

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT SMC

LINDSAY POLAND
JEREMY LANGE
CRISTINA GARCIA
PRESSIAN NICOLOV



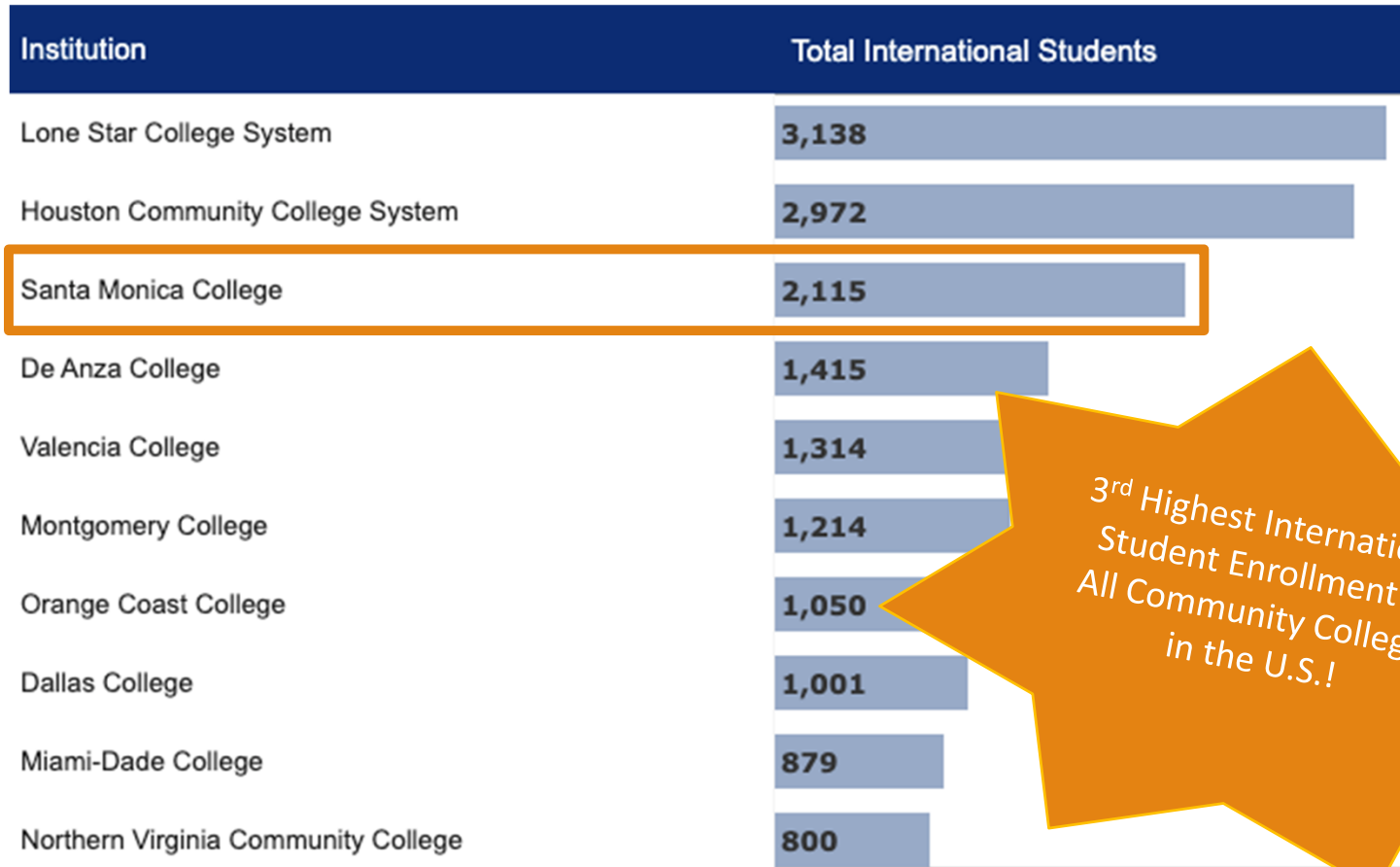
Agenda

- 1) Overview of SMC's international student population
- 2) What international students bring to SMC and how we benefit from their presence and engagement
- 3) Challenges facing international students
- 4) What the IEC does and how we support students
- 5) How faculty and the SMC community can support international students




International Students at SMC: Overview

International Student Enrollment



How Do International Students Hear About SMC?

