

College Leaders Agree on the Benefits of Internationalization

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A generation ago, college administrators eager to enhance their institution's international profile might have set up a handful of study abroad programs and sought to host a few overseas students each year. These limited initiatives were often delegated to international programs offices that were understaffed and under-resourced. Those days are long since past. On campuses large and small, urban and suburban, public and private, university leaders increasingly understand the importance of raising the international profile of their institutions and preparing all students with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that will serve them well in a rapidly shrinking world.



A booming population of internationally mobile students has created new streams of potential degree-seekers for higher-education institutions. With more and more universities around the world offering courses and degree programs in English, these students have a growing number of options from which to choose. For many, the United States, long the most popular choice for overseas students, remains their preferred destination. According to the annual Open Doors report from the Institute of International Education, in 2015-16, the most recent academic year for which figures are available, the number of international students in the United States exceeded one million for the first time.

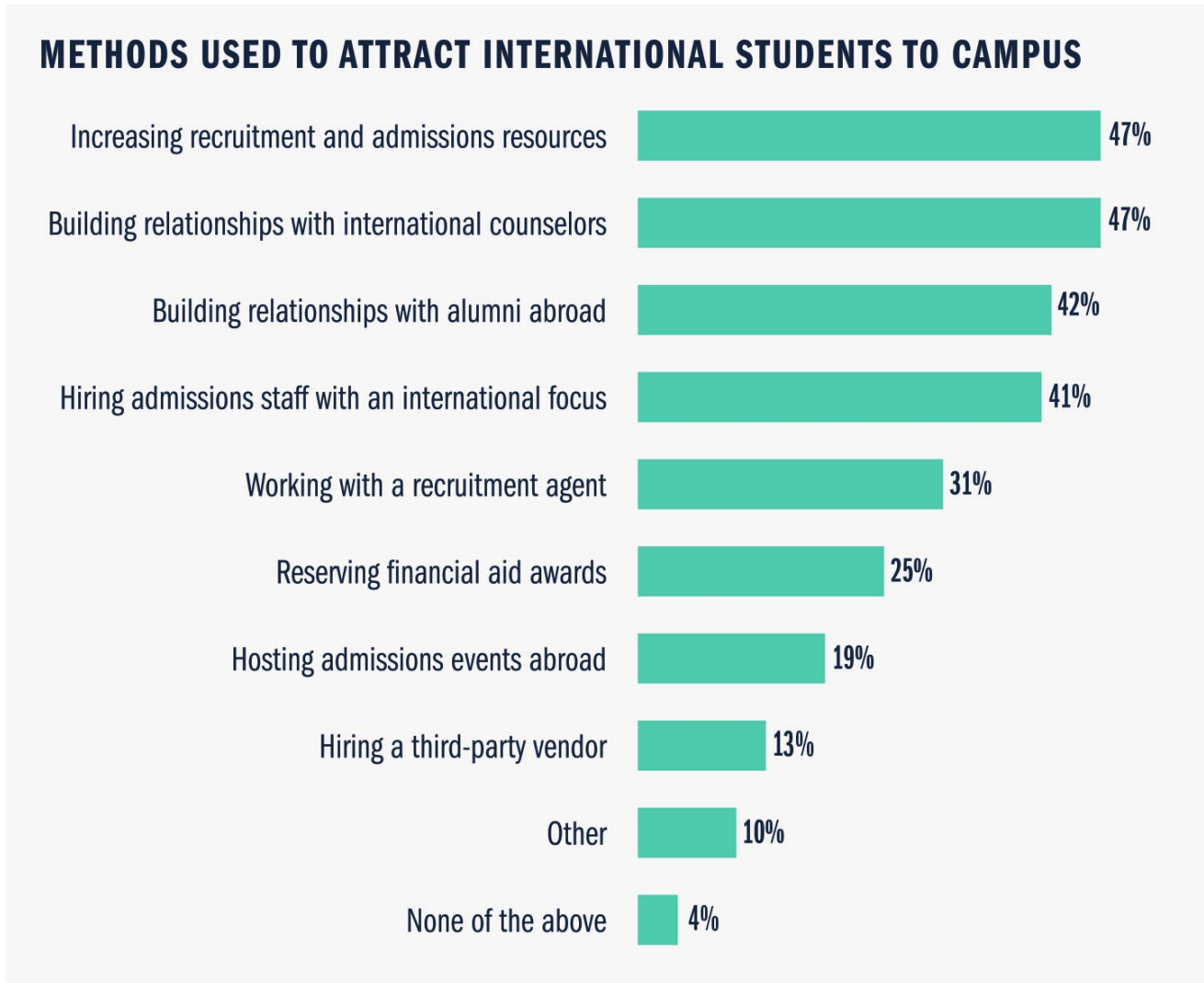
International students have become a ubiquitous and increasingly important part of the U.S. academic landscape. Today, most university leaders, even at institutions whose historic mission was to serve their local communities, agree that the internationalization of teaching, research, and service is central to their educational mission. According to Judy L. Genschaff, president of the University of South Florida, "It is our responsibility to educate our students for the future world. Not just the community, not just America, but the world." The University of South Florida initiated a partnership with INTO University Partnerships in 2009 and, since then, has seen international enrollments grow five-fold, to more than 5,200 foreign students in the fall of 2015, according to Open Doors.

