will likely face an unsuccessful academic experience.

Letters of recommendation. In some cases, requiring letters of recommendation for international students may not be appropriate. High school teachers may not speak English fluently and hence be reluctant or refuse to write letters. Since there is typically no equivalent to high school counselors, finding the appropriate people to write letters may be difficult to impossible and may even invite falsified letters.

Shadow education. Most students arriving from China will have experienced extra education services. Except for those programs that provide transfer credits there is a lack of an evidence trail, leaving these activities in the shadows. While additional academic activities may be seen positively they may eliminate time spent in activities more closely aligned with the American definition of extra-curricular activities. Expectations for extra-curricular activities may need to be adjusted when evaluating the admission packages of international students; especially those from China.

Admission Tests. American admissions is often quick to criticize the Chinese dependence on the *Gaokao*. But truth be told, American admissions is also highly dependent on the ACT/SAT and TOEFL/IELTS tests. While the utility of these tests cannot be denied, additional means of judging international student suitability for admissions may be especially helpful for international students. If possible an interview can be very instrumental in judging student's true English ability and other attributes. Time differences can make virtual interviews challenging, but in today's technologically adept world, students are likely able to provide a short video clip answering questions earlier provided.

Agents. Educational agents are here to stay. In fact, the use of agents is likely only to grow. American colleges and universities need to be better informed about agents and how students are using their services. Short of providing commissions, colleges and universities may establish agreements with reputable agents so that they have they can exchange appropriate information and better serve students.

Future outlook. Without doubt there are insufficient numbers of seats at Ivy-League institutions to serve the large number of Chinese students hoping to enroll. Moreover, not to discredit the prestige of a degree from a highly selective institution, there are many excellent

colleges and universities in the U.S. outside of the exclusive Ivy League. For the most part, Chinese students and their families are generally unaware of America's excellent liberal arts colleges. Yet a student can earn an excellent education from these colleges and will be highly competitive for a graduate degree at any research university including the Ivy League.

Most Chinese students and their families do not understand the workings of the American university system. For example, they overestimate the difficulty of being accepted to quality universities like the University of Iowa, Grinnell College, or Iowa State University. For many students, a major barrier is English language proficiency. Students are generally unaware that they could obtain a visa to study English in America through intensive English programs offered by many community colleges and then enroll in credit coursework prior to transferring to a quality American university. This lack of knowledge places students at the mercy of agents and others who can convince students and their families that they need expensive services or in some cases must proceed with dishonesty in order to be admitted.

Hence there is a misbalance that can be righted. There are numerous students in China seeking a quality postsecondary experience. And, there are numerous liberal arts colleges and community colleges in Iowa and other states that would welcome additional international students. The next steps are to educate the students and their families regarding the value of colleges outside of the Ivy League.

References

- Bartlett, T. & Fischer, K. (2011). The China conundrum. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Nov. 3, 2011. Available: <http://chronicle.com/article/Chinese-Students-Prove-a/129628/>
- Barton, D. (2013, May 30). *Half a Billion: China's Middle-Class Consumers*. Retrieved from The Diplomat: <http://thediplomat.com/2013/05/half-a-billion-chinas-middle-class-consumers/>
- Beijing Review. (2010, January 7). Is Teachers' Moonlighting Legal? Beijing, Hebei, China. Retrieved from http://www.bjreview.com.cn/forum/txt/2010-01/04/content_237874.htm
- Bergman, J. (2012). Forged transcripts and fake essays: How unscrupulous agents get Chinese students into U.S. schools. *Time*. Available: <http://world.time.com/2012/07/26/forged-transcripts-and-fake-essays-how-unscrupulous-agents-get-chinese-students-into-u-s-schools/> <http://world.time.com/2012/07/26/forged-transcripts-and-fake-essays-how-unscrupulous-agents-get-chinese-students-into-u-s-schools/>
- Bodycott, P., & Lai, A. (2012). The influence and implications of Chinese culture in the decision to undertake cross-border highr education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), 252-270.
- Bradsher, K. (Feb. 16, 2013). In China, Families bet it all on college for their children. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/17/business/in-china-families-bet-it-all-on-a-child-in-college.html?pagewanted=all>.
- Bray, M. (2009). *Confronting the shadow education system: What government policies for what private tutoring?* UNESCO Publishing. Paris, France.
- Bray, M. & Lykins, C. (2012) *Shadow education: Private supplementary tutoring and its implications for policy makers in Asia*. CERC Monograph Series in comparative and international education and development. No. 9.
- Center for China & Globalization. (2014). *Annual Report oon Chinese International Migration*. China: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Chen, A. (September 4, 2014). China unveils long-awaited plans to reform rigid national university entrance exam. *South China Morning Post*. Available: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1585179/highly-anticipated-plans-reform-chinas-rigid-national-university-entrance>
- China Realtime (June 30, 2010). Gaokao no predictor of success? Available: <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2010/06/30/gaokao-no-predictor-of-success/>
- China Realtime (October 16, 2013). Hong Kong's new gig draw: The SAT. Available: <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2013/10/16/hong-kongs-new-big-draw-for-mainlanders-the-sat/>