- Friends and family
 - International recruiting agents
 - International college fairs
 - Website and online marketing
- 

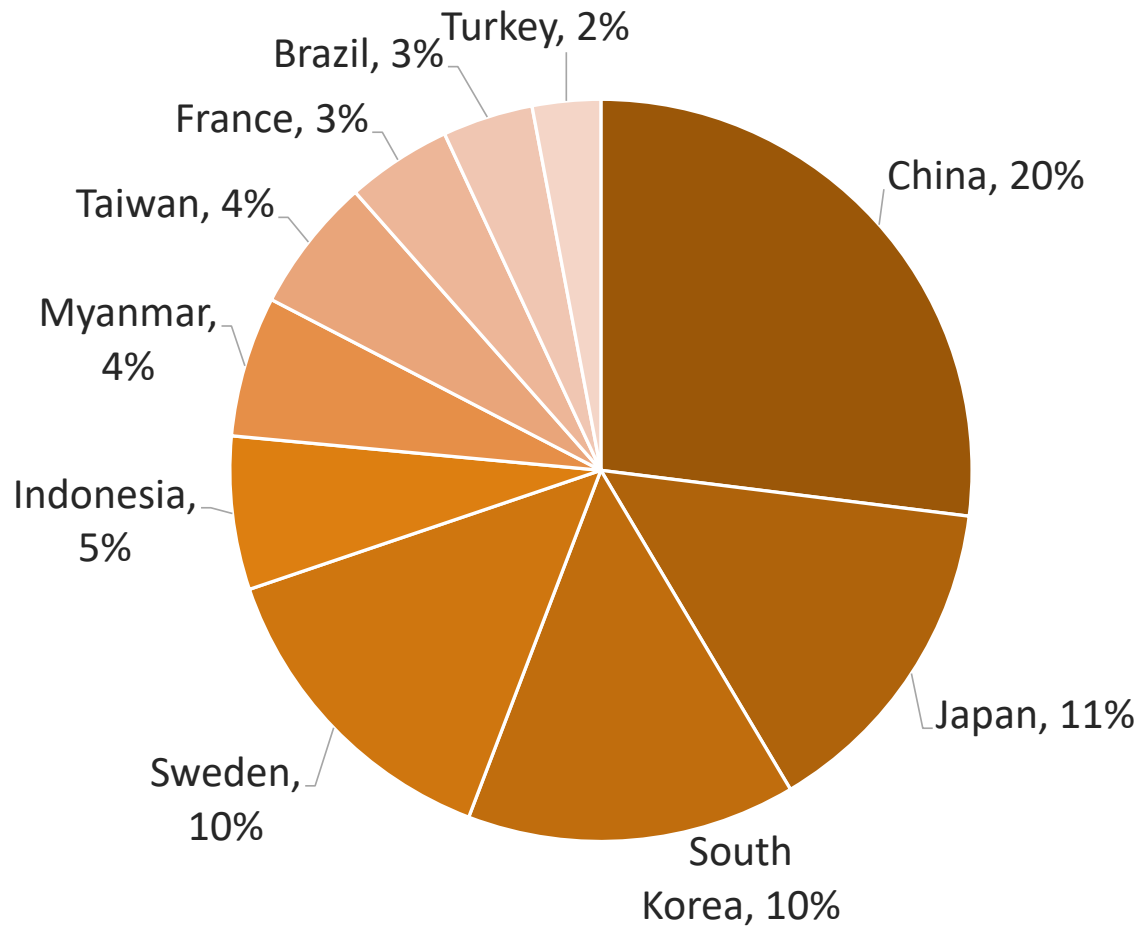
Why Do International Students Choose SMC?