A recent survey of university presidents by The Chronicle of Higher Education revealed that university leaders believe that boosting their international profile will yield significant dividends for their institutions. Nearly all respondents agreed that the very presence of international students on their campuses provides a benefit to their domestic students, enriching their experience and broadening their horizons. They also overwhelmingly agreed that geographic and academic diversity within the student body was important to their institution. Nearly 90 percent of the respondents viewed a significant international student presence on campus as an effective means of building a global brand.

In addition to these significant but often unquantifiable dividends, international students have of course brought more tangible benefits to institutions as their numbers have increased. Nearly three-fourths of the university presidents surveyed said that international students are an important means of generating significant income for their institutions. For the surrounding community, the spending power that overseas students bring can also be transformative. According to the Institute of International Education, international students are estimated to

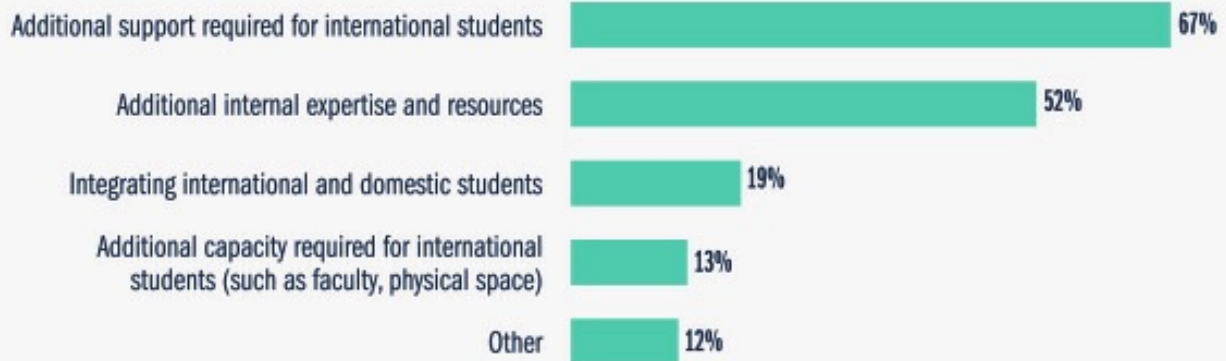
contribute more than \$35 billion annually to the U.S. national economy.

With such clear benefits, it is little wonder that 80 percent of the college presidents surveyed want to increase their institution's international student enrollment over the next decade.



However, although university presidents are united in their desire to increase international student numbers, the strategies they plan to employ vary considerably, with no single method enjoying overwhelming support. Fewer than half said they were planning to increase recruitment and admissions resources and would seek to build relationships with international counselors. Others cited an intention to build relationships with overseas alumni or to host admissions events abroad. Setting aside financial aid awards for international students was also mentioned. Fewer than a third said they planned to work with a recruitment agent, while just 13 percent said they planned to hire a third-party vendor. Notably absent from the range of strategies the presidents identified were any references to innovative new approaches that might reflect evolving enrollment realities and address the challenges of attracting a sustainable stream of globally diverse and academically promising students.

