Population and Methodology
The International Student Satisfaction Survey has been conducted since 2012. The annual survey aims to captures how international students feel at Emporia State University (ESU) as well as to identify areas for potential growth and continued improvement. The survey was conducted in electronic format using Zoomerang. The data was collected during the Spring and Summer semesters of 2014. All international students enrolled in Spring 2014 received the invitation and the OIE sent three reminders to complete the survey, reaching about 513 students. From the international student population, 93 students completed the survey, accounting for a response rate of roughly 18 percent. Despite the extended period dedicated for collecting data, the response rate was lower compared to previous years.

Survey respondents were primarily female (62.2 percent) with an average age of 23.5 years. Most of them were degree-seekers (76.8 percent) and on-campus residents (64.3 percent). In terms of college affiliation, students from the Business School were widely represented (43.2 percent), followed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (28.4 percent) and the Teachers College (16.1 percent). Most respondents were undergraduate students (62.2 percent). Among them, about 22 percent identified as freshman, followed by junior (13.4 percent). Sophomore and senior students were comparatively less represented (8.5 and 9.8 percent, respectively). At the time of completing the survey, most students had been at ESU for less than one academic year (76 percent). Finally, respondents were from 28 nationalities, among which Chinese students had the largest representation (30.4 percent).

The study analysis consisted of frequencies and descriptive statistics as drawn from the survey results. When the case warranted, the analysis included group comparisons based on three criteria: 1) gender, 2) housing, 3) degree or visiting students. Only significant differences between groups (at a p<.05 or higher) were reported in the study. Finally, the study concludes with the International Student Satisfaction Model, which looks at the effect of student demographic characteristics on the overall international student satisfaction.

Motivators to Join Emporia State University
Respondents identified several reasons for choosing Emporia State University. Consistent with previous years, students indicated value –combination of cost and academic quality- as a determining factors for choosing ESU (71.6 percent). Other factors that played a role in choosing ESU included education quality (41.2 percent) and campus safety (34.1 percent). An interesting change from previous years consisted of academic quality ranking higher among students’ priorities for choosing ESU this year (increase of 5.7 percentage points).

Consistent with previous years, factors that had a relatively smaller influence on students’ decision to join ESU were: the presence of other international students (21.2 percent), campus size (18.8 percent), innovative nature of academic programs (12.9 percent) and location (9.4 percent). Among these factors, students appreciated the presence of international students significantly more compared to the past year (increase of roughly 10.5 percentage points)
Respondents provided qualitative feedback on the reasons for choosing ESU. Among them, partnership with their home universities and scholarship opportunities at ESU were salient.

**Overall student experience**

**Student Integration to Emporia State University**

Students rated ESU from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent) on areas that are critical for international students’ integration to campus. Consistent with previous years, international students were mostly satisfied with the opportunity to meet peers from other countries (mean 3.37) followed by the ability to enroll in appropriate courses (mean 3.17), visit with academic advisors (mean 3.14), learn about campus resources (3.11) and experience U.S. academic life (mean 3.04). No significant differences were revealed after group comparisons.

Areas that continue to be challenging for international students are: having the opportunity to immerse into the U.S. culture (mean 2.92) and meeting American peers (mean 2.76). However, the standard deviations suggest students share different experiences in their ability to meet peers form the U.S. A possible explanation is the large representation of respondents who have spent less than one year at ESU. At any rate, international students said they had a fairly accurate idea of the environment at ESU and the City of Emporia (82.4 percent), before arriving to campus.

Respondents indicated that ESU and the City of Emporia were friendly to international students (95.6 percent and 91.3 percent, respectively). Furthermore, most of them would recommend ESU to friends and family (91.1 percent).

**About the City of Emporia**

Generally, international students have positive experiences in the City of Emporia. Most international students feel safe in Emporia (98.9 percent). Similarly, respondents said it was easy to meet people and make friends in the city (86.8 percent).