- Academic Reputation
- Choice of Major and Certification program offerings
- Transfer Reputation
- Location
- Student Support Services
 - International Education Center
 - Extensive Academic/Mental Health and Wellness Support Services
- Campus life/Engagement Opportunities
- Affordable Tuition

Why did you decide to come to SMC?

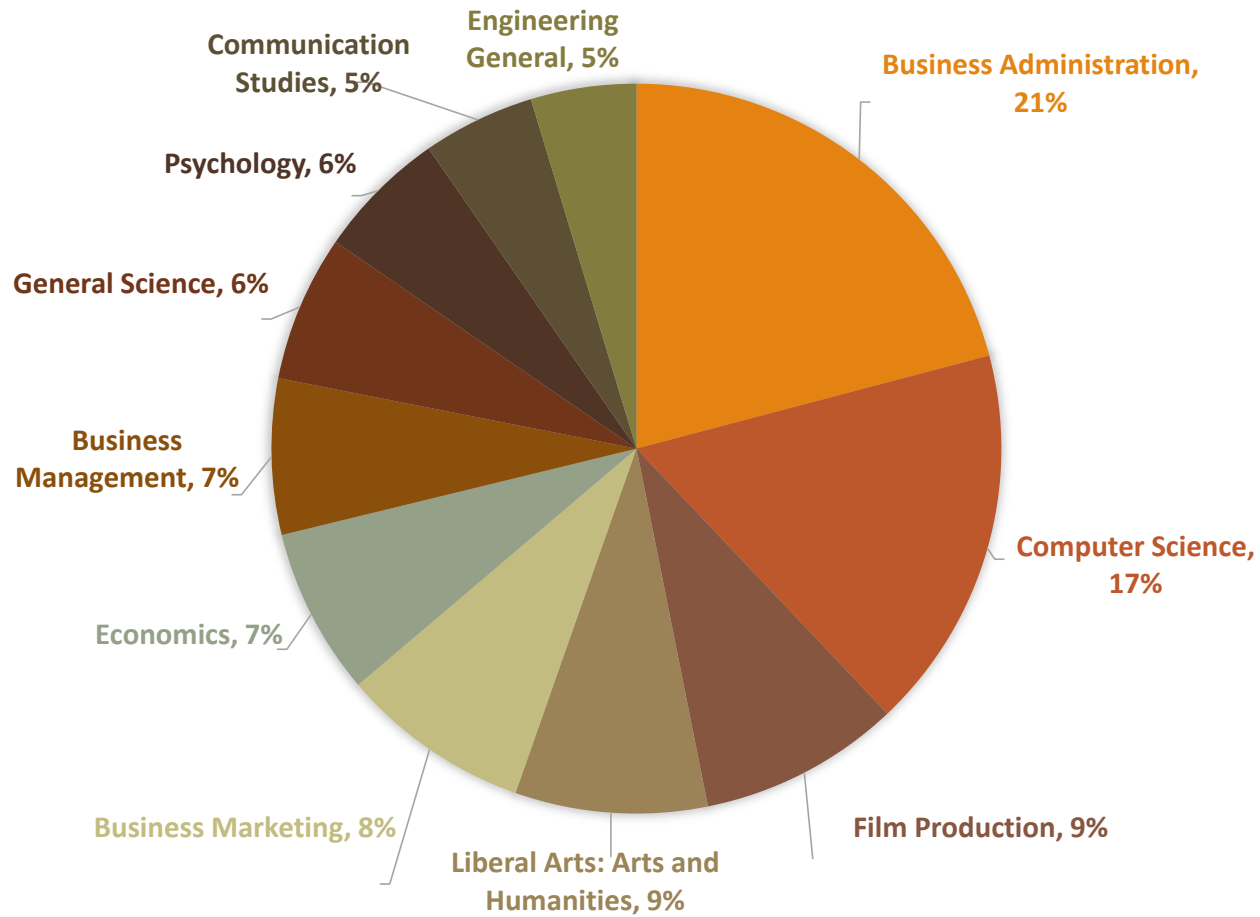


Enrollment and Nationalities



- 1,706 international students enrolled in Spring 2023
- 94 different countries
- Most students from:
 - China
 - Japan
 - South Korea
 - Sweden