- Conway, B. (2013, January 30). *Differences Between the Gao Kao and the SAT in China*. Retrieved from Peterson's: <http://www.petersons.com/college-search/sat-china-chinese-international-students.aspx>
- [Chua, A. \(2011\). *Battle hymn of the tiger mother*. Penguin Press, New York City.](#)
- Clinedinst, M.E.; Hurley, S. F; & Hawkins, D.A. (2012). State of college admissions 2012. National Association for College Admission Counseling, 10th anniversary. Available: http://www.collegedata.com/cs/content/content_payarticle_tmpl.jhtml?articleId=10064
- Espenshade, T. J., & Radford, A. W. (2009). *No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal: Race and Class in Elite College Admissions and Campus Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Findlay, S., & Kohler, N. (2010, November 10). The enrollment controversy. *Maclean's*. Retrieved from <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/too-asian/>
- FlorCruz, M. (Feb. 23, 2013). China's Steep University Tuition Costs the Average Farmer 13 Years Of Income. <http://www.ibtimes.com/chinas-steep-university-tuition-costs-average-farmer-13-years-income-1101434>
- Forbes (February 2, 2013). College apps cheating scandal is a learning moment for China. Available: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonma/2012/02/13/how-to-stop-chinese-kids-from-cheating-on-college-apps/>
- Foreign Credits (2012). The cost of college in China. <http://www.classbase.com/News/the-cost-of-college-in-china-60>.
- Franklin, S. K. (2008). A cultural perspective, for better or for worse. *NAFSA*. Retrieved January 12, 2009, from http://www.nafsa.org/File/_agents-cultural_perspective.pdf
- Government of Canada. (2014, January 15). *Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada*. Retrieved from Harper Government Launches Comprehensive International Education Strategy: <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/comm/news-communicues/2014/01/15a.aspx?lang=eng>
- Hagedorn, L. S., & Hu, J. (in press). Eastern Dreams: Alternative Pathways for Chinese International Students Pursuing American Baccalaureate Degrees. *College & University*.
- Hagedorn, L.S., & Hu. J. (2014). Non-traditional Paths: New International Student Pathways to the Baccalaureate. *Strategic Enrollment Management*, 2(1), 34-46.
- Hagedorn, L.S., & Zhang, Y. (2011). The Use of Agents in Recruiting Chinese Undergraduates. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 15(2), 186-202.
- Hu, J., & Hagedorn, L.S. (2014). *Black Box: Authentic College Admission Criteria to Chinese International Students in American Universities: A Case Study of Iowa*. Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Washington DC, November, 2014.

- Institute of International Education. (2013). "Top 25 Places of Origin of International Students, 2011/12-2012/13." *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
- International Business Times. (2012, April 7). 90% Of China's Super-Rich Want To Send Children Abroad. New York City, New York, USA. Retrieved from 90% Of China's Super-Rich Want To Send Children Abroad
- Jaschik, S. (2006, October 10). Too Asian? *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/10/10/asian>
- Jaschik, S., & Lederman, D. (2014). *The 2014 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College & University Admissions Directors*. Washington DC: Inside Higher Ed & Gallup.
- Knowlton, E. (June 12, 2014). 24 photos of China's insanely stressful college entrance exam process. Business Insider. Available: <http://www.businessinsider.com/24-stunning-photos-of-chinas-college-entrance-exams-2014-6>.
- Kumon. (2014). *Spreading Globally*. Retrieved from Kumon: <http://www.kumongroup.com/eng/world/>
- Kumon (2012). Features of the Kumon Method. Available: http://www.kumon.com.cn/KCN/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=105&Itemid=312&lang=en
- Kwok, P. (2001). Local knowledge and value transformation in East Asian mass tutorial schools. *International Education Journal* 2(5), 86-97.
- NACAC (2013a). Report of the Commission on International Student Recruitment. Available: http://www.insidehighered.com/sites/default/server_files/files/NACAC%20International%20Commission%20Report_Pre-Pub%20Draft.pdf.
- NACAC (2013b). Statement of Good Practice. Available: http://www.nacacnet.org/about/Governance/Policies/Documents/SPGP_9_2013.pdf.
- OECD. (2014). *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*,. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>
- Parker, P. (2014, July 14). Assistant Director of Admissions. (L. S. Hagedorn, Interviewer)
- Peterson's (n.d). Differences between the Gao Kao and the SAT in China. Available: <http://www.petersons.com/college-search/sat-china-chinese-international-students.aspx>
- Roberts, D. (May 15, 2014). China Exam System Drives Student Suicides. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*. Available <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-05-15/china-exam-system-drives-student-suicides>.
- Salili, F., Fu, H., Tong, Y., & Tabatabai, D. (2001). Motivation and self-regulation: A cross cultural comparison of the effect of culture and context of learning on student motivation and self regulation. In C. Chiu, F. Salili, & Y. Hong, *Multiple competencies and self-*

- regulated learning; Implications for multicultural education* (pp. 123-140). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Shen, H. (2008). An investigation on factors influencing private supplementary tutoring at the level of compulsory education. *Economics of Education Research (Beida)*, Vol.6, No.3, pp.1-10.[in Chinese]
- Times Higher Education (2014). The Times Higher Education World reputation Rankings 2014. Supplement 2014 in association with IELTS. Powered by Thompson Reuters.
- World Education Services. (2014). *How to Obtain Authentic International Academic Credentials*. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/eWENR/documentation.htm>
- Xue, H.P. & Ding, X.H. (2009). A Study on Additional Instruction for Students in Cities and Towns in China. *Educational Research*, Vol.30, No.1, pp.39-46. [in Chinese]
- Zhang, W. (2011). Shadow education with Chinese characters. Available: <http://www.iias.nl/the-newsletter/article/shadow-education-chinese-characteristics>
- Zhang, Y., & Hagedorn, L.S. (2011). College application with or without assistance of an education agent: Experience of international Chinese undergraduates in the U.S. *Journal of College Admission. Summer*, pp 7-16.
- Zhang, Y., & Hagedorn, L. S. (2011). College application with or without assistance of an education agent: Experience of international Chinese undergraduates in the U.S. *Journal of College Admission*.(Summer), 7-16.