There are some areas that present opportunities for improving the international students’ experience at ESU. Local transportation is an example. While several students said it was easy to get around Emporia (71 percent), about 28.2 percent reported challenges in this area. The standard deviation (.83) suggests students with personal transportation may experience the ESU community differently relative to students who rely on public transit. Another example is finding things to do on or off-campus. About 54.4 percent of respondents said they always find something to do on or off-campus while 43.6 percent felt otherwise. Finally, Emporia offers limited shopping opportunities for international students. About 53.3 percent did most of their shopping in Emporia while 46.7 percent did not. The standard deviation (.995) may also suggest students experience shopping in Emporia differently, which may be attributed to access to private transportation.
The Office of International Education

International student services
Responded rated from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent) some of the regular services that the OIE provides for international students. Respondents rated highly the OIE role in maintaining international student visa status (mean 3.23) followed by developing events and programs with an international focus (mean 3.17), assistance in tax filing (mean 3.14) and CPT/OPT information session (mean 3.08).

Areas where the OIE could improve services consist of the coordination of shuttle services during breaks and end of semesters (mean 2.97) and preparing students for campus employment (mean 2.89). In light of the diverse nature of the international student population at ESU, some of the services provided by the OIE do not serve all students equally. For example, a large proportion of students have never used the CPT/OPT information session or the tax filing services (26 percent, respectively).

How students connect with the OIE
Respondents indicated a preference for direct and personal communication with the OIE. International students are less likely to use the OIE website to find information they need. About 42 percent of respondents said to visit the OIE website to find specific information. In contrast, 81.6 percent of respondents indicated a preference for direct contact and communication as the OIE staff members respond to questions quickly and accurately. The OIE staff also referred students to other divisions when situations were beyond the scope of the OIE (83.1 percent). Similarly, respondents said the OIE send emails on topics that are important to them (84.2 percent).

Overall experience with the OIE
Respondents reported a great deal of satisfaction with the services provided to international students by the OIE. In addition, they reported a positive experience when they visit the OIE. Students said to be greeted by a friendly staff member when they visited the OIE (77.3 percent) and enjoyed visiting the OIE (79.1 percent). Finally, international students felt the OIE advocates on behalf of students’ interest across campus (75 percent). The OIE continues to rank highly on friendliness. More students enjoyed visiting the OIE, although the OIE staff was rated less friendly in comparison to the previous year (decrease of 2.7 percentage points).

Students had the opportunity to include qualitative feedback on the role of the OIE. Most comments focused on friendly and student-oriented staff. One student suggested that the OIE survey include more questions concerning academic problems students are confronted with while studying at ESU.

The Campus Experience
In the classroom
International students had a positive experience in the classroom. Most students felt as though they are adequately prepared to undertake academic work (94.2 percent) and engaged in classroom discussions (88.2 percent). However, roughly 12 percent of students indicated otherwise. The majority of students felt they make significant contributions to the classroom setting by bringing new perspectives (89.5
percent). Finally, international students agreed that their results and grades are commensurate with their academic effort (89.6 percent).

Competency in English language communication appears to not be an obstacle in students’ ability to follow academic work. Most respondents said they had no difficulty following classroom presentations and discussions (86 percent). However, respondents acknowledged that the lack of English communication competency had the potential to limit their ability to participate in class (58.4 percent).

International students indicated that they are offered opportunities to build rapport with ESU faculty members. Respondents said their professors are generally available to them (96.5 percent) and genuinely interested in their home country and culture (81.1 percent). Furthermore, international students agreed their professors were genuinely interested in their home country and culture (94.1 percent).

Through qualitative feedback, students provided suggestions for opportunities to improve the classroom experience. One student said it would help if professors took into consideration that first‐semester students typically are uncomfortable using English in the academic setting and unfamiliar with the U.S. systems of distributing academic assignments. Another student suggested mixing American students with international students on classroom projects and presentations.

