

The Northwestern Experience of International Latin American Graduate Students

Research Question: What factors contribute to Latin American international graduate students’ decision to study at Northwestern University and how does Northwestern support Latin American students’ academic and social integration into the University community?
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Rationale

- **Why?:** To investigate why graduate-level Latin American international students choose to study at Northwestern
- **What?:** To investigate what academic, social and professional expectations the students have about their studies and research work at Northwestern University
- **How?:** To investigate how the University supports these expectations through programs and initiatives aimed specifically at these students

Literature Review Domains

- **Internationalization of graduate programs in the US:** trends and perspectives
- **Profile of International Latin American graduate students studying abroad:** relevant social, economic and academic characteristics
- **Experience of International Latin American graduate students in the US:** Existing research
- **Highly selective Research institutions:** Expectations, resources, programs and support

Implications

- **Context:** to provide a framework to evaluate diversity within the international graduate student population
- **Challenges:** to provide a framework for implementation of theories into practice considering the students’ characteristics
- **Supports:** to align the support systems to the expectations of the students for more effective and targeted programming and initiatives

Data Collection

- **Student Survey:** designed to understand the reasons the students choose Northwestern University for graduate study (about 150 students)
- **Focus Group:** three focus group sessions of 4-5 students each, selected from the survey pool
- **Administrators Interviews:** 2-3 interviews with administrators in programs relevant to the students’ experience at Northwestern