Majors



Most popular majors:


- Business
- Computer Science
- Film Production
- Liberal Arts

*Majority of Business and CS classes are still being offered online




Benefits of Serving International Students

Cultural Benefits

- Enrich classrooms and college activities with diverse ideas and cultural perspectives
 - Academic Excellence - International students have exceptional transfer rates to top colleges, helping SMC to remain #1 in transfers to UCs, CSU, USC, & LMU
 - International students have made SMC a global brand
 - Active participants in campus life and student governance
- 

Financial Benefits

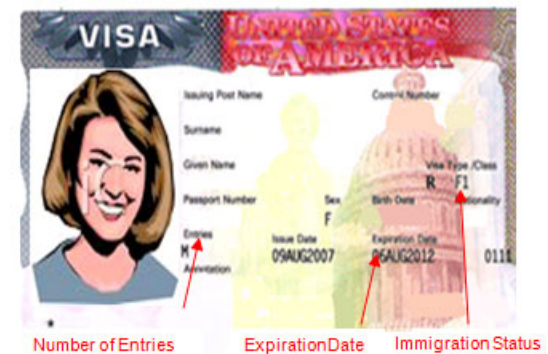
- International students contribute \$39 billion to the national economy and support more than 400,000 jobs across the U.S.
 - International students pay non-resident tuition - roughly 8 times as much as domestic students (\$386/unit vs. \$48/unit)
 - International tuition is SMC's 2nd largest revenue stream
 - Revenue from international tuition is used to support services, faculty/staff hires, and campus events for ALL students
- 



What's Different for F-1 Visa Students? Regulations and Challenges

What is an F-1 Visa?

- Visa that allows non-U.S. Citizens to enter the U.S. with the intent of being a full-time student
- Students apply for the F-1 visa through U.S. Embassy or Consulate, usually in their home country
- Most SMC F-1 visa applicants are given an I-20 that allows them to study for up to 7 semesters.



Major Differences for F-1 Students



Application Process

Apply early to get an I-20
and apply for F-1 visa

Application fee (\$75) and
Seminar fee (\$85)

Must submit extensive
admission documentation
and attend mandatory
online Information Seminar



Tuition & Fees

SMC's 2nd largest revenue
source

Pay 8x more in tuition
than residents: \$386/unit

Estimated annual expenses:
\$29,000



Employment Options

Only eligible to work off-
campus in specific situations

Must receive authorization
to work off-campus

Only eligible for Student
Help jobs on-campus

Major Differences Continued



Full-Time Enrollment Requirement

Enrollment in fewer than 12 units is an F-1 Status Violation!

Consequences of Grading Decisions:
“F” vs. “W”



On-ground/hybrid Class Requirement

International Students **MUST** take at least 9 units on-ground/hybrid to maintain F-1 visa status

No more than 1 online 3 units course can count towards the mandatory 12 units enrollment requirement

Consequences of Status Violations for Students

When international students violate their F-1 status, they must:

1. File for reinstatement of their status with USCIS, an expensive and time-intensive process, or
2. Leave the U.S., pay a \$350 fee for a new I-20, potentially apply for a new F-1 visa, and attempt to re-enter the U.S. or,
3. Leave the U.S. and abandon their studies


Falling out of status is bad for students, and bad for SMC!