**Campus Involvement**

Overall, students’ self‐assessment on‐campus involvement was high (83.3 percent). Students appear to be active member of one or more recognized student organization (RSO) (67.5 percent). Nonetheless, the proportion of students not involved in any RSO was surprisingly high (32.6 percent). These figures suggest a decrease in student involvement compared to the previous year (decrease in 21.2 percentage points.) This decrease may be explained by the overwhelming representation of students who have been at ESU for less than one year.

There continues to be room for improvement in international students’ familiarization with the Associated Student Government (ASG). Only half of respondents (50 percent) said they were familiar with the role ASG plays on‐campus; the figure is slightly lower in comparison to previous years. Respondents generally believed that on‐campus involvement was an opportunity to meet and connect with other international students (85.9 percent) and American peers (71.8 percent).

Through qualitative feedback, students indicated possible ways to increase international student involvement on‐campus. Some students suggested more Union Activity Council‐approved activities targeted toward integrating international with domestic students. Another suggestion consisted of arranging planned trips to nearby cities.

**Campus resources and services: Frequency of use and satisfaction**

Respondents rated from 1 (never) to 4 (regularly) the frequency in which they used several campus resources and services. The results in this section should be interpreted in light of the respondent pool: students who have been at ESU less than one year and freshman classification.
Consistent with previous years, international students are most avid users of the William Allen White Library (mean 3.36), the Recreation Center (mean 3), Hornet Nest (mean 2.75) and Hornet Express (mean 2.67). Three campus resources that appeared to be least used by international students were the Center of Student Involvement (mean 2.12), testing and assessment (mean 2.14) and Career Services (2.3).

Respondents were also asked to rate from 1 (poor) to 4 (excellent) the services offered through various campus resources. Respondents who did not use specific campus resources had the option to mark “Not Applicable.” In such case, the responses were labeled as “missing value” and therefore did not count for this particular satisfaction analysis. International students reported the greatest degree of satisfaction with the William Allen White Library (mean 3.25) followed by the Writing Center (mean 3.19), the Recreation Center (3.17) and lastly, the Student Advising Center (mean 3.11). In contrast, respondents showed a lesser degree of satisfaction with the Hornet Nest (mean 2.74) followed by Cashier (mean 2.79), the bookstore (mean 2.81) and the Testing and Assessment (mean 2.82).

On and Off-campus Housing

Most respondents lived on-campus (64.3 percent) while a smaller proportion opted for off-campus housing (35.7 percent). On-campus residents reported a great degree of satisfaction. The people associated with Residential Life contributed to the positive experience of international students. For example, respondents rated highly the friendliness of Residential Life staff (93.5 percent). Similarly, resident advisors (RA) were identified with the important role of making a positive ESU experience (93.6 percent). Living on-campus was also identified as a good setting for meeting new people and exchanging ideas with the roommates (87.1 percent, respectively). On-campus residents said they kept up-to-date with campus events (83.9 percent) and had opportunities to practice English (79.3 percent). Overall, 83.9 percent of respondents indicated to enjoy living on-campus.

Respondents offered additional layers of their on-campus experience through qualitative feedback. One respondent said dorms were “perfect.” Other respondents had practical recommendations for improving the on-campus housing experience. Some of the student recommendations were:

- Reduce housing cost
- Provide housing solution during Winter Break
- Design more opportunities for on-campus residents to meet other people
- Develop friendlier processes for relocation when conflicts arise among roommates
- Improve Wi-Fi connection in Central Morse Hall
- Provide more photos of the dorms for students who are in their home countries wanting to choose where to live once at ESU
- Install better air conditioning systems

Off-campus residents also reported a great degree of satisfaction. Firstly, respondents indicated finding that off-campus housing was easier than expected (86.8 percent). They also characterized off-campus housing as affordable and convenient (90.7 percent). Students who lived off-campus said to be involved in campus events (90.7 percent). This finding is counter-intuitive to the idea that off-campus students
would be disengaged. Off-campus living is less attractive for international students who are interested in practicing English skills. Expectedly, a relatively small proportion said they were able to practice English while living off-campus (59.2 percent). This could be explained by the fact some students live off-campus either alone or with roommates who shared the same native language. Even so, an overwhelming number of off-campus residents reported a great deal of satisfaction with their housing choice (96.3 percent).