Top Latin American Countries in Graduate Programs at Northwestern

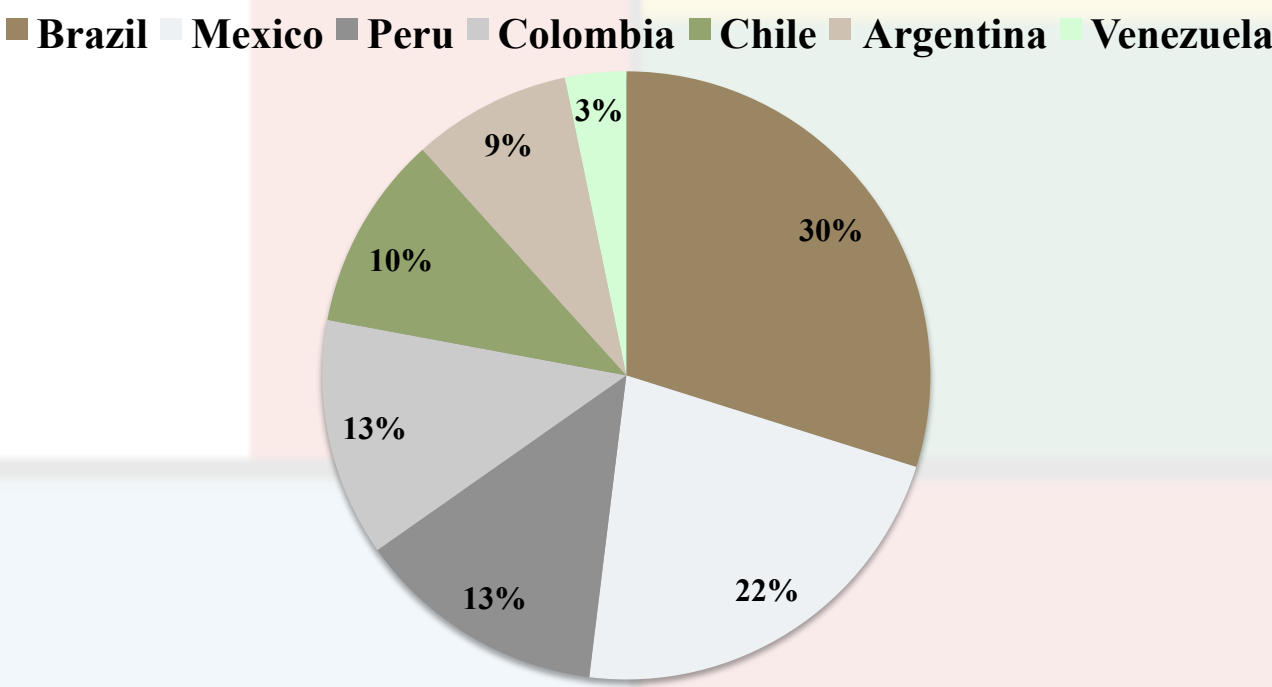
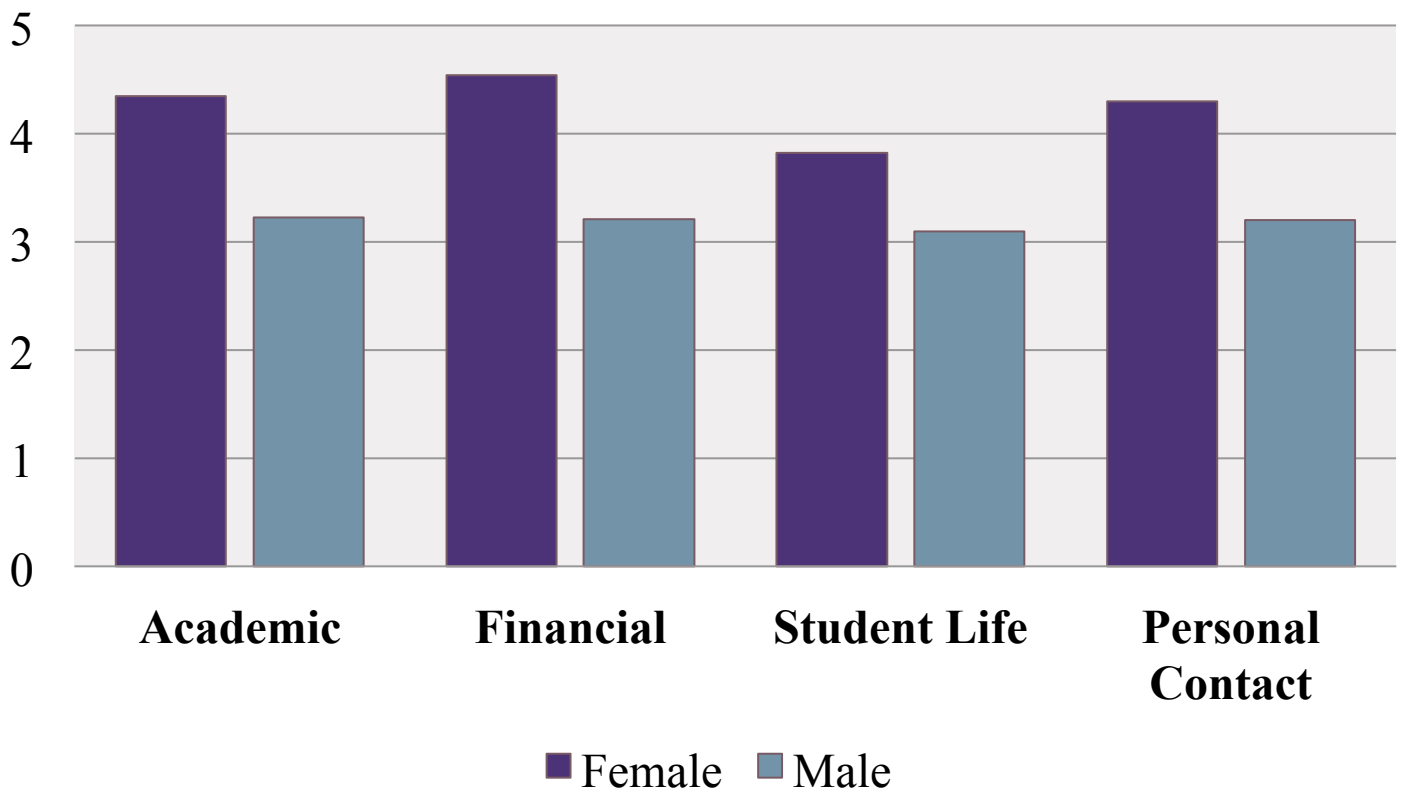


Table 1: Importance of quality in choosing an institution



Data Findings

- Existing Data:**
- 37% of international students in the US are at the graduate level (IIE, 2014)
 - With the exception of Peru, Northwestern population reflects the regional trends in Latin American student mobility

- Preliminary Findings:**
- Female ILAG (International Latin American Graduate) students expressed more concern with the quality of academic offerings, financial packages, student life and personal contact than their male counterparts (Table 1)
 - In the same survey, the majority of respondents (64%) did not identify themselves with an underrepresented group

American Council on Education. (2006). *Students on the move: The future of international students in the United States*: Washington, D.C.

Bartell. M. (2003). Internationalization of universities: A university culture-based framework. *Higher Education*, 45, 43-70.

Hudzik, J. (2011). *Comprehensive Internationalization: From Concept to Action*. NAFSA: Washington, D. C