Consequences of Lack of On-Ground/Hybrid Classes for Students and the College

- About 100 international students have not enrolled in the on-ground/hybrid classes needed to maintain F-1 status due to lack of availability
- Lack of on-ground/hybrid courses forces students to enroll at other institutions or fall out of status and withdraw from SMC completely
- Loss of tuition for a single 3-unit class for 100 students = **-\$115,800** for one semester
- Loss of 100 students due to Withdrawal from the college = **-\$1,852,800** over 2 years

External Challenges


- Demographic decline of college aged students across major recruitment markets
 - Increased competition from UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand: Increased availability and ease of applying for visas, pathways to residency after education, and employment opportunities
 - COVID-19: Embassy closures, travel bans and restrictions,
 - Hostile domestic political rhetoric – Feeling unsafe and not wanted
 - Difficult F-1 visa application process and increase in visa denials
- 

Internal Challenges

Student-Specific:

- Difficulty understanding how to navigate college and immigration requirements, asking for help, finding resources
- Homesickness, culture shock
- Issues in home country (medical, financial, political)
- Housing & Transportation

College-Wide:

- Lack of sufficient on-ground/hybrid class options
 - Students going under unit and falling out of F-1 status
- 

What is a challenge you've experienced at SMC?



INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION



What Is the IEC and How Do We Support International Students?

International Education Center



IEC Leadership

- Pressian Nicolov (Dean)
- Denise Kinsella (Associate Dean)
- Catherine Weir (Dir. of International Development)

IEC Staff

- IEC Counselors
- Admissions Specialists and Assistants
- Immigration Specialists
- Front Office Staff
- Licensed Psychologist
- Peer Mentors

Location: Third floor of the Student Services Center

IEC Services

Front Desk

- Answer all F-1 student questions in person, phone, email, Hubspot – “triage”
- Mass email reminders and updates, flyers & brochures, assist with Seminars

Admissions

- Provide individual admissions support through international application portal
- Create initial I-20s and register continuing students in SEVIS
- Complete verification letters and I-20 travel signatures

Specialists


- Immigration, Admissions, Housing, Health Insurance, Student Events & Activities
- Intensive English Program
- Social Media: Instagram [smc international](#)

IEC Services Cont'd


IEC Counselors

- All regular counselor duties
- Recommend students for RCLs, Concurrent Enrollment, and post-completion work authorization
- Notify and advise students who are not enrolled in sufficient on-ground/hybrid classes
- Assist students in finding classes at SMC or other schools that meet program and immigration requirements

Immigration Team

- Share immigration regulations with new students in the Information Seminar
 - Determine student eligibility and assist students with applications for F-1 Benefits
 - Alert students who are under units and at risk of falling out of status
 - Meet with students to address immigration related questions
 - Assist students with reinstatement – e.g., explaining regulations, writing letters, helping with forms
 - Review off-campus work or internship requirements, assist with applications
 - Create information-sharing videos on relevant topics
 - Coordinate presentations on taxes and post-completion options
- 

IEC Retention & Engagement Strategies

- Proactively connect students to employment, academic, mental health/welness, food programs and support services
 - Develop and implement on-ground engagement activities
 - Expand database of affordable housing options
 - Work with counselors to identify new students that would benefit from Reduced Course Load (RCL) approval
 - Work with Academic Affairs to create faculty-led workshops designed to increase faculty awareness of international student needs
- 

What has helped you be successful?



What would students like to see more of from faculty?



How Can You Help?

1. Clearly communicate class attendance policies/Drop Policies
2. Know the basic regulations:
 - a. 12 units enrollment requirement
 - b. Implication of late semester drops
 - c. Grade implications (letter Grade A-F Vs. W)
3. Be aware of who international students in your classes are and acknowledge them on the first day of class
4. Encourage international students to contact the IEC any time they need help
5. Flag students in GPS
6. Advocate for more on-ground or hybrid class sections
7. Reach out to the IEC any time you have questions about an F-1 visa student, or you think a student could use some additional support or resources



A heartfelt THANK YOU for your support of SMC's international students!

International Education Center
3rd Floor Student Services Center
intled@smc.edu | 310-434-4217