Respondents offered another layer of their off-campus experience through qualitative feedback. A few respondents said living off-campus helped them gain responsibility and stronger English skills. Students had the opportunity to pay utility bills, write checks, pay rent, take taxis, buy groceries and go to restaurants. Other respondents had practical recommendations for making the transition to ESU easier. Some of the student recommendations were:

- Include links to off-campus property companies on the ESU website
- Develop a system to facilitate finding roommates (including American students)
- Educate students on the documentation needed for signing a housing lease in Emporia
- Provide a check-list of all things students must inspect in an apartment before signing a lease

**Communication with international students**

International students found out about campus events mostly through their ESU email account (84.7 percent). Other sources of information included Hornet Life (40 percent), the OIE Facebook page (40 percent) and the ESU Facebook page (38.82 percent). International students were less active on Twitter.

On the preferred method of communication, international are mostly active on their email account (95.35 percent) followed by the OIE Facebook (50.96 percent), ESU Facebook (48.24 percent) and Hornet Life (47.67 percent). Few students use the ESU or OIE Twitter account (18 and 14 percent, respectively).

**Factors that would improve the overall experience**

Respondents provided valuable feedback on how ESU could continue meeting the needs of international students. Chief among these factors were affordable transportation, both in Emporia and better access to the cities nearby. Students indicated the real limitations associated with not having a car. Also relying on regular scheduled public buses that connect with larger cities and the airport would significantly improve the experience of international students.

Another pressing theme that rose among respondents was the need to provide more opportunities for mixing international and domestic students. One student described international students as living in “cultural bubbles,” hanging out together. However, several students recognized the efforts made so far in providing opportunities to connect international with American students.

Finally, other topics mentioned were, expanding the operation hours of the recreation center to include winter and summer breaks, expanding campus employment opportunities for international students, having food choices at the Hornets’ Nest that better meet the needs of international students and introducing an official Men’s soccer team for ESU.
International Student Satisfaction Model

Following with last year survey analysis, the study examines the effects of student characteristics on the overall international student satisfaction at ESU. Following the model from previous studies, the dependent variable (DV) is a composite variable that takes into account social and academic factors of students’ experience at ESU. For interdependent variables (IV), the study takes into account students’ demographic characteristics.

Dependent variable

International student satisfaction responds to a combination of academic and social variables. For this study, the DV has been operationalized as a composite measure drawn from eleven items that touch on critical dimensions in international students’ experience at ESU (see Table 1). A consistency analysis of the items suggest internal consistency (Cronbach alpha=.803) which allows for using this continuous-level DV.

Independent Variables

Consistent with the previous study, this study operationalizes five independent variables and one control variable. All of the IVs are binary (dummy) variables. Students’ demographic and academic characteristics are depicted in the following variables:

- Student gender (male vs. female)
- Class status (undergraduate vs. graduate)
- Academic plan (degree seeking vs. visiting students)
- Student nationality (Chinese vs. other nationalities)
- Department affiliation (Business School vs. other colleges)
- Age (control)

Analysis

The analysis explores the effect of specific student characteristics and school affiliation with the overall international student satisfaction at ESU. From previous studies, the model has offered valuable insights about predictors for satisfaction among international students at ESU.

Table 2 illustrates the OLS regression of student degree intention, sex, class rank, affiliation to the business school and China as country of origin on international student satisfaction. The constant (y-intercept) predicts a student satisfaction of about 3.325 points when they are visiting students, male, pursuing graduate studies and from countries other than China and of zero age. In previous years, three factors were significant in predicting student satisfaction. The intention to obtain a degree from ESU had a positive effect compared to students who were at ESU as visiting students. Being a female students had a positive effect on student satisfaction relative to being a male student. Finally, affiliation to the business school had a negative effect on student satisfaction.

