

CROSSING BORDERS, BUILDING FUTURES (Report 1)

My preliminary research involves the higher education industry and I have taken University of Massachusetts - Amherst as the organization. Based on the outlined criteria I would like to give a few points.

Demographics and consumer groups:

International students constitute an important part of the student community within US universities. The students hail from diverse backgrounds and desire high quality education, employment opportunities and cultural experiences in the US. The top 5 countries with maximum number of international students in 2022 (https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/2022_AllStudentsByCOC.pdf) are from China, India, South Korea, Canada and Brazil.

Consumer Behaviors:

Multiple patterns and behaviors are observed in international students and their primary focus is on academics. International students are known for their strong dedication to secure higher grades and thus maintain rigorous study schedules. They tend to be active users of technology and social media, relying on these platforms for communication and networking. Often these international students come from 2nd world and 3rd world countries and due to their socio-economic status, they seek employment at an earlier stage compared to other groups. The students aspire to pursue full-time employment after graduating by seeking programs with strong industry connections and support for internships and job placements.

Customer Culture:

International students' community is diverse, where individuals are from various regions, religions, and socio-economic backgrounds. Despite this diversity, certain cultural values such as respect for elders, the importance of education and commitment to family are widely observed among Asian students. They frequently participate in community events, cultural organizations, and religious institutions to stay connected with their heritage and fellow community members.

Identification of Subgroups:

Among international students, there exist smaller, yet equally important subgroups which are, undergraduate students, graduate students, PhD students, students from different regions of the world, students pursuing different field of study like STEM, Management, Finance & Accounting etc. Apart from this, there are other subgroups such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and marital status. Typically, the international students are in their early to mid-20s, with an even gender distribution (<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/sevisBTN2022.pdf>). These subgroups may also vary based on academic interests, cultural affiliations, or involvement in campus activities (Ex: Women of Isenberg).

Tailored Marketing Practices (Existing ones):

UMass offers international student orientation sessions, provides career counseling, workshops, and networking opportunities tailored to the career goals and aspirations of international students. They also offer financial assistance in the form of scholarships and work study programs to ease the financial burden of the students.

As UMass moves through the complex landscape of international student intake, its marketing strategy assumes a crucial role. Ranging from good advertising to culturally sensitive messaging, these tactics form the foundation of interaction between the university and the students. However, continuous engagement and creative thinking are essential to maintain the relevance in today's emerging trends.

CROSSING BORDERS, BUILDING FUTURES (Report 2)

Who are international students?

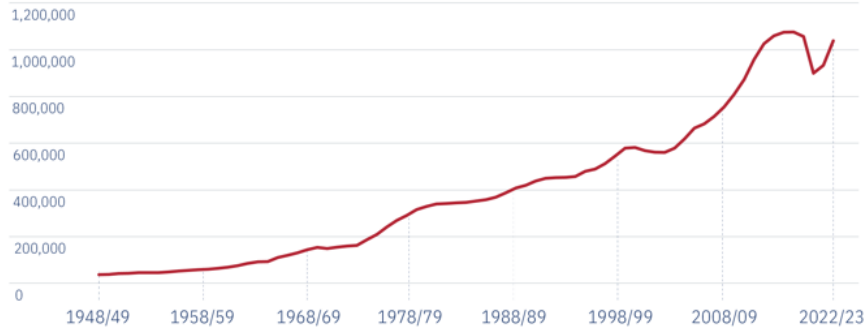
International students in the US are a diverse group pursuing higher education from various countries. They enrich campus life with unique perspectives and talents, prioritizing academic success while navigating challenges like cultural adjustment and visa regulations. Despite obstacles, they contribute significantly to the cultural diversity and academic vibrancy of American institutions.

How do international students contribute to the US economy?

The one million international students studying in the United States contributed US\$40.1 billion to the American economy during the 2022-23 academic year, says a report published online on 13 November by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. International students make contributions not only through the tuition they pay to U.S. higher education institutions but also through their spending on accommodations, transportation, food, and consumer goods while they are living in the U.S.