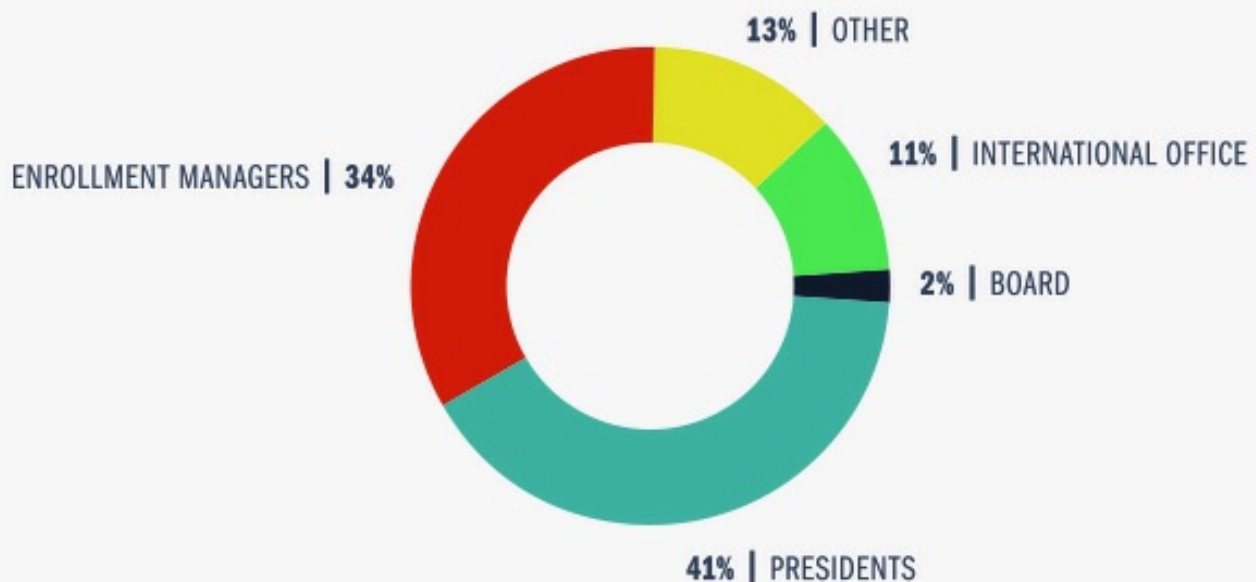
CHALLENGES TO INCREASING THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POPULATION ON CAMPUS



Responses to other questions in The Chronicle survey further underscored the need for universities and their institutional partners to come up with innovative solutions to the challenges presented by increasing internationalization. When asked about impediments to boosting international student numbers on their campuses, more than two-thirds of college presidents said that the main challenge their institution faces is the requirement for additional support for international students. Just over half cited insufficient internal expertise and resources as their main challenge, while a third said that their faculty and staff are not sufficiently prepared to handle the challenges that come with teaching and supporting international students. Effectively integrating international students with domestic students is viewed by nearly 20 percent of presidents as their biggest challenge.

The survey results did not explore in depth what additional resources college presidents believed their institutions would need to increase and better serve their international student populations. These could potentially include more scholarships, enhanced tutoring and advising services for international students, and additional English-language instruction.

WHERE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR AN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY LIE ON CAMPUS



One of the most startling results from the survey was that almost half of the respondents said that they, and not the international office, were responsible for their institution's overall international strategy. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of presidents surveyed said that at their institutions they had sole responsibility for public-private partnerships as well. A little over a third reported that enrollment management was responsible for international

strategy, and just 11 percent of the presidents said that this responsibility was delegated to an international office. The fact that the international office at so many universities appears to be out of the loop in leadership decisions about the internationalization strategy is surprising and complicates the challenges confronting institutions as they internationalize. These efforts will clearly require concerted effort across the board and international offices should ideally be playing an important role in the process.

Another potential impediment to increasing international is that, although university leaders and administrators are united in their recognition of the importance of internationalizing, this awareness does not always extend to university board members. More than half of the college presidents surveyed said that their own boards would prefer that their institution focus on serving local students.

The results of the survey clearly demonstrate a need for comprehensive planning on the part of institutions to attract and better serve the growing population of international students. This will require institutions to explore new strategies and innovative financing models, such as public-private partnerships

With university presidents in such a uniquely powerful position to initiate strategies and decide the path their institution will take to attract more international students, they need access to a wide range of information on leadership development and best practices in internationalization. For third-party players seeking to carve out a role in this process at individual institutions, the message is clear: While their ultimate partners in a day-to-day working relationship may end up being administrators in the international studies and admissions offices, their first port of call when forging strategic partnerships with institutions should be at the top, in the president's office.