From this year’s survey results, the predictors had no significant effect on international student satisfaction. However, a few surprises the direction of the effect of the IVs is worth noting in this study and observing in future surveys. For example, being a degree-seeker this year had a negative effect on
satisfaction relative to visiting students. Similarly, being an undergraduate student had a negative effect on satisfaction relative to graduate students. Finally, the effect of being Chinese had a negative effect on student satisfaction relative to students from other nationalities. In contrast, all of these factors had a positive effect last year. Finally, the effects on international student satisfaction of being a female student (positive), being affiliated to the business school (negative) and age (positive) remained consistent with the findings of the previous study. The model predicts roughly 12.29 percent of international students’ satisfaction at ESU.

Discussion and implications

The survey response rate for this study was smaller compared to that of previous years. In addition, the population was marked by a large representation of undergraduate and first year students. Arguably, these factors determined small variance among respondents. Consequently, unlike the previous study, the comparison across groups and the effects of students’ demographic characteristics yielded non-significant differences as reflected in t-test results and the International Student Satisfaction Model. Nevertheless, there are several valuable insights that can be drawn from this study.

International students join ESU motivated by its value proposition; that is, the combination of academic quality combined with affordability. This has been the main reason to join ESU as indicated by international students in the past three surveys. This year, academic quality took a leader role in attracting international students. Students arrive to Emporia with a fairly accurate image of the campus and the City of Emporia. Once in Emporia, international students enjoy the opportunity to meet peers from other countries and enroll in courses that are meaningful for their major. International students appreciate the City of Emporia for its friendliness toward international students; however, there are areas such as transportation, access to more things to do, and shopping that continue to be a concern. These efforts require further consideration and most likely community-based efforts.

International students are the OIE’s largest customer basis. In general, students enjoy visiting the OIE and appreciate the friendly staff when they need to go to the OIE for specific business. The OIE was highly rated in two important dimensions: 1) the role of maintaining students’ visa in “status” and, 2) the role of organizing and coordinating events.

International students report a positive experience in and outside of the classroom. Inside the classroom, students feel connected with their professors. They like to participate in class as they feel they make substantive contributions in classroom discussions. Overall, international students feel they are prepared to be in the academic classroom. Some barriers international students are confronted with in the classroom environment include a relative small number of students not feeling comfortable participating in class. Another barrier is students not feeling confident enough in their language abilities to make contributions to the class discussions. Outside the classroom, students also indicated involvement in campus activities and identified with one or more recognized student organizations, albeit the survey results suggested that international students were less involved on-campus compared to previous years. An area in need of continued growth is helping international students understand the role that ASG plays on-campus and helping them feel represented within the student government. Students take advantage
of the campus resources and services. Most commonly used services this year were the WAW library, the recreation center and the Hornet Nest. Among the services available at ESU, students rated the WAW library, the writing center and the recreation center with the highest degree of satisfaction.

The decision of living on or off-campus appears to be associated with positive experiences. Students who live on-campus indicated to enjoy living on-campus because of friendly staff, helpful resident advisors and the opportunity of learning from their roommates. Similarly, students who chose to live off-campus were happy with their decision and believed that they have gained a sense of responsibility by shopping, cooking and paying bills. In both cases, students who live on or off-campus felt engaged in campus life and participated in campus events and programs.
Table 1

<table>
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<th>Academics indicators</th>
<th>Social indicators</th>
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<td>● Results commensurate to student’s efforts and ability</td>
<td>● Friendly campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Feeling prepared for academic work</td>
<td>● Feeling safe</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Ability to engage with professors outside the classroom</td>
<td>● Opportunities to meet people and make new friends</td>
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<td>● Classroom and group discussions</td>
<td>● Opportunities to do things on or off-campus</td>
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<td>● Faculty genuinely interested in the students’ culture</td>
<td>● Getting around campus easily</td>
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<td>● Recommending ESU to friends</td>
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Table 2

OLS regression of student degree intention, sex, class rank, affiliation to the business school and China as country of origin on international student satisfaction

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