"International education doesn't just benefit individuals. It's also vital to American diplomacy, to our economic competitiveness, even to our national security," said Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a recorded statement released during a live stream presentation of the Open Doors data.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, 1948/49 – 2022/23



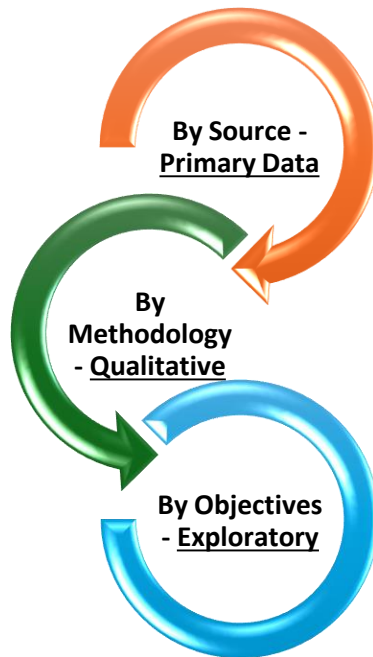
In 2022/23, the total number of international students **increased by 12%** from the prior academic year and **surpassed one million.**

Source: The *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars at higher education institutions in the United States and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.opendoorsdata.org.

opendoors

Detailed Analysis

For my detailed analysis I will be using qualitative research methods including interviews, focus groups and observations to explore the international students' perceptions, feelings, experiences, and challenges. To gain more insights into each student's experience of living in the US I personally had conversations with 25 people, most of them are UMass graduate students and all of them are from Asia.



Why the qualitative method?

As an international student myself, I thought through interviews, focus groups and observations I can understand fellow students experience and gain insights that quantitative data alone may not reveal. For instance, *"Were you given the opportunity to apply for TA/RA positions?"* is specific to MSBA students as other graduate students are given this opportunity at UMass and only through qualitative method the thought process and opinion about this could be gained.

By engaging in a one-on-one conversation, I was able to uncover their personal perspectives, challenges, as well as potential solutions that contribute to their experiences. This gives voice to the individuals whose experiences are studied.

As this is a participant centered approach, I could better understand the root causes of their difficulties and develop targeted solutions that are sensitive to their unique circumstances.

Moreover, by deploying the qualitative method we can identify a pattern or trend that can guide towards the overall course and school improvement.

Settings and participants

I approached the participants individually and they agreed to answer a few questions about my project. Out of 25 people that I interviewed 11 of them were females and the remaining 14 were males.

The list of international students is comprised of 18 UMass MSBA graduate students, 3 UMass PhD students and the rest are past alumni from other US universities and their age range from early 20s to

early 30s. 22 of the participants came from India and the remaining are from Thailand, Mongolia, and China.

All interviews took place in an informal setting to allow interviewees to speak freely. Each participant was asked various questions regarding their social, cultural, and academic experiences in the US.

My questions were based on my very own experience living in the US as an international student. Everyone remained on topic throughout the interview and redirection was not required. Each interview lasted for about 10-15 minutes.

Student interview questions

I asked the following questions for analysis:

- Name, age, gender, DOB, Nationality.
- Desired Major and Minor of study, Is it a STEM course?
- What factors influenced you the most to pursue graduate studies in the US?
- How would you rate the teaching methods in UMass compared to your previous educational experience in your country?
- How satisfied are you with your overall experience as an international student at UMass Amherst?
- How likely are you to recommend UMass Amherst to other international students considering studying abroad?
- Do you work part-time?
- Is your part-time job aligned to your course of study?
- How often are cultural events held in UMass?
- How confident are you in securing a job position once you graduate?
- Is the curriculum making you more job ready? Yes, or no?
- Were you given the opportunity to apply for TA/RA positions?
- How many career fairs have you attended so far on campus?
- Have you attended career fairs organized by other departments?
- What are your chances of getting a full-time job right now, when compared to a US student?
- How does the distance from urban centers like Boston and NYC affect your access to job opportunities and networking at UMass Amherst?
- How stressed are you on the current job market trends?
- How often have you had the opportunity to interact with domestic students?
- Why did you choose UMass?
- How are you feeling mentally?
- Have you faced discrimination or racism so far in UMass?

Key marketing goal for UMass to do better.

Providing more platforms for international students to get more internships and fulltime jobs.

What UMass can do better to accommodate the needs of the international students in getting job opportunities?

