

The Social Well-being of International Students with English As Their Second Language at UBC

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PURPOSE

This study looks at international students in which English is their second language and revolves around identifying barriers that limit their engagement in recreation at UBC. The primary measure in this study will be the social aspect of well-being and connectivity



“There is more play, less studying ... in china it’s always study, study, study.”

METHODS

- Social well-being in this study will be defined as the extent to which a student feels a sense of belonging, social inclusion, and social connectedness in the UBC community.
- This will be measured by the student’s active participation in the UBC community such as UBC clubs, UBC sport and recreation, UBC programs and events.
- The target populations that will be investigated are international students studying at the UBC for the sole-purpose of obtaining an undergraduate degree.
- Although well-being encompasses concepts of mental, social, and physical aspects, the scope of this study will be focused on exploring the social nature of international students in the university setting.

“Things are a lot more costly here compared to back home, and hence money plays a huge part in many of my decision making processes.”

“As an international student, it was pretty hard to make friends ... like the language barrier, it’s there.”

FINDINGS

3 main themes pertaining to the well-being of international students.

1. The influence of social clubs

- There was an increase in the social activities among international students when engaged in these various clubs

2. Language barriers

- Multiple participants cited the language barrier in English proficiency as a fundamental cause to their lack of engagement in social activities on campus.

3. Financial barriers

- Separation from family tends to put pressure on students studying abroad to find part-time work, cook, and take public transport. As a result, this leads to significant time constraints where time for recreation is sacrificed for work or school related priorities.

RECOMENDATIONS

- Increase in social activities targeted towards new students
 - Imagine Day is known to be quite successful but could be even more useful if held twice a year, once in the fall and again at the start of Winter/Spring semester in January.
- Clubs or groups on campus that focus specifically on English as a second language members
 - More clubs focused on grouping ESL students together with other students who are willing to offer their help would be recommended.
- More financially affordable programs for international students.

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