1. Inclusion of other departments students in a specific department career fair, hackathon, public speaking. Example: MSBA students can attend Computer science, Data Science department organized career fairs. Not everyone will be looking for a software developer etc.
2. Tie ups with local companies that will provide H1B sponsorship to the international students.
3. Career fairs to be more specific to MSBA/Isenberg so that everyone will get an opportunity to attend and explore.
4. Awareness of clubs and their importance.
5. Graduate teaching assistantship for international students to be made available for MSBA, as currently that opportunity is denied.
6. Making the students ready to work in the corporate work culture by providing them with the necessary skills that are used and deployed in work. Example: Instead of using Google Collab to code and submit projects, jupyter, Anaconda can be taught to code using Python programming language. Similarly, instead of MS Access for learning SQL queries, MySQL, Oracle can be implemented in the curriculum so the tool can be used, as they are the ones used in market.

Follow up survey!

After completing my Qualtrics survey I will send out the follow up to a few participants and get their opinions and add it as part of deliverable 3.

CROSSING BORDERS, BUILDING FUTURES (Report 3)

What UMass can do better to accommodate the needs of the international students in getting job opportunities?

1. Inclusion of other departments students in a specific department career fair, hackathon, public speaking. Example: MSBA students can attend Computer science, Data Science department organized career fairs. Not everyone will be looking for a software developer etc.
2. Tie ups with local companies that will provide H1B sponsorship to the international students.
3. Career fairs to be more specific to MSBA/Isenberg so that everyone will get an opportunity to attend and explore.
4. Awareness of clubs and their importance.
5. Graduate teaching assistantships (TA) and research assistantships (RA) for international students to be made available for MSBA, as currently that opportunity is denied.
6. Making the students ready to work in the corporate work culture by providing them with the necessary skills that are used and deployed in work. Example: Instead of using Google Collab to code and submit projects, jupyter, Anaconda can be taught to code using Python programming language. Similarly, instead of MS Access for learning SQL queries, MySQL, Oracle can be implemented in the curriculum so the tool can be used, as they are the ones used in market.

The following efforts can be made to improve the academic and corporate responsibilities of international students:

Cross-Departmental Career fair (Improved Service): By expanding the scope of career fairs to include multiple departments, UMass can create a more inclusive and diverse job search environment. International students, particularly those in specialized fields like MSBA, benefit from exposure to a wider range of career options and networking opportunities, increasing their chances of finding relevant employment.

Corporate Readiness Workshop (New Service): In addition to the gap identified in the utilization of tools like Google Collab and MS Access, the lack of exposure to widely adopted corporate tools poses a significant challenge for international students transitioning into the workforce. To address this issue effectively, UMass could incorporate a comprehensive curriculum overhaul for MSBA students, integrating industry-standard tools such as Jupyter Notebook for coding and MySQL or Oracle for database querying. By aligning coursework with the tools and technologies dominant in corporate environments, UMass can ensure that international students are not only proficient in theoretical concepts but also equipped with practical skills. Moreover, hands-on training and practical exercises utilizing these tools could be integrated into coursework, allowing students to gain proficiency and confidence in their application.

Enhanced internships and Co-op Opportunities (Improved Services): For international students pursuing STEM fields, securing employment in the US is often their primary goal, making access to co-op and internship opportunities is crucial. As many companies increasingly prioritize candidates with US work experience, UMass can significantly benefit international students by expanding its offerings in this area. A notable example is Northeastern University, located in the same state, which has established extensive industry partnerships and operates a dedicated career site for student applications.

This proactive approach has yielded considerable success, with numerous Northeastern students securing internships and co-op positions. UMass can follow this strategy to strengthen its support for international students, promoting similar partnerships with a diverse range of companies and streamlining the application process through a centralized career platform. By enhancing access to valuable experiential learning opportunities, UMass can empower international students to gain practical skills, build professional networks, and ultimately increase their competitiveness in the US job market.

TA/RA opportunities for International MSBA students (New Service): Graduate teaching assistantships (TA) and research assistantships (RA) for international students to be made available for MSBA international students, as currently that opportunity is denied. Serving as a TA allows international students to gain valuable teaching and leadership experience. We can have the opportunity to develop our communication skills, enhance our ability to explain complex concepts, and improve our classroom management abilities.

As TAs interact with professors, fellow TAs, and students, they expand their professional networks within the university community. These connections can lead to collaboration opportunities, research partnerships, and valuable mentorship relationships, all of which contribute to our academic and professional development.

Apart from these efforts UMass can allow international students to work on campus after graduation providing them with H1B sponsorship in the future. The H1B visas issued under the educational department are different from the H1B issued in the corporate work place, making the process more streamlined and giving more opportunities for international students.